

Overview
& Scrutiny



MEETING: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES)

DATE: Tuesday 12th January, 2021

TIME: 6.30 pm

VENUE: Remote meeting

Member

Councillor
Councillor Bradshaw (Chair)
Councillor Byrom (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Brodie - Browne
Councillor Brough
Councillor Doyle
Councillor Grace
Councillor Killen
Councillor Lewis
Councillor McCann
Councillor McKinley

Substitute

Councillor
Councillor McGinnity
Councillor Murphy
Councillor Sathiy
Councillor Jones
Councillor Myers
Councillor Roche
Councillor Roscoe
Councillor Shaw
Councillor Bennett
Councillor Thomas

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Paul Fraser
Senior Democratic Services Officer
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If you have any special needs that may require arrangements to facilitate your attendance at this meeting, please contact the Committee Officer named above, who will endeavour to assist.

We endeavour to provide a reasonable number of full agendas, including reports at the meeting. If you wish to ensure that you have a copy to refer to at the meeting, please can you print off your own copy of the agenda pack prior to the meeting.

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AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are requested at a meeting where a disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest arises, which is not already included in their Register of Members' Interests, to declare any interests that relate to an item on the agenda.

Where a Member discloses a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, he/she must withdraw from the meeting room by switching their camera and microphone off during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest, except where he/she is permitted to remain as a result of a grant of a dispensation.

Where a Member discloses a personal interest he/she must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or staff member representing the Monitoring Officer to determine whether the Member should withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest or whether the Member can remain in the meeting or remain in the meeting and vote on the relevant decision.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 16)

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2020

4. Public Health Annual Report on Air Quality (Pages 17 - 24)

Report of the Head of Health and Wellbeing

5. Air Quality and Clean Air Zone Update (Pages 25 - 40)

Report of the Head of Highways and Public Protection

6. Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Council Tax Base 2021/22 (Pages 41 - 58)

Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services

7. 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 - December Update (Pages 59 - 80)

Report of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources and Customer Services submitted to Cabinet on 3 December

2020

- 8. Executive/Scrutiny Protocol** (Pages 81 - 96)
Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer
- 9. Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group - Update** (Pages 97 - 98)
Briefing Note of the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services
- 10. Work Programme 2020/21, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan** (Pages 99 - 126)
Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer
- 11. Cabinet Member Report - October 2020 to December 2020** (Pages 127 - 142)
Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES)

REMOTE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 20TH OCTOBER, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Bradshaw (in the Chair)
Councillor Byrom (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Brough, Doyle, Grace, Killen, Lewis,
McCann and McKinley

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lappin

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September, 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

9. SURPLUS COUNCIL OWNED LAND/ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee received a presentation from Dominic Ellis, Assets and Property Manager on Sefton's Surplus Council Owned Land/Asset Management Strategy.

Mr. Ellis explained why the management of the Council's asset base was important; where the Council was at currently regarding its policies and activity; how this aligned with the Council's Framework for Change programme; what the next 2-3 years may look like; and how Members would be engaged in the process. Details were provided on the following:

- In respect of the Council's asset base, aside from Staff, this was the Council's next biggest resource and therefore a robust strategic approach was required to ensure assets were maximised and informed decisions could be made;
- The Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy were updated to provide a strategic framework for decisions; were aligned with the Framework for Change and the new capital strategy that was required; that documents went through the

Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH OCTOBER, 2020

- Council's formal governance process including Cabinet and Council; and that an annual review was conducted;
- The retention of assets within the Strategy provided a strategic landholding in key locations in the borough; and value for money (in respect of their current or future investment, capital value, revenue generation and/or ability to influence regeneration);
- How the Strategy supported the Framework for Change via Asset Maximisation; Partnering Opportunities; Agile working; Alignment with ICT / Digital Strategy; Key enabler to PSR projects and reform for service delivery; Strategic Investment; and Key enabler - direct contributor to growth programme
- What the next 2 to 3 years would look like including office accommodation and making most of assets such as Magdalen House; the Locality Model; informing direction for the Growth Programme; a systematic review of asset base - top 200; and work in progress and what would inform officer and Member decision making;
- Phase 1 of the Asset Disposal Policy in relation to the 15 sites approved by Cabinet in January 2020;
- Member engagement in the decision-making processes and the Constitutional and legislative rules that provided the framework within which the Council worked

A Member of the Committee asked a question about significant sites, such as the Toad Hall site in Ainsdale, remaining derelict for a number of years; and how the Council was prioritising the disposal of such sites.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. Ellis be thanked for his informative presentation.

10. CLIMATE EMERGENCY PROGRESS REPORT

Further to Minute No. 48 of 3 March 2020, the Committee received a presentation from Stephanie Jukes, the Section Manager Energy and Environmental Management, Corporate Resources; and Julia Thorpe, Project Officer – Climate and Environment, reporting on Climate Emergency progress by the Council. The presentation outlined the following:

- Purpose of the presentation
- Background – Climate Emergency
- Carbon footprint for Sefton
- Strategy and Implementation Plan
- Implementation Plan - Phase 1
- Covid-19 – how the lockdown has changed air pollution levels
- Green recovery
- How will progress be monitored?
- Communications Plan

Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH
OCTOBER, 2020

- Climate Assembly UK
- Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions
- Summary and next steps
- Contact details

Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- The drop-in energy consumption in Council offices and other buildings such as leisure centres because staff were working from home
- How the Green Homes Grant scheme (a scheme to install energy efficient improvements to homes and which could be accessed by both homeowners and landlords) operated in Sefton
- The operation of Sefton's Affordable Warmth scheme
- The effect of climate change in Sefton and its impacts on surface water inundation
- Sefton Surface Water Management Plan
- Alternative domestic fuel sources to be used post 2025 when all new homes constructed will not be fitted with gas boilers
- Sefton's declaration on Climate Emergency, agreed in July 2019, set out a commitment to achieve 100% clean energy by 2030. Clarification was sought and given that nuclear energy would not form part of this commitment

RESOLVED:

That Ms. Jukes and Ms. Thorpe be thanked for their informative presentation.

11. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Committee received a presentation from Elena Lloyd, Corporate Communications Manager, on the use of social media in the Council's response to Covid-19.

Ms. Lloyd detailed:

- That at the start of the pandemic a Communications Cell was established chaired by Head of Strategic Support and with herself as vice-chair
- Some of the main themes to the communications activity to date which included closure of services and buildings, and subsequent re-openings, #StayHomeSaveLives, #SeftonInMind, Wish You Weren't Here, Public Health messages, social distancing, face coverings, etc, support for businesses (grants etc), opening of test centres across the borough, furlough information and benefits such

Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH OCTOBER, 2020

as council tax relief and the commemoration of victims and bereavement services

- Additional communications activity undertaken which included media interviews across a host of TV and radio stations and the production of video messages by senior officers of the authority
- that during the pandemic the use of social media and digital communications had increased significantly; that the Council had strived to tailor its messages for the right audience and the right platform and that it was rare to see a carbon copy of the same post/message across all 4 of the Council's main social media channels; and statistics were provided for social media activity since lockdown was enforced on 25th March 2020 in relation to Facebook, Instagram, Linked In and Twitter.

RESOLVED:

That Ms. Lloyd be thanked for her informative presentation.

12. "MANAGE MY REQUESTS" (ICASEWORK) SYSTEM – STATISTICAL UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Strategic Support that provided an update on the adoption of the "Manage my Requests" iCasework system (the system) for capturing, managing and reporting all customer complaints, representations and feedback across the Council including the number and nature of complaints by Service in the last 12-month period.

The report indicated that the system supported a 'digital by default' process, whereby all information requests and complaints were accepted, administered, responded to and archived electronically. Members of the public that did not have direct access to the internet could have their requests logged by proxy through the Contact Centre or at the One Stop Shops.

Paragraph 2 of the report provided statistical information on the numbers of complaints and inquiry management.

The report concluded that it was imperative that the system was maintained in a timely fashion to prevent drift and escalation and accordingly, the Strategic Support Service (Performance & Business Intelligence function) would continue to develop performance reporting to ensure that information and insight was shared with the Senior Leadership Board and Members.

RESOLVED:

That the report updating on the adoption of the "Manage my Requests" iCasework system be noted.

13. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2020/21 INCLUDING THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE 2020/21 BUDGET

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that updated on:

- (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 August 2020 in relation to:
 - 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.

A Member of the Committee asked a question concerning the Council's negotiations with Government, and collectively with the Liverpool City Region authorities, regarding the cost pressures associated with Covid-19 and the Liverpool City Region being made subject to Tier 3 restrictions.

