

CABINET

**MEETING HELD AT THE REMOTE
ON THURSDAY 4TH FEBRUARY, 2021**

PRESENT: Councillor Maher (in the Chair)
Councillors Atkinson, Cummins, Fairclough, Hardy,
John Joseph Kelly, Lappin, Moncur and Veidman

84. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

85. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests or personal interests were received.

86. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

87. PERSISTENT PUPIL ABSENCE WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maher welcomed Councillor Carragher, Lead Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Children's Services and Safeguarding, Persistent Pupil Absence Working Group to the Meeting to present the Working Groups Final Report.

Councillor Carragher presented the Working Groups Final Report and highlighted that the Working Group had been established on 9 July 2019, long before the Covid pandemic had emerged and at a time when there were some concerns regarding school attendance, particularly attendance at primary schools.

The Working Group reviewed persistent pupil absence in schools within the Borough, with a particular focus on those children with Special Educational Needs support, those with Education Health Care Plans, and pupils supported by Child Protection, Child in Need and Early Help Plans. The Working Group had found that both early years, and the transition stage from primary to secondary schools, were critical times as attendance

at those key stages could build the foundation and set the scene for children for years to come.

Councillor Carragher highlighted that excellent work was already being progressed in many of Seftons schools in partnership with the Local Authority and emphasised that the recommendations, if approved, would further enhance that work.

Councillor Carragher expressed her gratitude to all Members and Officers for their assistance during the course of the review and in producing the final report on behalf of the Working Group.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Councillor Cummins thanked Councillor Carragher, Working Group Members and Officers for the report and requested that recommendation 2 (h) be amended as follows:

- 2 (h) strongly encourage schools to provide training in SEND and Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) conditions to all staff.

Decision Made: That Cabinet noted the following recommendations and commended the report with recommendations to the Council with the inclusion of the amended recommendation above:

1. That the good practice regarding school attendance currently undertaken by the Council and schools, as outlined in the findings of the Final Report, be acknowledged and noted.
2. That the Interim Head of Education be requested to explore the possibility of:
 - (a) a campaign to tackle school attendance across all key stages with a specific emphasis on the early years and foundation stage, the campaign to focus on conveying clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes.
 - (b) delivering of clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families through prospectus and admission/transition events.
 - (c) ensuring that the attendance of vulnerable children is monitored across the early years stage.
 - (d) an aspiration for a post of a dedicated worker for children who are supported by Education, Health and Care Plans, in order to address any barriers for children and young people attending school; this aspiration could be considered in the future as part of the on-going work on school attendance.

- (e) attendance being part of the enhanced transition and not just for children and young people on the Special Educational Needs and disability (SEND) register, as this will address the early identification of any school attendance issues.
 - (f) sanctions for non-attendance being applied consistently across primary and secondary schools.
 - (g) schools providing an adult mentor to those children who have contact with the school Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) but who are not on the SEND register, with whom the children can have regular access and build up a relationship.
 - (h) strongly encourage schools to provide training in SEND and Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) conditions to all staff.
 - (i) Extending buddy schemes with older peers to all schools, pupils to be “matched up” to ensure they have something in common.
 - (j) Improving communication between primary and secondary schools at transition stage, to ensure children are “understood” by teaching staff in secondary schools and that any good practice is shared.
3. That the Senior Democratic Services Officer be requested to liaise with relevant officers in order to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) receives a six-monthly monitoring report, setting out progress made against each of the recommendations outlined above.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Working Group has made a number of recommendations that require approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding), the Cabinet and the Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No alternative options were considered. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) established the Working Group to review persistent pupil absence and the Working Group has performed this task.

88. ADULT SUBSTANCE USE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT, TREATMENT & RECOVERY SERVICE (AMBITION SEFTON)

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Health and Wellbeing/Director of Public Health in relation to the re procurement of the

Adult Substance use Community Assessment, Treatment and Recovery Service which will expire on 31 March 2021.

Decision Made: That:

- (1) the Director of Public Health be authorised to conduct a light-touch regime procurement exercise for an Integrated Adult Substance Use: Assessment, Treatment and Recovery Service to run for a period of five years from 1st April 2022 with the option of further extensions to be exercised up to a maximum of two-years. Bids will be evaluated on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT); and
- (2) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing to award the contract to the highest scoring bidder(s) resulting from the procurement and to award any extension thereof.

