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Governance & Civic Services

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To: Members of the Council

Date: 22 November 2012
Our Ref:
Your Ref:

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Dear Councillor

COUNCIL - THURSDAY 22ND NOVEMBER, 2012

I refer to the agenda for the above meeting and now enclose the following report which was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No.

Item

Questions Raised by Members of the Council (Pages 105 - 110)

Schedule of Questions submitted by Members of the Council and Responses attached

Yours sincerely,

M. CARNEY

Chief Executive

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QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. Question submitted by Councillor Ashton to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)

Please list:

- (a) all the sub-committees, working groups, panels, and any other functional sub-units of the Liverpool City Region Cabinet, together with the name and position of the Sefton Council representative(s) on each one; and
- (b) any other bodies on which the Liverpool City Region Cabinet itself has representation (whether ex-officio or otherwise), together with the name and position of any Sefton Council elected member or officer on each one.

Response:

- (a) The Cabinet has approved the following representation on the following bodies for 2012/13:

- Liverpool City Region (LCR) Cabinet – Leader of the Council (Cllr P.Dowd)
- LCR Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission – (Cabinet Member – Children, Schools, Families and Leisure (Cllr Moncur)
- LCR Employment and Skills Board – Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Tourism (Cllr Maher)
- LCR Local Enterprise Partnership Board - Leader of the Council (Cllr P.Dowd)

The details of the above mentioned appointments are provided on the Council's website via this link:

<http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/mgListOutsideBodies.aspx?bcr=1>

- (b) The Merseyside Leaders and Merseyside Local Authorities, through the LCR Cabinet, are represented on the following:

- Cllr Davies (Wirral) as the sub-region representative on the Local Monitoring Committee for the European Regional Development Fund North West Operational Programme (Cllr Cargill (Knowsley) appointed as alternate).
- Councillors Joe Anderson (Liverpool), Ron Round (Knowsley) and Marie Rimmer (St. Helens) on the Regional Leaders' Board.
- Cllr Polhill (Halton) as the Local Authority representative on the Atlantic Gateway Board.
- Cllr Papworth (Sefton) on the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. (4 year term January 2009 - January 2013)
- Cllr Davies (Wirral) on the LCR Local Enterprise Partnership Board Task and Finish Group (Fitness for Response).
- Local Nature Partnership Interim Management Board – Jane Gowing, Head of Planning Services, Sefton.

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2. Question submitted by Councillor Robertson to the Council's Spokesperson on the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority (Councillor Friel)

"Bearing in mind that the availability of the proposed site for the new Maghull North railway station is time limited can I please be updated on the project?"

Response:

Following the substantial reduction in Government funding for Merseytravel's capital projects programme in 2010/2011, all further technical work on Maghull North Station was stopped, but the work which has been done has been drawn into an appropriate state for retention and future use. It will be reviewed at the appropriate time, should funding become available, so the work done so far has therefore not been wasted and can form the basis for progressing the project in the future.

3. Question submitted by Councillor McGuire to the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services and Performance (Councillor Tweed)

Please can the Cabinet Member provide details on the business rates currently collected by Sefton Council from businesses and organisations operating within the Borough specifically:

1. How many organisations are there in Sefton paying full business rates?
2. How many organisations are there in Southport paying full business rates?
3. How many organisations are there in Sefton paying a reduced business rate?
4. How many organisations are there in Southport paying a reduced business rate?
5. How many vacant business properties are there in Sefton?
6. How many vacant business properties are there in Southport?

Please can these results be given for the last 5 years.

Response:

1. How many organisations are there in Sefton paying full business rates.
Answer: 3,436
2. How many organisations are there in Southport paying full business rates.
Answer: 1,347
3. How many organisations are there in Sefton paying a reduced business rate.
Answer: 3,459

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4. How many organisations are there in Southport paying a reduced business rate.
Answer: 1,490
5. How many vacant business properties are there in Sefton.
Answer: 633
6. How many vacant business properties are there in Southport .
Answer: 256

The report is as at today's date.

When you look back historically we would be trying to report on a landscape that changes daily. A business paying full rates today may have had reduced business rate earlier in the year or in previous years. This information would require specific computing resource to extract the information.

4. Question submitted by Councillor McGuire to the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services and Performance (Councillor Tweed)

“Please can the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance provide details on the number of properties within each Council Tax band for each ward in Sefton.”

Response:

The Council tax banding is recorded for the precepting areas, e.g. parishes not political ward boundaries.

5. Question submitted by Councillor Jones to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P Dowd)

“Is it correct that according to reports, the Council has now agreed to close Ainsdale and other libraries?”

Response:

I am aware of such claims. However, the Council is in the middle of a consultation process about the library review. The public engagement process, in advance of the review, was initiated when the Liberal Democrats were responsible for the libraries portfolio.