RESOLVED: 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 noted, and approval be given for subsequent reports to provide updates and where appropriate remedial actions plans as appropriate;
 - (3) the current forecast revenue outturn position for 2020/21 be noted; and

Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH
OCTOBER, 2020

- (4) It be noted that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved; and
- (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 August 2020 of £5.417m (paragraph 6.2.1) with the latest full year forecast of £36.871m (paragraph 6.3.1) be noted;
 - (3) The explanations of variances to project budgets (paragraph 6.2.3) be noted;
 - (4) the proposal to upgrade Sefton's Community Equipment Store and replace the current vehicle fleet at a cost of £0.335m funded from the Disabled Facilities Grant (paragraph 6.4.2) be noted;
 - (5) the outcome of the approved procurement process for the replacement fleet for the Cleansing Service (section 6.5) be noted;
 - (6) the most favourable tenders received for the required Cleansing Service vehicles (section 6.5) be noted;
 - (7) It be noted that the Head of Highways and Public Protection and Chief Legal and Democratic Officer will enter into contracts with the successful tenderers for supply of the required Cleansing Service vehicles (section 6.5);
 - (8) the supplementary capital estimate of £0.610m in the 2020/21 programme for phase two of the Bootle Strategic Acquisitions scheme (paragraph 6.6.2) be noted;
 - (9) subject to approval by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority of a request for further funding for phase two of the Bootle Strategic Acquisitions scheme, the additional supplementary capital estimate of £0.040m in the 2020/21 programme (paragraph 6.6.3) be noted; and
 - (10) It be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services 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).

Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH
OCTOBER, 2020

14. CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY - 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK IF YOU ARE SCRUTINISING CLIMATE CHANGE

Further to Minute No. 6 (3) of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 8 September 2020 the Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that provided information contained in a document, produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), entitled "10 questions to ask if you are scrutinising climate change". A copy of the CfPS document was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report indicated that the CfPS document was part of the "10 questions" series, which set out key issues on which local scrutineers (councillors sitting on scrutiny committees and the officers who support them) could pose questions to those with decision-making responsibility; and the 10 questions in respect of scrutinising climate change were set out in the report.

This report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 8 September 2020 and it was resolved that:

- (1) the document entitled "10 questions to ask if you are scrutinising climate change", as produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, be noted;
- (2) the Member Reference Group for Climate Change be requested to take account of the 10 questions posed in the Centre for Public Scrutiny document as part of their work on climate change; and
- (3) a copy of the Centre for Public Scrutiny document be circulated to all Overview and Scrutiny Committee members for information.

The purpose of the report is to comply with (3) above.

RESOLVED:

That the Centre for Public Scrutiny document entitled "10 questions to ask if you are scrutinising climate change" be noted.

15. DRAFT EXECUTIVE/SCRUTINY PROTOCOL

Further to Minute No. 4 of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 8 September 2020 the Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking consideration of a draft Executive/Scrutiny Protocol. This draft Protocol was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report indicated that Cabinet, at its meeting held on 30 July 2020, considered a report that sought consultation on both the guidance

Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH OCTOBER, 2020

published by the CfPS and on Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in Sefton, in general, with a view to providing feedback to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, in due course; together with a proposal that the Management Board develop an Executive / Scrutiny protocol for Sefton.

Cabinet resolved that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be requested to develop an Executive / Scrutiny protocol for use in Sefton.

The report concluded that any comments made by this Committee would be considered by the Management Board and subsequently Cabinet at their meetings to be held on 10 November and 3 December 2020 respectively.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) that draft Executive/Scrutiny Protocol be endorsed; and
- (2) the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Cabinet be advised accordingly.

16. ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT – UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to Minute No. 34 of 14 January 2020 the Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that updated on the implementation of recommendations contained in the final report of the Ethical Business Practices Working Group that was approved by Council in February 2020.

A table attached to the report set out each recommendation and an accompanying update on the action taken to implement each recommendation.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report updating on the implementation of recommendations contained in the final report of the Ethical Business Practices Working Group be noted; and
- (2) a further update report be submitted in six months.

17. DIGITAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to Minute No. 11 of 10 September 2019 the Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer setting out progress made against each of the recommendations formulated by the Digital Inclusion Working Group and approved by Cabinet.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH OCTOBER, 2020

A table attached to the report set out each recommendation and an accompanying update on the action taken to implement each recommendation.

A Member of the Committee commented, regarding the Working Group's recommendations that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority:

- (a) Employment and Skills Board be requested to consider the development of a Digital Skills Passport Scheme; and
- (b) use the information generated by the Poverty Modelling and Digital Inclusion "Mosaic" data in order to identify need across Liverpool City Region, and target digital inclusion activities accordingly;

that he was concerned and disappointed that no progress had been made in respect of this and that the Policy Lead: Employment and Skills at the LCR simply advised that there was nothing further to update.

RESOLVED:

That the report setting out progress made against each of the recommendations formulated by the Digital Inclusion Working Group and approved by Cabinet be noted.

18. MEMBERS' WELFARE REFORM REFERENCE GROUP - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 22 of its meeting held on 22 October 2019 the Committee considered an update of the Head of Health and Wellbeing and Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services on the operation of the Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group.

The update provided information on the purpose of the Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty (WRAP) Cabinet Member Reference Group and in particular on activities associated with:

- Community Resilience and Covid-19 Response Update
- Food Programme 2020
- Universal Credit
- ELAS update summary performance data for the period 1 April 2020 – 30 August 2020.

Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services presented the update.

Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH OCTOBER, 2020

Members of the Committee asked questions/made comments on the following issues:

- The availability of statistics to show how many of the 34,900 employments furloughed in Sefton had returned to work
- The Government's Job Support Scheme, which will commence on 1 November 2020 and run for 6 months, and its implications for Sefton residents; and the anticipated increase in demand for Sefton's Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme and applications for Universal Credit

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update on the operation of the Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group be noted; and
- (2) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her update.

19. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21, SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS AND KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for 2020/21, the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by a Working Group(s) appointed by the Committee; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and providing an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and
- (2) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

20. CABINET MEMBER REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that included the most recent report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services presented her report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory,

Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 20TH
OCTOBER, 2020

Compliance and Corporate Services be noted; and

- (2) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	12 January 2021
Subject:	Public Health Annual Report on Air Quality		
Report of:	Director of Public Health	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Health and Wellbeing		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Public Health Annual Report 2018/19, which explored the issue of Air Quality in Sefton¹²³. The PHAR is the independent annual report of the Director of Public Health and is a statutory duty. The latest report for 2019/20 focuses on Health Inequality and the successful Well Sefton Programme.¹

Recommendation(s):

(1) Note and comment upon the update on the 2018/19 Public Health Annual Report on Air Quality

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The PHAR is the independent report of the Director of Public Health. Improving air quality is priority for Sefton Council and Sefton residents alike.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

Not applicable. The PHAR is a legal requirement. Communicating clearly about air quality and the steps being taken to reduce air pollution in Sefton is an important aspect of our work on this issue.

¹ Video links on Sefton Council Website: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/PHAR>

² Fact-file: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/2038c29f-1cd5-4dd2-ae66-6f7e4915a88b>

³ Video-link on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mo78NNplvs8&feature=youtu.be>

Agenda Item 4

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no additional revenue costs identified within this report.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no additional capital costs identified within this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): This report was financed from within existing resource. This report has no direct implications for resourcing.
Legal Implications: The Public Health Annual Report is a statutory duty upon Directors of Public Health
Equality Implications: There are no direct equality implications. The report was published in an animated format to maximise accessibility. This report explains the impact of air pollution on social inequalities in health.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The information in this report is still relevant and current to this aim, The report uses evidence-based information to explain how air pollution can cause health problems, who is most at risk (older people, those with chronic health conditions, babies and children) and actions which improve air quality and reduce exposure.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: It is anticipated that this report has continuing value to support and enable community engagement and action on air quality, including behaviour change, and community-led initiatives.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable
Place – leadership and influencer:

The report sets out clear priorities that the Council will continue to pursue, and also revisits a set of supportive 'calls to action' for key stakeholders including schools, the NHS, other organisations and businesses and the Voluntary and Community Sector.
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Not applicable
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener: This report gives a clear endorsement of the value Sefton Council places on protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment. Insights from Sefton's experience of the Coronavirus pandemic and its impact on air quality and health inequality underline the direct link between healthy places and healthy people.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD 6250/21) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD 4451/21) have been consulted and comments are incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

To note, this report is presented for information. Decision process is not applicable.

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report.