Reason for the Decisions:

Effective substance use treatment and recovery requires a range of referral pathways and services collaborating to optimise the effect of treatment interventions. Individual stability and progress in recovery is dependent on stability in the treatment system. In line with calls from National Advisory Councils, the recommendation provides scope for longer contract duration and a greater degree of stability and continuity.

The service is, and will continue to be provided from two sites, one in the North of Sefton and one in the South, ensuring geographical equity and ease of access. While the North Sefton site, based in Southport, continues to prove satisfactory, issues have emerged in relation to the suitability of the Canal Street site in Bootle. The current lease on the premises expires on 1st October 2021 and the current providers are exploring options including an extension on the lease to the 31st March 2022 and temporary alternative accommodation. Public Health Commissioners would expect to approve the suitability and location of any venue in relation to the new contract.

The recommendation includes a procurement timeline that provides any successful bidder with an eight-month period of mobilisation, sufficient time to identify and secure alternative and more suitable accommodation for the Bootle Service Hub.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

To award a further twelve-months extension on the existing contract to enable the current provider to secure an alternative venue for the Bootle Service Hub. There is currently no provision within the existing procurement framework as existing contract extension options have already been exercised.

89. HIGH NEEDS FUNDING UPDATE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Education in relation to the financial position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block Budget; actions to address ongoing in-year pressures; and longer-term sufficiency plans to meet increasing demand for specialist places, to improve processes and governance and balance the budget.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Safeguarding, Councillor J. J. Kelly extended his appreciation to all Officers and the Schools Forum for all their hard work.

Decision Made: That:

- (1) the latest High Needs forecast, be noted; and
- (2) the ongoing work to provide sufficiency of places over the medium term and bring the budget into a balanced position, be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the forecast outturn position for the 2020/21 High Needs Budget.

To keep members informed of the progress of the sufficiency and improvement plan which aims to provide placements in Sefton for all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

90. CROSBY LAKESIDE ADVENTURE CENTRE - BUSINESS CASE UPDATE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place in relation to the proposals to provide a sustainable future for, and to optimise the benefits of the Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre including an updated Business Case following a review of operating models in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills, Councillor Atkinson thanked the Executive Director – Place for the report and referred to the 3.1m as a welcome investment which would create local jobs and reduce unemployment.

Decision Made: That:

- (1) the Full Business Case be agreed and option 2 within the Full Business Case, be approved;
- (2) the Executive Director (Place) be authorised to implement the delivery plan outlined within the Full Business Case in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills; the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services; and the Cabinet Member – Health and Wellbeing, be approved;
- (3) in alignment with approval of option 2 (recommendation (1) above), the new operating company be incorporated, with board members nominated and appointed in accordance with the Council’s Constitution; and
- (4) £500,000 working capital be loaned from Sefton Council to the new hospitality company to cover the launch and the first 18 months of operation; after which the loan will be paid back to the Council over the 10 years of the business plan and as the first financial commitment from profits generated; be approved.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure readiness for the completion of the construction project and prompt reopening of the asset, and to ensure that the facility and the operating model deliver economic, social and environmental outcomes to the benefit of the local community and the borough of Sefton.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

This review reassessed options for operation of the facility in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which are summarised in the table below.

The assessment of these options identified the Preferred Option to be Option 2: a Sefton Council wholly owned hospitality company to deliver operational transformation within a fully refurbished hospitality facility.

The summary of the outcome of the assessment is shown in the table below:

OPTION	VALUE AND RISK ASSESSMENT
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Changes to management, in-house council delivery</p> <p>New JV and operating model</p>	<p>Partner with hospitality operator to run facility using a new operating model and new team. Also invest in the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the facility.</p> <p>Financial outcome: current c.£217k pa subsidy fully removed and a surplus generated for the Council of c. £70k pa average over 10 years (total c. £320k pa average) after fully funding on-going maintenance (c. £100k pa average over 10 years) and paying profit</p>