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6. Question submitted by Councillor Crabtree to Cabinet Member – Children, Schools, Families and Leisure (Councillor Moncur)

“Is it true that the call-in of the library review which took place on the 1 November 2012 and instigated by the Liberal Democrats has delayed our residents having their say on the libraries and also incurred substantial additional cost to the rate payer in so doing?”

Response:

Yes, the “call-in” process had the effect of delaying the start of consultation and reducing the time available for consultation by 2 weeks for the hard copy questionnaire and 1 week for the on-line version, the closing date for consultation has to remain 14 January 2013 in order for the outcome to be considered as part of the Council’s budget setting process. Costs have been incurred by the delay in commencing the consultation.

7. Question submitted by Councillor Shaw to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Regeneration and Environmental Services (Councillor McKinley)

“As one of those who called-in the Cabinet’s decision on the Review of Library Services, I attended the 1st November meeting of your Committee at which the Call-in was considered.

At the meeting I thought I heard you tell the Committee that although members were permitted to ask questions as “points of clarification” of the 2 Cabinet members present and of officers, they were not permitted to discuss the matter as a Committee.

Would the Chair agree that the discussion of a Call-in by members of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a vital part of “checks and balances” in the Cabinet-style of executive arrangements introduced through the Local Government Act 2000 and forced upon most of local government by the last Labour Government?”

Response:

Firstly, you heard wrongly.

Secondly, yes.

Thirdly, no.

8. Question submitted by Councillor Hands to the Cabinet Member – Children, Schools, Families and Leisure (Councillor Moncur)

“Will the Cabinet Member assure the public that any volunteers (Friends Groups) helping in the parks will not be put off by Sefton Council’s bureaucracy, petty rules and regulations.”

Response:

Sefton Council fully recognise the valuable contributions volunteers, friends of parks groups, and community organisations can make in developing ownership and respect for our parks and open spaces.

The Council is keen to ensure that the interest and goodwill of such groups is not stifled by bureaucracy, petty rules and regulations.

9. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member – Transportation (Councillor Fairclough)

“What measures are being implemented this year to provide concessionary variation in parking regulations in the run up to Christmas, as has been done in past years – and what discussions have been held between the Council and business representatives about this matter?”

Response:

As in 2011, no concessions are planned for this year. A number of discussions have taken place between the Council and business representatives in recent months but the issue of Christmas concessions has not been raised.

10. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member – Children, Schools, Families and Leisure (Councillor Moncur)

“What is the prospective date for the removal of all hoardings around the front of the Atkinson Building, Southport, and what deadlines have been provided to contractors working on the site for ‘making good’ around the Cambridge Arcade?”

Response:

Hoardings around the Atkinson will have to remain in place until early in the New Year to offer protection whilst the fit out works and final building works are completed. The hoardings were reduced in size in early October to help improve sight lines and access into the Cambridge Arcade from Lord Street.

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The most urgent “making good” works have been instructed and will be completed (out of normal shop opening hours) by 14th December. The balance of proposed repairs will be programmed to follow final works completion early in the New Year.

11. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member - Children’s, Schools, Families and Leisure (Councillor Moncur)

“In respect of the present dispute between the Council, the Government and former teaching employees regarding the responsibility for redundancy payments, have all parties concerned shared with each other the detailed legal advice which they have received on the substantive issues?”

Response:

No

12. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member – Older People and Health (Councillor Cummins)

“Is the Cabinet Member satisfied that the Sefton MBC Social Services Department can now facilitate transfer of those applicants who wish to leave the Council’s present ‘preferred providers’ for home care via ‘direct payments’ or otherwise within a reasonable period and what is that period? Could the Cabinet member inform the Council of how many individuals have applied to leave the Council’s direct care providers since April 1st?”

Response:

I am satisfied, where a service user in receipt of Domiciliary Care from one of the Council’s contracted providers wishes to pursue the option of a Direct Payment to enable them to arrange their own care provision, that Sefton Council can facilitate this within a reasonable period. Typically, from the date of referral to the Direct Payments Team, it takes 2-4 weeks to establish the Direct Payment arrangement. It is difficult to be definitive about the timescale as it can vary considerably, dependent upon the service user’s individual circumstances (for example, whether they need to set up a bank account and whether a representative is needed to manage the Direct Payment on their behalf). It is important that the service user and their representative make an informed choice in deciding that the Direct Payment is the best option for them, consequently no pressure is applied to them to complete the process within a set time period. I can advise Council that since April 1st 2012, the Direct Payments Team have received 27 referrals relating to service users in receipt of Domiciliary Care from one of the Council’s contracted providers and wanting to pursue the option of a Direct Payment, to enable them to arrange their own care provision.