Agenda Item 4

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 Overview

The 2018/19 Public Health Annual Report took an in-depth look at the largest environmental risk to population health in the UK, air pollution. The animated film and more detailed fact-file included a range of information, including:

- Data on the pattern of health conditions where air pollution is a known cause, or can make a health problem worse;
- Facts about what air pollution is, where it comes from, and where we encounter it in day to day life
- Information about how air quality in Sefton compares to other parts of the UK, and how levels of air pollution vary across the borough and from place to place
- Practical advice about reducing the contributions we each make to the problem of air pollution and tips for limiting exposure to air pollution
- An update on Sefton Council's Air Quality Goals, and
- Calls to Action aimed at other organisations and the wider community, accompanied by evidence-based guidance and information resources

1.2 Air quality and health in Sefton

Health statistics, which describe the contribution air pollution makes to death and disease from significantly preventable causes, e.g. heart and lung disease and cancer, has been updated since the annual report was published⁴. Air pollution was the 12th highest modifiable risk to health in 2017 and has maintained this ranking in 2019. Compared to high impact 'behavioural' risks the contribution to poor health from air pollution is around one fifth of that from obesity and one tenth the harm due to smoking.

Overall, 4.3% of known, modifiable risk for mortality is attributed to air pollution in Sefton.⁵ This does not mean that 1 in 25 deaths is due to air pollution. In the North West, the latest figures for 2018 show that attributable mortality has increased slightly, ranging from 5.1% in Liverpool to 3.2% in Cumbria. This a reminder that as the health gains from the continuing decline in smoking stack up, the issue of air quality, which affects everyone to some extent must remain a priority.

1.3 Air quality and COVID-19

⁴ <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare/>

⁵

https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/air%20pollution#page/3/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000002/ati/302/are/E08000014/iid/30101/age/230/sex/4/cid/4/page-options/ovw-do-0_car-do-0

The global and local impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has drawn public and scientific interest back to the contribution patterns of air pollution make to health inequality. In particular,

- We already know that chronic exposure to fine particulate matter is one of several causes of long-term conditions, that are leading causes of death and premature mortality, including blood vessel disease, affecting the lungs, heart and brain, and lung cancer.
- Early⁶ and subsequent^{7,8} research into risk factors for severe COVID-19 disease and death has highlighted increased risk with older age, noticeable from age 50, and added risk from having one or more of these chronic conditions. The social gradient in COVID-19 mortality (lowest in populations with the most economic, social and environmental protections, highest in populations with the least) is slightly steeper than for other causes of death.
- A short-lived drop in nitrogen dioxide emissions from transport during the first lockdown, saw people investing time and money in walking and cycling
- But this was accompanied by advice to avoid public transport where possible. The rise in home-working could not prevent a rebound in private vehicle use, whilst the increase in online shopping is adding to local delivery traffic on our streets
- Dramatic images of clearing skies in the most heavily polluted cities in the world were accompanied by satellite images capturing the international flow of air pollution, a reminder that not all air pollution is caused by local activity⁹

2. Progress

In the 2018/19 PHAR on Air Quality we set out some goals to capture different aspects of Sefton Council's ongoing work to support emissions reduction and better air quality in Sefton.

The Coronavirus pandemic has meant that some areas have progressed less than others in 2020. But we know from public engagement before and during the development of the PHAR report that these are still important priorities and will continue to shape the work of Public and Environmental Health and Highways teams, and others brought together through the Cabinet Member Reference Group on Air Quality.

2.1 Our goals

⁶ [Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and socioeconomic deprivation - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/statistics/publications/health-and-social-care/deaths-involving-covid-19-by-local-area-and-socioeconomic-deprivation)

⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/945839/S0948_CO-CIN_2nd_Wave.pdf

⁸ <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/build-back-fairer-the-covid-19-marmot-review>

⁹ View satellite imaging of changes in surface air pollution across Europe during early lockdown from March to mid-April here: <https://atmosphere.copernicus.eu/european-air-quality-information-support-covid-19-crisis>

Agenda Item 4

- Use the latest information on sources of air pollution in hotspot areas, apply the latest guidance, and work with national agencies and local partners to define options for improving air quality more quickly in Sefton.
 - **Update:** Unlike in many areas, work has continued to develop the outline business case to establish options for a Clean Air Zone in Sefton
- Continue to involve communities and work on our communications, using your feedback to build a better website and look at different ways to keep you informed about air quality
 - **Updates:** Further work in this area¹⁰ is scheduled for the new year, and will draw upon content in the PHAR, which was developed based on questions raised by residents and their comments about the type and style of information they want to see.
 - Areas of cross-over advice from new research on indoor air pollution and the role of ventilation in limiting spread of Coronavirus will be discussed and developed at the Joint Communications Cell.
- Start work on a new project enabling residents to reduce their exposure to air pollution at home
 - **Updates:** comprehensive 18-month project on Domestic Solid Fuel Burning, including wood-burning stoves, funded from DEFRA's Air Quality Grant scheme is progressing well.
 - New webpages and leaflets provide clear information for public and professionals, covering health issues linked to particulate matter, the law on domestic burning, practical advice to lower health risks and emissions and help with fuel poverty. Work in the new year will concentrate on further engagement and promotion of these new resources.¹¹
- Build on our existing work with schools, starting with activities on Clean Air Day
 - **Update:** The Clean Air Crew online educational tool for primary age pupils has undergone further improvements and a DEFRA Air Quality Grant bid and has been submitted by the Environmental Health Pollution and Sustainability Teams. This aims to expand the reach and resources available for the Clean Air Crew teaching offer and establish a Schools Air Quality monitoring programme
- Support opportunities for citizen-led science and action to help tackle air pollution, such as community planting and air monitoring projects
 - **Updates:** There are tie-ins to this goal from the work in schools and the involvement of allotment holders in the Domestic Solid Fuel Project.

¹⁰ <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/environmental-protection/air-quality/>

¹¹ <https://smokecontrolsefton.co.uk/about/>

- Other opportunities may come from the recent re-establishment of collaborative research activity in this area under the Applied Research Collaborative - North West Coast

In recognition of the many sources of air pollution, and the opportunities other sectors and organisations have to bring about change, the report set out four calls to action:

2.2. Our Calls to Action

- We are calling on our NHS partners to
 - Use their Sustainable Development Management Plans to deliver on the air quality goals in the NHS Long Term Plan, and
 - Share how they are supporting patients and staff to reduce the health impacts of air pollution
- We're asking Schools across Sefton - our pupils and parents to tell us their ideas to promote cleaner air,
 - Will you adopt an air pollution monitor? Host an anti-idling campaign? Develop a fresh approach to the 'school run'? Or do a project on indoor air pollution? The Clean Air Crew website is full of inspiration
- Our challenge to industry, other businesses and organisations is to
 - Make one big change this year! Whether that's a brand new Clean Air Strategy, an attractive active travel policy or introducing a fleet recognition scheme for drivers
- And to our community, voluntary and faith sector, please help by bringing your creative energy and ideas to share the messages from this report far and wide:
 - Share the information and advice in the Let's Make Change Happen Section
 - Be the catalyst for a new Citizen Science idea or a novel approach to behaviour change
 - Or take a moment to report a smoky lorry or bus
<https://www.gov.uk/report-smoky-vehicle>

In these areas of collaborative, cross-sector working, key and upcoming developments include:

- **Updates:** Sefton CCGs' new 5-year plan for NHS services Sefton2gether 2020¹² which gives a strong commitment to 'make a full contribution to Sefton's Health & Wellbeing Strategy e.g. wider determinants like air pollution'
- Engagement with joint pilot schemes supported via the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

¹² <https://www.southseftonccg.nhs.uk/media/4179/sefton2gether-final-print-version-2020.pdf>

Agenda Item 4

- Prominent examples of a range of good practice in the final LCR Air Quality Action Plan 2020¹³
- The final Port of Liverpool Air Quality Strategy will mark another positive development

¹³ <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA-AIR-QUALITY-ACTION-PLAN-2020.pdf>

Agenda Item 5

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	12 th January 2021
Subject:	Air Quality and Clean Air Zone update		
Report of:	Head of Highways and Public Protection	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To provide an update regarding air quality management and the ongoing clean air zone work.

Recommendation(s):

The report be noted

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To update members on current Air Quality activities and the ongoing work taking place on the development of an Outline Business Case (OBC) for a Sefton Based Clean Air Zone (CAZ)

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs –

N/A - this report is an update only.