OPTION	VALUE AND RISK ASSESSMENT
	<p>share to operator partner.</p> <p>Backlog maintenance requirements covered in full refurbishment.</p> <p>£3.4m benefit to the Council (improvement on current position) over 10 years.</p> <p>Overall assessment: could be financially sustainable, but concerns about ability to attract and retain appropriate partner.</p>
<p>Option 2</p> <p>New wholly-owned operating company</p>	<p>Recruit new team, including MD, with hospitality experience to run facility. Work to new operating model. Also invest in the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the facility.</p> <p>Financial outcome: current c.£217 pa subsidy fully removed and a surplus generated for the Council of c. £81k pa average per annum (beginning after year 5 of operations) after fully funding on-going maintenance (c. £100k pa average over 10 years).</p> <p>£3.4m benefit to the Council (improvement on current position) over 10 years.</p> <p>Overall assessment: financially sustainable, also delivering positive social outcomes; recommended option.</p>
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Changes to management, in-house council delivery</p>	<p>Retain the existing operating model and team and hire new management with hospitality experience. Also invest in the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the facility.</p> <p>Financial outcome: current c.£217k subsidy not removed with insufficient new income to fully fund on-going maintenance requirements.</p> <p>(Backlog maintenance requirements will be covered in full refurbishment).</p> <p>Overall assessment: not a financially sustainable option.</p>

As detailed at **Appendix A – Full Business Case** to the report.

91. BOOTLE STRAND SHOPPING CENTRE – INTERIM UPDATE ON THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place in relation to Bootle Strand Shopping Centre. The Executive Director – Place referred to COVID-19 and the significant impact that the pandemic has had on the financial performance of shopping centres across the UK and the financial returns in year to landlords and owners. It was further reported that as a result, the financial position of Bootle Strand (The Strand) shopping centre, owned by Sefton Council, would be impacted in the current year, 2020/21.

The report highlighted that prior to the start of the pandemic, The Strand's operations and financial returns were performing as expected with a positive financial return that had assisted in allocating £1m to support the councils budget.

An update on the current financial position and potential financial scenarios for the financial year 2020-2021, in advance of the three-year Business Plan update (which will include outline strategy and short-term action plans) was detailed within the report.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maher referred to the economic pressure the Country's retail industry is suffering as a consequence of the pandemic and emphasised the importance of developing the vision and strategy for the Bootle Strand Shopping Centre.

Decision Made:

That the content of the report, and the factors that could influence and impact upon the financial returns to the Council from The Strand, and the action plans proposed to manage and mitigate those, be noted.

Reasons for the Decision:

The council's objectives for the acquisition of The Strand in 2017 were to ensure that it was supported to continue its role in the local community, as a key asset at the heart of Bootle critical to the town's physical, economic and social regeneration.

Since the start of the spread of COVID-19 in the UK in March 2020, the regular weekly and monthly monitoring of the operations of The Strand have indicated increasingly severe impacts of the pandemic and associated government restrictions on the operations of and financial returns from The Strand. Despite continued uncertainty, this report provides an update on impacts and potential scenarios for the current financial year.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Continue as-is - this was discounted as it would have resulted in more severe impacts than implementing the proposed Action Plan.

Publish a three-year Business Plan now – this was discounted due to continued uncertainty on the economic and regulatory impacts of the pandemic and governmental and sectoral response, and continued impacts on The Strand.

92. CULTURE - BOROUGH OF CULTURE 2020, LEGACY AND STRATEGY

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place that provided an update on Sefton’s programme for the Liverpool City Region’s Borough of Culture 2020, including its outcomes and legacy, and sought approval for the procurement of a provider to support with development of a Culture Strategy for the Borough of Sefton for 2021 and beyond.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, Councillor Hardy extended her appreciation to Members, Officers, Partners and all those who took part in ensuring that the Borough of Culture 2020 programme was a success.

Councillor Hardy reflected on the year and referred to the Constellations event at Crosby Marina, a three-day event that had brought thousands of residents and visitors together and illustrated the demand of such events in the future. The Nightingale’s song was also highlighted as an unforgettable moment whereby a spectacular show of illumines to portray the history of the Borough on three civic buildings throughout the Borough over three nights was shown.

Councillor Hardy also referred to the Sefton Time Capsule as a historical moment that would provide future generations with an understanding of Sefton’s Cultural heritages and give an insight of how Covid and the pandemic had affected Sefton and its Communities.

Councillor Hardy emphasised the importance of a Culture Strategy for Sefton and looked forward to progressing that work in the future.

Decision Made: That:

- (1) the outputs and outcomes of the Borough of Culture 2020 programme, be noted;

- (2) the development and implementation of a Culture Strategy, in collaboration with key stakeholders across the borough, for 2021 and beyond, be approved; and
- (3) the procurement of a provider to lead the Culture Strategy development process, to be progressed in line with contract procedure rules, led by the Communities service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, be approved.