(B) Capital Costs-None

N/A

Agenda Item 5

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
There are no resource implications currently
Legal Implications:
There are no legal implications
Equality Implications:
There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Yes, poor air quality can have a major impact on health particularly those already vulnerable e.g. young children, the elderly and those with existing respiratory problems. Measures being implemented to improve air quality therefore contribute to this core purpose
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Yes, interventions to improve air quality taken by the Local Authority and its partners, including the community demonstrates that mitigation against poor air quality is possible and the interventions actively support making better choices and behavioural change.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Local Air Quality Management is a statutory responsibility for the Council
Place – leadership and influencer: The management and improvement of air quality is a key aspect of place leadership and creating cleaner, greener and healthier places
Drivers of change and reform: Clean Air Zones are important tools for improving vehicle fleets.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: There is an established link between poor air quality, poor health, the ability to work/remain economically active and productivity. Improving air quality can therefore contribute to improved productivity and economic prosperity.
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener-Yes, poor air quality is an indication of environmental damage and any mitigation measures reduce the impact of this damage.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD6249/20) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4450/20.) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

‘not applicable’

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

Contact Officer:	Greg Martin
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2098
Email Address:	greg.martin@sefton.gov.uk

Background

- Evidence has shown that certain atmospheric pollutants are linked to poor health. The Environment Act 1995 places a **statutory duty** on all Local Authorities to review and assess air quality in their areas at regular intervals. The Air Quality Regulations made under the Act specify the pollutants that must be considered and sets standards and objectives for each of the pollutants, which are referred to as National Air Quality Standard (NAQS) Objectives. These are detailed below with the 2 pollutants still of concern shown in red text.

The pollutants that have to be considered are:

Pollutant	Description	National Air Quality Standard Objective (NAQS)
Benzene	An organic chemical compound emitted by some industrial processes and a constituent of petrol	5 µg/m³ (Annual Mean)
1,3 Butadiene	A Hydrocarbon based gas released from car exhausts	2.25µg/m ³ (Annual Mean)
Carbon Monoxide	An odourless colourless gas produced by incomplete combustion	10mg/m³ (8 hour mean)
Lead	A heavy metal emitted by certain industrial processes	0.25µg/m³ (Annual Mean)
Nitrogen Dioxide	A gas produced by internal combustion engines	200µg/m³ (1hr mean) not to exceeded more than 18 times per annum 40µg/m³ (Annual mean)

Agenda Item 5

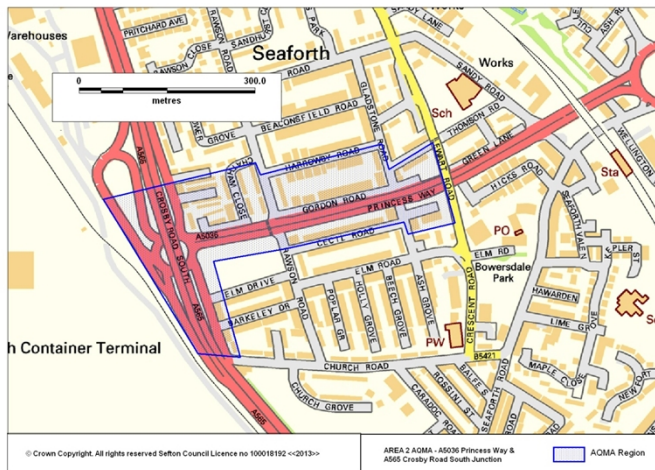
Particulate Matter PM ₁₀	Particulates less than 10µm in diameter produced by industry and road traffic.	50µg/m³ (24hr mean) not to be exceeded more than 35 times per annum 40µg/m³ (Annual mean)
Sulphur dioxide	A gas which can be produced when burning fossil fuel and or heavy fuel oil	266µg/m³ (15 min mean) Not to be exceeded more than 35 times a year 350µg/m³ (1hr mean) Not to be exceeded more than 24 times per year 125µg/m³ (24hr mean) Not to be exceeded more than 3 times a year

2. Sefton has undertaken several Review and Assessments since the Environment Act placed this duty on Local Authorities. As part of these previous assessments it has been determined that for the following pollutants, Benzene, 1,3 Butadiene, Carbon Monoxide, Lead and Sulphur Dioxide, the NAQS objectives will **not** be exceeded in Sefton and as such, no AQMAs have been declared for these pollutants. These pollutants will however be kept under regular review as part of the Review and Assessment process.
3. The ongoing review and assessment process has confirmed that in the majority of Sefton, Air Quality is of a good standard and complies with the National Air Quality Standard Objectives given above. There are however areas in the South of the Borough, where due to high levels of traffic, levels of NO₂ are above or close to the national standard.

Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)

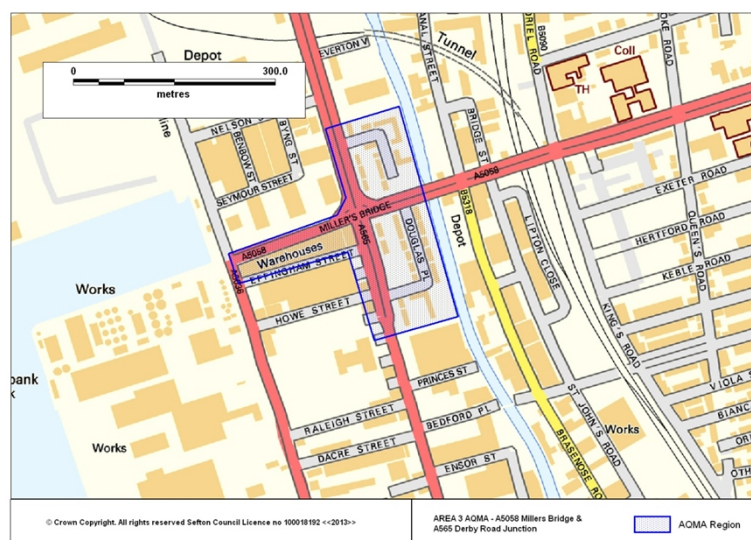
4. If it has been identified that levels of air pollution may exceed the NAQS an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has to be declared.
5. 4 localised areas in South Sefton have been identified where levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) have exceeded or are close to the annual average standard of 40 µg/m³. AQMA's have been declared in these locations and are discussed in more detail below.

AQMA 2-Princess Way, Seaforth.



6. AQMA 2 - Princess Way was identified for NO₂ exceedances. The main source of NO₂ in this AQMA is related to HGV traffic. The deep-water berth at the Port of Liverpool is now complete and HGV traffic is predicted to increase as a result. A major highways improvement intervention is currently being considered by Highways England to accommodate the increase in road traffic as a result of the port expansion.
7. A number of air quality actions have been implemented by Sefton to reduce levels of NO₂ in this area. These include assisting in the development of port booking systems, participation in the ECOstars fleet recognition scheme and the redesigned 'hamburger' roundabout improvements.
8. It is recognised, however, that dealing with road traffic related emissions in this area with the potential increase in HGV port traffic is extremely challenging and alternative/innovative measures need to be considered.

AQMA 3 Millers Bridge



Agenda Item 5

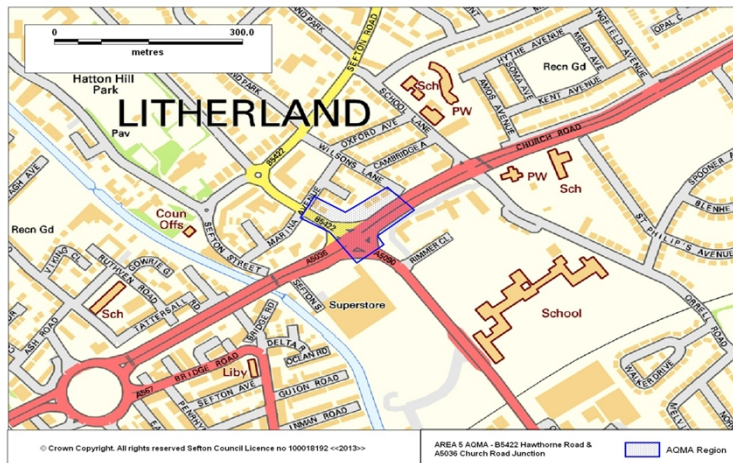
9. AQMA 3 was identified for exceedances of the PM₁₀ and NO₂ NAQS objectives. The main contributors to the emissions in this area were found to be HGVs and industrial processes on the dock estate.
10. A number of successful measures have been implemented in this area as part of the action plan to reduce emissions. Intensive road and footpath cleaning has been undertaken previously to reduce the amount of particulates being re-suspended, joint work the Environment Agency to ensure industrial emissions are monitored and controlled effectively in this area is ongoing, a HGV hurry call system has also been introduced which gives priority to HGV's heading up Millers Bridge, reducing the need for stopping at the traffic lights thus reducing emissions. The major junction has also recently been redesigned to improve traffic flow and reduce waiting times at the traffic lights.
11. As a result of these measures the NAQS objective for PM₁₀ has consistently been met for the last 8 years. However, this will be kept under review as the port expands in the future.
12. With regard to NO₂ the results of monitoring show some exceedances of the annual NAQS objective in this AQMA. Dealing with NO₂ exceedances in this area is again challenging and alternative measures are under consideration.

AQMA 4 Crosby Road North, South Road Waterloo



13. AQMA 4 was identified for exceedances of the NO₂ NAQS objective. As part the Action Plan to address this exceedance, improvements to the South Road and Haigh Road junction were agreed to improve traffic flow. The junction improvement works have now been completed and the effectiveness of these in terms of reducing levels of NO₂ in the AQMA is currently being monitored using diffusion tubes. The latest results show that levels of NO₂ in the AQMA have now reduced to below the national limit. Further monitoring will be undertaken to ensure consistent compliance with the NAQS before the decision to revoke this AQMA is made.

AQMA 5 Hawthorne Road, Church Road Junction Litherland



14. AQMA 5 was identified for NO₂ NAQS objective exceedances. The main source of the emissions at this location is road traffic. In 2017, 2018 and 2019 this AQMA showed compliance with the annual NAQS objective for NO₂. However as with AQMA 2, this site may be affected by the increased emissions due to HGV traffic as a result of the port expansion and will remain in place

Monitoring

Real Time Automatic Monitoring Stations

15. As in previous years Sefton undertakes extensive air pollution monitoring using both real time monitoring systems and diffusion tubes which provide average annual levels. The table below details the location of the automatic monitors and the pollutants monitored.

Table 1-location of Automatic Air Quality Monitors

Monitor Location	Justification for Location	Pollutants Monitored
Waterloo Primary School, Crosby Road North, Waterloo.	Within previous AQMA1 Crosby Road North. Proximity to Road/Sensitive Receptor	PM ₁₀ NO ₂
Hawthorne Road opposite KFC, Litherland	Within AQMA 5 Church Road Junction- Proximity to Road Junction/Sensitive Receptor	NO ₂ , PM ₁₀
Lathom Close, Seaforth	Within AQMA 2. Proximity to Road/Docks/Sensitive Receptor	PM ₁₀ NO ₂
Millers Bridge, Bootle	Within AQMA 3. Proximity to Road Junction/ Docks and Sensitive Receptor.	PM ₁₀ PM _{2.5} NO ₂
A565, Crosby Road South previously located at St Joan of Arc School	Proximity to Road /Docks and Sensitive receptor.	PM ₁₀ NO ₂ SO ₂
Regent Road Crosby (installed summer 2020)	Background Particulate Levels in suburban area	PM ₁₀ PM _{2.5}

Agenda Item 5

16. Two additional dual particulate monitors measuring PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} have been recently purchased, one is located at Regent Road in Crosby to monitor background levels of particulate matter and one is to be installed at Princess Way to provide additional PM_{2.5} data at this location.

Diffusion Tubes

17. In addition to the real-time monitors, Sefton measures monthly NO₂ levels at approximately 100 sites across the Borough using diffusion tubes.

18. The diffusion tubes are located in areas that have already been identified as AQMA's or are located in areas, in close proximity to sensitive premises where additional data and monitoring is required into assess current/future NO₂ levels as part of the ongoing Review and Assessment process. The monthly results from these tubes are combined to enable comparison with the annual mean NAQS objective for NO₂.

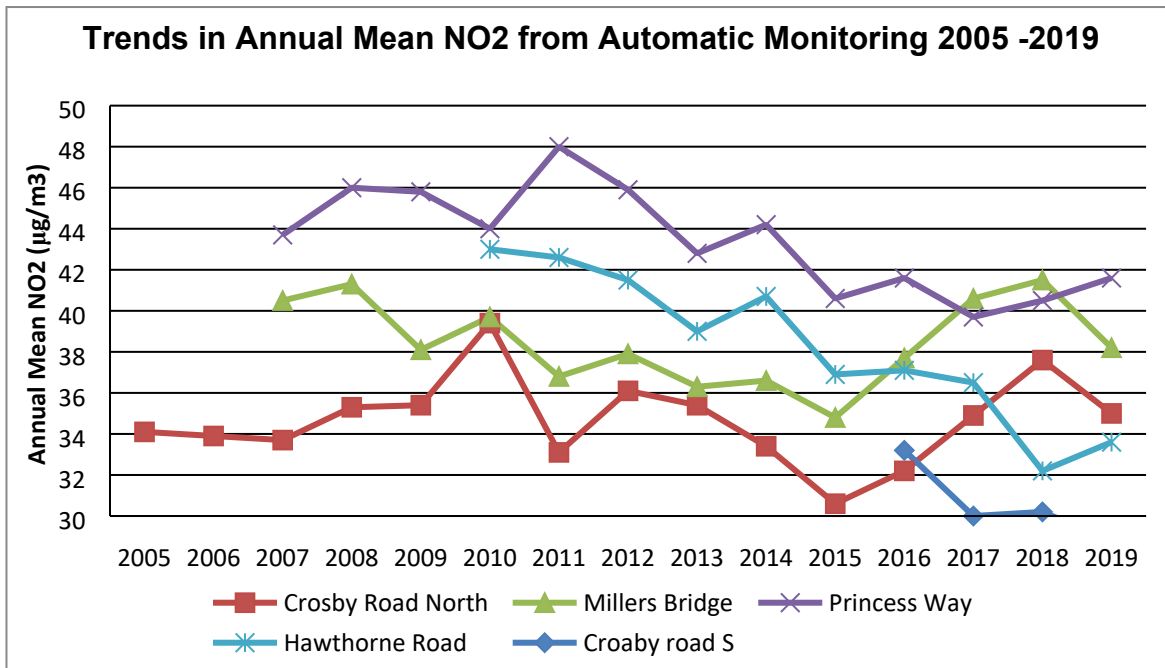
19. A number of sites have also been added recently to assess the impact the port expansion and subsequent highway improvement will have on NO₂ levels. The location of these is reviewed annually to ensure all areas of concern are monitored.

Diffusion Tube Monitoring Results

NO₂ Annual Mean 2012 - 2019 (limit 40 µg/m³)

Site	NO ₂ Annual Mean µg/m ³							
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Crosby Road North	36.1	35.4	33.4	30.6	32.2	34.9	37.6	35.0
Millers Bridge	37.9	36.3	36.6	34.8	37.7	40.6	41.5	38.2
Princess Way	45.9	42.8	44.2	40.6	41.6	39.7	40.5	41.6
Hawthorne Road	41.5	39.0	40.7	36.9	37.1	36.5	32.2	33.6
Crosby Road South				34.6	33.2	29.6	30.2	28.8

20. The table above shows the measured levels of NO₂ at each of the continuous monitoring sites since 2012. The national limit is 40 µg/m³ and whilst the monitors are not located exactly at the receptor location, they provide an accurate indicator of NO₂ levels in the locality.



21. The graph above shows the trends in Annual mean NO₂ levels between 2005 and 2019 at each of the continuous monitoring sites.
22. Princess Way monitor which is located within AQMA 2 showed levels in exceedance of the NO₂ annual mean objective of 40µg/m³ in 2019 This represents an increase in levels compared to 2017 and 2018.
23. Hawthorne Road monitor which is located within AQMA 5 showed a slight increase compared to 2018 however levels are still within the NAQS. Due to the port expansion this monitor is ideally placed to assess any future increases.
24. Monitoring in 2019 at Millers Bridge which is located within AQMA 3 has shown a slight reduction in NO₂ levels compared to 2018. Monitoring at this junction will continue
25. Trends at Crosby Road North automatic monitoring site continue to show compliance with the annual standard and levels have reduced since 2018.
26. Levels at Crosby Road South were well within the NAQS objective and remain fairly constant.

Agenda Item 5

Particulate Matter

PM₁₀ Annual Mean 2012-2019 (Limit 40 µg/m³)

Site	PM ₁₀ Annual Mean µg/m ³							
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Crosby Road North	25.4	28.3	23.6	23.7	17.0	21.1	19.9	26.3
Millers Bridge	26.1	28.1	28.8	28.7	25.4	23.9	20.1	17.9
Princess Way	24.9	26.5	26.5	26.7	23.8	23.1	22.6	17.3
Crosby Road South				25.3	22.4	19.5	23.7	N/A
Hawthorne Road						23.9	21.2	23.7

27. The table above shows the measured levels of PM₁₀ at each of the continuous monitoring sites since 2012. The national limit is 40 µg/m³ and whilst the monitors are not located exactly at the receptor locations, they provide an accurate indicator of PM₁₀ levels in the locality.

28. All areas are now consistently compliant with the PM₁₀ NAQS objective with annual levels well within the standard. The number of daily exceedances is also consistently below the standard of 35 exceedances per year. Monitoring of PM₁₀ will however continue to assess the impact the port expansion may have on particulate emissions.