Reasons for the Decisions:

A Culture Strategy is proposed for progression in collaboration with stakeholders across the borough, in order to sustain momentum built by the programme and by other organisations working effectively in this area across Sefton. This will also help to maximise the impact of current cultural activity across the borough, add value to existing cultural organisations and their activity, alongside showcasing Sefton as a cultural leader within the Liverpool City Region.

The strategy development process would be led by the Communities service, with input from service areas across the organisation and from external stakeholders and partners. Oversight will be from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The alternative of not developing a Culture Strategy is rejected. Although this would enable the allocation of the remaining £10,000 of funding to other culture-related activity, the lack of a strategy will limit the legacy of the programme and negate the impact and momentum that the Borough of Culture programme has helped to build.

93. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY UPDATE 2020

Decision Made:

That the item be withdrawn from the Agenda.

94. DIGITAL STRATEGY

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services in relation to the Digital Strategy 2021 – 2023.

Decision Made:

That the Digital Strategy 2021 – 2023 be approved.

Reasons for the Decision:

To ensure that the priorities of ICT service delivery and wider digital initiatives are aligned to the delivery of Sefton's 2030 vision and clearly articulated to residents of the Borough.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

95. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2020/21 TO 2023/24 AND FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE 2020 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2020/21 INCLUDING THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE 2020/21 BUDGET - FEBRUARY UPDATE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources and Customer Services and were advised of:

- (1) the current estimated financial impact of COVID-19 on the 2020/21 Budget;
- (2) the current forecast revenue outturn position for the Council for 2020/21;
- (3) the current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2020/21; and
- (4) the monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of December 2020:
 - the forecast expenditure to year end;
 - variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members;
 - updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects are also presented for approval.

Decisions Made: That:

- (A) in respect of the Revenue Budget:
 - (1) the current estimated impact of COVID-19 on the 2020/21 Budget together with the key issues that will influence the final position, be noted;

- (2) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2020/21 revenue budget and the material variations that are to be expected to the current estimates contained in this report be recognised, and it be agreed subsequent reports provide updates and where appropriate remedial actions plans as appropriate;
 - (3) the current forecast revenue outturn position for 2020/21, be noted;
 - (4) it be acknowledged that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved;
 - (5) the Government Rapid Testing Fund grant that has been received to support Lateral Flow Device testing at care homes and which will be distributed in accordance with central government guidance, be noted;
 - (6) that decisions on the use of 20% of the Rapid Testing Fund be delegated to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing, be approved;
 - (7) the Council's successful bid for £0.500m from the Community Champions Fund to enable the Council and VCF sector to support people shown to be most at risk from COVID-19 to follow safer behaviours and reduce the impact of the virus on themselves and those around them, be noted; and
 - (8) the transfer of £0.500m from the Redundancy Reserve to the Transforming Sefton Reserve in order to fund the Cost of Change budget. This transfer has been approved by the Section 151 officer in consultation with the Chief Executive in line with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, be noted.
- (B) in respect of the Capital Programme:
- (1) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 6.1.1) be noted;
 - (2) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 December 2020 of £13.466m (paragraph 6.2.1) with the latest full year forecast of £29.713m (paragraph 6.3.1) be noted;
 - (3) the explanations of variances to project budgets (paragraph 6.2.3) be noted;
 - (4) approval of a supplementary capital estimate for £0.155m for phase one of the scheme at Crosby Marine Lake (paragraph 6.4) be recommended to Council, be approved;

- (5) approval of a supplementary capital estimate for £0.250m for Litherland Sports Park Improvements (paragraph 6.5) be recommended to Council, be approved;
- (6) approval of a supplementary capital estimate for £0.164m for Bootle Golf Driving Range (paragraph 6.6) be recommended to Council, be approved, be approved; and
- (7) the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services will manage capital resources to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council (paragraph 6.7.3), be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the forecast outturn position for the 2020/21 Revenue Budget as at the end of December 2020, including delivery of a remedial action plan, and to provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2019/20 and agreed allocations for future years.

To progress any changes that are required in order to maintain a relevant and accurate budget profile necessary for effective monitoring of the Capital Programme.

To approve any updates to funding resources so that they can be applied to capital schemes in the delivery of the Council's overall capital strategy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None