PM_{2.5} Monitoring Millers Bridge

29. Although Sefton Council monitors PM₁₀ at a number of locations in the Borough, there is now clear evidence that even smaller particles with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5µm or less, known as PM_{2.5}, have a significant impact on human health. A new dual PM₁₀ / PM_{2.5} monitor was installed in July 2017 at the Millers Bridge monitoring site with data being used to provide accurate levels of PM_{2.5} in the area to assist in providing data for the Councils new role in reducing levels of PM_{2.5}. The table above shows the last 3 years results to be consistently below the current PM_{2.5} annual mean limit value of 25µg/m³.

Year	2017	2018	2019
PM ₁₀ Annual Mean µg/m ³	7.1	8.9	10.0

Diffusion Tube Monitoring Results

30. Nine non-automatic (passive) diffusion tube monitoring sites showed exceedance of the NO₂ annual mean objective in 2019 at the monitored location. These were within existing Air Quality Management Areas or areas under investigation and are shown in the table below

Site location	NO ₂ level at monitor µg/m ³	NO ₂ Level at receptor µg/m ³
Derby Road/Millers Bridge	51.7	47.5
Hawthorne Road	40.1	33.5
Hawthorne Road	41.7	30.1
Church Road	41.3	26.1
Hawthorne Road /Linacre Lane	44.8	34.9
Princess Way	41.4	36.6
Derby road	41.9	37.1
Derby road /Heman Street	48.0	37.3
A565/South Road	40.8	28.7

Summary of monitoring

31. Overall levels of NO₂ in the areas where monitoring takes place have not changed significantly since 2018. There remains a number of exceedances of the NAQS objective at the monitoring locations and whilst levels at the receptor (when corrected for fall off with distance) are generally within NAQS objectives, a number of receptor sites are very close to the national limit and there is ongoing concern that the increase in traffic associated with the port expansion will cause further exceedances.

Actions to Improve Air Quality

Preliminary CAZ Feasibility Study

32. Because there are still significant challenges ahead with regard to reducing levels of NO₂ in some of Sefton's AQMAs particularly those impacted by traffic entering and leaving the Port of Liverpool. Officers from Environmental Health, Public Health and Transport teams, overseen by the Air Quality Member Reference Group, commissioned environmental consultants AECOM to undertake a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) feasibility study, to assess the feasibility of implementing CAZs in Sefton to reduce traffic related emissions. A copy of the report (May 2019) can be found here <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1611489/Sefton-Clean-Air-Zone-Feasibility-Study.pdf>

33. AECOM's report concluded that given the current and projected make-up of the traffic in the four AQMA areas, a Charging CAZ could deliver more rapid improvements in NO₂ emissions than existing measures, taking account of forecast improvements in the emissions profile of the vehicles on Sefton's roads.

Agenda Item 5

The study predicted that in 2020 if no further improvement actions took place there would still be 70 NO₂ exceedances in the south of the Borough. The key study outcomes indicated the following:

- A CAZ would achieve reduced emissions within the defined zone.
- A CAZ B (HGVs, taxis, buses), including the junction of A5036/A565, would potentially achieve the most significant benefits.
- Further analysis would be necessary to identify the type and location of the CAZ.

CAZ Outline Business Case (OBC)

34. Following on from the Preliminary CAZ feasibility study Cabinet gave approval for Officers to progress the development of a detailed Outline Business Case (OBC) for the creation of a Sefton Based CAZ, in line with the approach recommended by DEFRA. AECOM were commissioned in May 2020 to undertake the additional air quality and transport modelling work needed and prepare a draft OBC in conjunction with Council officers.
35. The development of the OBC forms part of the Council's wider AQ programme overseen by the AQ Cabinet Member Reference Group.
36. A temporary CAZ Project Manager has been seconded into the Council on a part-time basis, since May 2020, to oversee and input into AECOM's work in conjunction with the CAZ Steering Group/Project Group, in addition to supporting wider tasks such as the Communication and Engagement strategy for Sefton's overarching Clean Air Plan

Outline Business Case – Progress and Actions – May-December 2020

37. The **aim** of Sefton's CAZ Outline Business Case is to Identify the best value CAZ option to meet the objectives set out by Cabinet.
38. Four key overarching strategic **Objectives** have been set for the OBC, as follows:
 - To improve air quality and achieve compliance with national standards in the shortest possible time in known hotspot areas i.e. within four AQMAs
 - To promote improved air quality in the wider area (outside AQMAs) through more rapid switch over to vehicles with minimal exhaust emissions
 - To reduce human exposure to air pollution and thus improve public health, particularly for areas with high deprivation
 - To reduce emissions relating to the A5036 for HGV vehicle travel, particularly around high-density residential areas.

Key OBC Outputs and Progress to Date:

39. The Outline Business Case process is a systematic approach. It establishes the case for change, evaluates affordability, and aims to identify a commercially viable option or options that offer best value for money and is practically deliverable. The Council is using the "5 Case" Business Case model, which is also the framework

being used in other local authority areas where a CAZ is being considered, as it enables effective risk management and strengthens rigour, transparency and objectivity in decision-making. Investment in this approach is commensurate with the magnitude of costs, benefits and risks that attend future decisions about a CAZ in Sefton.

40. We are currently testing four charging CAZ scenarios against a 'No-CAZ' (Baseline 2023) option to define a preferred/best-value option and this work is progressing well. For each CAZ option the scenario assessments will identify compliance/noncompliance of NO₂ levels and PM₁₀ levels at numerous receptor points across south Sefton in the assessment years.
41. Once all options testing has been completed an evidence-based OBC will be developed which will identify the preferred CAZ option for consideration by Members (guided by the detailed traffic and air quality modelling). The OBC will indicate the benefits the CAZ can bring in terms of improved air quality, thus resulting in the protection of public health and a reduction in inequalities i.e. the worst air quality is recorded in the most disadvantaged areas of Sefton where the AQMAs are defined.
42. The formal business case will include the development of a project plan, risk register, resource costings using recognised project management frameworks, and is aligned to an appropriate communications and engagement plan, as set out below. An outline scheme design will be provided for the preferred CAZ option and the outline scheme costs will be quantified.

Aligned Communication and Engagement Strategy

43. An appropriate Communication and Engagement Strategy has been developed to support the CAZ OBC process.
44. Internal communication and engagement focus on regular routine engagement with key internal stakeholders including
 - Informal Policy Cabinet
 - Executive Leadership Team (ELT)
 - Growth Board
 - Air Quality Member Reference Group
 - OSC (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)
45. Updates will also be provided, in due course, to the Strategic Capital Investment Group (SCIG) and to wider internal committees, groups and departments as appropriate.
46. External communication and engagement so far has focussed on priority external stakeholders. The strategy is split into 3 stages of Communication and Engagement, as follows:

Agenda Item 5

Phase 1 (Sept 2020 – March 2021) – will raise awareness and seek to gain support in principle for the Clean Air Plan. It will also explore the best way to engage stakeholders going forward;

Priority

- Highways England
- Liverpool City Council
- Peel Ports

Other:

Local authorities, Sefton Youth, Registered Providers, Sefton CVS, Taxi Provider Forum, Bus/Freight companies

Phase 2 (to be confirmed)– wider consultation on the OBC (above plus public, local businesses, taxi drivers, schools);

Phase 3 (to be confirmed) – communication on CAP decisions and any implications for key stakeholders (all of the above).

47. A dedicated Clean Air Plan page is currently being developed on the *YourSeftonYourSay* Platform. This will set the scene and raise general awareness of the project in the first instance.

Timescales / Programme

48. The current timeline for the OBC programme is as follows:

OBC Work Area	Expected completion date
Air Quality and traffic modelling work	Jan/Feb 2021
Define preferred option (Options Appraisal Report)	Feb 2021
Outline Design and Costing of Preferred Option	March/April 2021
OBC draft completion	May /June 2021
Internal review and presentation to Cabinet	June/July 2021

Additional Air Quality Improvement Actions/Developments

Intensive Road Washing (AQMA2, AQMA3, AQMA5)

49. Although there are currently no PM exceedances of the NAQS objectives within Sefton, visual inspections of road and pavement conditions within AQMA2, AQMA3 and AQMA5 showed large accumulations of debris and road grime. Following a previous successful intensive road washing exercise where levels of PM were actively reduced, preparation of a further project began in 2019. The project was planned to start following the completion of the Millers Bridge Junction improvement works, however this was only completed in spring this year and due to the Covid pandemic the project was put on hold. We are currently reviewing when the project can commence.

Schools Air Quality

50. Sefton Council continues to work closely with schools to ensure that its youngest residents are aware of both the causes and risks of air pollution and the steps they can take to avoid it. The 'Clean Air Crew' website continues to be developed with additional teaching resources and interactive learning opportunities for all schools to use. The site has been developed thanks to active engagement with schools and can be found at www.southportecocentre.com/cleanaircrew

Domestic Smoke Behaviour Change Project

51. Sefton is concerned that the increased use of domestic solid fuel is potentially adding to particulate matter levels in the Borough especially PM_{2.5}. Sefton, like all Local Authorities has new duties with regard to PM_{2.5} and the reduction of this particular airborne pollutant. Sefton successfully obtained a £100,000 grant from DEFRA to undertake a Solid Domestic Fuel behaviour change project which is currently ongoing with the primary aim to minimise the Particulate Matter (PM) contribution from domestic solid fuel use in Sefton. The project is employing a number of behaviour change methods and interventions aimed at engaging with householders, fuel suppliers, appliance suppliers and installers to promote best practice.

Conclusions

52. Air Quality in the majority of Sefton is within NAQS Objectives, however, the ongoing review and assessment has identified localised areas where NAQS Objectives will not be met and Action Plans are in place to work towards compliance in these areas. Action Plan measures have shown significant success and levels of pollution have reduced with levels of PM₁₀ at all monitoring locations below the NAQS objectives and resulted in the de-declaration of AQMA 1 near Waterloo primary school

53. There are however areas where there are major challenges to air quality as detailed within the report. Port expansion and the associated increase in HGVs may lead to an increase in emissions that will affect air quality in the AQMAs and surrounding areas around the A5036, A565 and A5058.

54. The development of the Outline Business Case for a Sefton based CAZ under the overarching Clean Air Plan will specifically address these concerns and further update reports will be provided in line with the communication and engagement strategy.

55. Officers will continue to develop and implement air quality improvement actions under the direction of the Air Quality Members Reference group with additional focus on holistic approaches and engagement with all key stakeholders.

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Agenda Item 6

Report to:	Cabinet Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) Council	Date of Meeting:	7 th January 2021 12 th January 2021 21 st January 2021
Subject:	Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Council Tax Base 2021/22		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide details of the review of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 and to recommend that there is no change to the scheme for 2021/22 for working age claimants.

The report also provides an updated Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish area for 2021/22.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet:

- (1) Note the contents of the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21;
- (2) Recommend to Council that there are no changes to the existing Scheme for 2021/22 for working age claimants; and
- (3) Recommend that Council approves the relevant Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish Area as set out in Annex A.

Agenda Item 6

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services):

(1) That the report be noted.

Council:

- (1) Notes the contents of the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21;
- (2) Approve that there are no changes to the existing Scheme for working age claimants for 2021/22; and
- (3) Approve the relevant 2021/22 Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish Area as set out in Annex A.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Each financial year, the Council must consider whether to revise or replace its local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council must approve and adopt the 2021/22 Council Tax Reduction Scheme by 11 March 2021, as set out in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2017.

The report provides an update on key aspects of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. After consideration of the factors outlined later in the report it is proposed that the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22 remains unchanged for working age claimants

Council Tax Base

In accordance with Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended, the Council is required to set a tax base for both Sefton Council and each Parish Area for 2021/22 before 31st January 2021.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme was last revised in 2018/19 following a public consultation process. The changes introduced then continue to address the Council's priorities to minimise the impact on vulnerable residents, by striking a balance between dealing with Council priorities. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation assess the impact of those changes to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. No alternative options have been considered for 2021/22.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22

There would be no additional revenue implications as a result of a decision to retain the current scheme. The cost of the current council tax reduction scheme discounts has been reflected in the council tax base.

Council Tax Base

Changes to the council tax base will have an impact on the level of Council Tax income transferred from the Collection Fund to the Council's General Fund in 2021/22. It will also impact on the amounts due to the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Fire and Rescue Service, and the Combined Authority.

The following table shows the impact of the changes to the tax base between 2020/21 and 2021/22, based on the 2020/21 Council Tax Band D charge:

Council Tax Income	Sefton Council £ million	Police & Crime £ million	Fire & Rescue £ million	Combined Authority £ million
Budget 2020/21	138.651	17.997	6.826	1.613
Forecast 2021/22	135.088	17.535	6.651	1.572
Change	-3.563	-0.462	-0.175	-0.041

(B) Capital Costs

No capital costs applicable.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

The local Council Tax Reduction Scheme will continue to be administered from existing resources.

Legal Implications:

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

By Section 5 of Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012) for each financial year each billing authority must:

- a. Consider whether to revise its Council Tax Reduction Scheme or to replace it with another scheme
- b. Make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement is to have effect.
- c. If any revision to a scheme, or any replacement scheme, has the effect of

Agenda Item 6

reducing or removing a reduction to which any class of person is entitled, the revision or replacement must include such transitional provision relating to that reduction or removal as the authority thinks fit.

- d. Before revising its scheme or making a replacement scheme, an authority must:
 - i. Consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it.
 - ii. Publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
 - iii. Consult other such persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

Equality Implications: The equality implications have been identified and mitigated.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The Council Reduction Scheme proposed for 2021/22 will help to maintain fairness and consistency. The Scheme provides support to those experiencing financial hardship as well as supporting those making the transition to Universal Credit.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Not applicable

Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable

Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable

Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Provide support to those in financial hardship as well as supporting people into work.

Greater income for social investment: Not applicable

Cleaner Greener: Not applicable

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6216/20) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4408/20.) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Implementation Date for the Decision

Agenda Item 6

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet recommendation to Council and approval by Council on 21st January 2021.

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Appendices:

Annex A: Council Tax Base Report 2021/22

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Agenda Item 6

1. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

1.1 Introduction/Background

1.2 Local Council Tax Reduction replaced Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 1st April 2013. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is a discount awarded to households on a low income to help towards Council Tax payments. The amount awarded is based on a person's household and income. The local scheme rules only apply to working-age Council Tax payers. Pensioners are protected by legislation and must be provided with the level of Council Tax support specified by the Government.

1.3 The grant transferred to the Council, Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire Service in 2013/14, £24.2M; to fund the local scheme was £3M lower than had previously been provided to fund CTB in 2012/13. The Council therefore had to introduce changes to the national default Council Tax Support Scheme in order to ensure that the local scheme was cost neutral. As the Government had specified the level of support that had to be provided to pensioners, the saving requirement had to be met by reducing the level of support available to working age claimants and through changes to Council Tax empty property discounts.

1.4 The Council is required, by law, to review the Scheme each year irrespective of whether it is being amended.

1.5 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22 must be agreed by Council by 11th March 2021.

2. Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21

2.1 To satisfy the requirement to review the Scheme, the following areas have been evaluated:

- Claimant caseload
- Scheme expenditure
- Impact on most vulnerable claimants
- Council Tax collection
- Attachment of Benefits
- Review of the Council's principles for the Scheme
- Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund.

2.2 Claimant Caseload

The table below shows the caseload data at 30th September 2020 compared to caseload data at the end of each year since the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was introduced in 2013/14:

Agenda Item 6

Year	Date	Pensioners	Working Age	Total	Change
2013/14	03.04.14	14,655	16,025	30,680	n/a
2014/15	01.04.15	13,925	15,349	29,274	-1,406
2015/16	31.03.16	13,206	14,886	28,092	-1,182
2016/17	31.03.17	12,541	14,524	27,065	-1,027
2017/18	31.03.18	11,970	14,005	25,975	-1,090
2018/19	31.03.19	11,404	14,160	25,564	-411
2019/20	31.03.20	10,871	14,326	25,197	-367
2020/21	30.09.20	10,691	15,505	26,196	+999

The working age caseload can be split further:

Year	Date	Employed	Other	Total	Change
2013/14	03.04.14	2,874	13,151	16,025	n/a
2014/15	01.04.15	2,748	12,601	15,349	-676
2015/16	31.03.16	2,504	12,382	14,886	-463
2016/17	31.03.17	2,193	12,331	14,524	-362
2017/18	31.03.18	1,900	12,105	14,005	-519
2018/19	31.03.19	1,597	12,563	14,160	+155
2019/20	31.03.20	1,268	13,058	14,326	+166
2020/21	30.09.20	1,049	14,456	15,505	+1,179

2.3 Pensioner Claimants: Since the initial implementation of the scheme in 2013/14 the number of Pensioner claimants has declined in every year. Claimant numbers reduced by -312 between 2018/19 and 2019/20. Pensioner claimant numbers have continued to fall in 2020/21.

2.4 Working Age Claimants: The number of working age claimants reduced each year between 2013/14 and 2017/18 before starting to increase in 2018/19. Claimant numbers have increased significantly in 2020/21 as a result of the economic impact of Covid-19. Claimant numbers are expected to continue to rise into 2021/22 as the Government removes support provided through the job support scheme and self-employed scheme.

2.5 Scheme Expenditure

The following table shows the Council Tax Reduction Scheme expenditure reported in the Revenue Outturn Return compared to the mid-year estimate for 2020/21:

Year	Source	Pensioners £000	Working Age £000	Total £000	Change £000
2013/14	RO Return	13,305	9,907	23,212	n/a
2014/15	RO Return	12,152	10,364	22,516	-696
2015/16	RO Return	11,895	9,760	21,655	-861
2016/17	RO Return	11,540	10,559	22,099	+444
2017/18	RO Return	11,378	10,948	22,326	+227
2018/19	RO Return	11,695	11,069	22,764	+438

Agenda Item 6

2019/20	RO Return	11,790	11,784	23,574	+810
2020/21	Estimate	11,961	13,492	25,453	+1,879

Notes:

2020/21 Estimate: Pensioner & Working Age cost have been split based on the weekly average recorded on the monthly CTR304 reports up to 30 September 2020.

2.6 Council Tax Base Return Data

The following table provides a view of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme expenditure based on weekly payments recorded in early October as reported in the Council Tax Base Return:

Year	Source	Pensioners £000	Working Age £000	Total £000	Change £000
2013	CTB Return	12,602	10,214	22,816	n/a
2014	CTB Return	12,491	10,260	22,751	-65
2015	CTB Return	11,991	10,033	22,024	-727
2016	CTB Return	12,503	9,918	22,421	+397
2017	CTB Return	12,579	9,816	22,395	-26
2018	CTB Return	12,634	9,742	22,376	-19
2019	CTB Return	11,995	11,780	23,775	+1,399
2020	CTB Return	12,021	13,503	25,524	+1,749

2.7 Impact on the most vulnerable claimants

The local Council Tax Reduction Scheme addresses the Council's priorities to minimise the impact on the most vulnerable, by seeking to strike a balance between dealing with Council priorities whilst supporting those experiencing financial challenges. The Council, having recognised the impact on communities, has introduced a range of mitigating actions, including:

- Provision of an Exceptional Hardship Fund (see Section 2.11)
- Allowing a Universal Credit notification, received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to be treated as a claim for local Council Tax Reduction, thus removing the need for those in receipt of Universal Credit to have to make a separate claim for support towards their Council Tax.
- Making provision in the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for awards to be backdated for up to 6-months for working-age vulnerable claimants.
- Deciding that the Council's local Council Tax Reduction scheme for working-age families should not to replicate the rules that are in place in the national Housing

Agenda Item 6

Benefit scheme and the Council Tax Reduction Pensioner scheme whereby the removal of the family premium and the “2-child” rule restrict the level of award.

- Offering 12-month (rather than 10-month) instalment payments to Council Tax payers.
- Adopting a sensitive approach to enforcement action to consider the potential vulnerability of Council Tax Reduction claimants. Before cases are referred to Enforcement Agents a vetting stage has been introduced and cases are dealt with under a separate debt recovery process to minimise potential increases in debt.
- Establishing a co-ordinated working relationship between the Council’s contracted Enforcement Agents and Citizens Advice Sefton to support people in debt. Citizens Advice Sefton has direct lines of communication with the Enforcement Agents and can arrange for recovery action to be placed on hold whilst discussing and agreeing affordable payment arrangements.
- Implementing processes for Council staff to refer claimants to the Money Advice and Pension Service, or Citizens Advice Sefton for help and support with debt/budgeting advice or making/maintaining their Universal Credit claim.
- Putting an escalation process in place for the debt advisor based at South Sefton foodbank to contact nominated Council Tax staff to request a hold on recovery action or discuss affordable payment arrangements.
- Participating in Sefton’s Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty Partner’s Group – staff from the Council’s Council Tax and Benefit team, work with partner organisations and other Council services to support residents suffering financial vulnerability and to provide practical support such as signposting claimants for winter coats, school uniforms.

2.8 Council Tax Collection

The table below shows the amount of Council Tax billed and collected during 2019/20:

Recorded at 31 March 2020	Liability Raised £000	Received In Year £000	Collection Rate %
CTRS Cases - Working Age	4,225	3,060	72.4
CTRS Cases - Pensioner Age	1,650	1,714	103.9
Other Council Tax Payers	155,781	150,103	96.4
Total (in-year collection)	161,656	154,877	95.8

The in-year collection rate reduced from 97.2 % in 2012/13 under the council tax benefit system to 96.2% in 2013/14 when council tax support was localised. Since then the overall collection rate has remained within a narrow range from 95.8% to 96.3%. The in-year collection rate for 2019/20 was 95.8%, which is the lowest collection rate recorded to date, but 0.8% higher than the average for Metropolitan Districts.

Agenda Item 6

In-year collection rates have continued to decline in 2020/21 as a result of the impact of Covid-19.

Council Tax Collection 2020/21

As at 31st October 2020, the in-year Council Tax collection figure was 62.94%. This is a drop of 1.2% on the equivalent comparison in 2019/20.

The main reason for the lower collection rate for 2020/21 has been the impact of Covid-19 on the economy. The Council has adopted a sensitive approach to Council Tax collection throughout the pandemic as detailed below: -

- A greater awareness of vulnerability has meant that as soon as an issue is identified, in most cases, recovery action is placed on hold whilst the vulnerability aspect is assessed. It may result in the Council entering into payment arrangements which take slightly longer to repay because of a genuine financial vulnerability being identified.
- There was no recovery action taken on accounts for 2020/21 until 30th June 2020 when the Council issued informal, "soft reminders" to 14,412 taxpayers who had fallen into arrears. A second batch of soft reminders was issued on 19th August 2020 to 3,548 taxpayers. On 8th October 2020, 9,844 second reminders were issued. This time the wording on the reminder was slightly stronger than the initial reminder.
- The emphasis of the soft reminder letters has been to encourage engagement with the Council to discuss options around payment arrangements and to advise about the support that is available, such as the Exceptional Hardship Fund, benefits advice, and signposting to debt advice agencies for help with managing finances.
- As there has been no formal recovery action taken, the Council has not issued Magistrates Court summons to apply for Liability Orders. As a Liability Order must be obtained prior to taking deductions from benefits and earnings, and also in order to refer cases to Enforcement Agents, there has not been any revenue from these recovery options.
- All applications for Liability Orders in the Liverpool City Region area were put on hold in April 2020 due to Covid-19. Magistrates Courts in the area will be commencing Liability Order hearings again in January 2021 and the Council will put steps in place to recommence formal recovery for appropriate cases.
- Enforcement Agent visits were suspended by 23rd March 2020 when national lockdown commenced. Enforcement visits were able to restart from 24th August 2020. The Civil Enforcement Agency (CIVEA) implemented a post-lockdown plan whereby prior to visits recommencing, Enforcement Agents had to issue pre-engagement letters to identify vulnerability and those affected by Covid-19. The Council asked Enforcement Agents to issue pre-engagement letters in August 2020 in respect of debt that had been referred before the pandemic. The letters gave 30 days for the taxpayer to engage with the firms to seek support and/or

arrange payment. Enforcement Agents commenced visits from 11th September 2020. Agents are trained in how to identify vulnerability and offer support. CIVEA has set out requirements for safe visits, i.e. they should be contactless, and agents do not enter the premises.

2.9 Attachment of Benefits

Since the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in April 2013 the number of working age claimants falling into arrears continues to grow. One recovery option open to the Council in respect of benefit claimants is to apply for an Attachment of Benefit (AOB) via the courts. Under this option the Court can require a payment of up to £3.70 per week to be made by the DWP directly from the claimant's benefits to meet Council Tax arrears.

Payments by AOB do provide some certainty to both the Council and the debtor. For the Council, the payments do guarantee regular income from the debtor. For the debtor, there is the security of knowing that a debt is being paid by a deduction from their benefit.

However, AOB is not a perfect solution to the problem of growing debt for the following reasons: -

- An AOB cannot be applied without first having taken the debtor to court to obtain a Liability Order. Due to the need to follow the correct legislative timeline for obtaining a Liability Order, payment by AOB cannot commence until part-way through the year. Typically for a bill issued in March the first payments would not be made by the DWP until August of the same year.
- Many debtors have arrears outstanding for multiple years Council Tax. An AOB can only be used to collect one debt at a time. In addition, current legislation does not allow the Council to take any other form of debt recovery (e.g. use of Enforcement Agents) whilst an AOB is in place. To mitigate this, letters have been issued to people on AOB asking them to contact the Council for advice, to make alternate payment arrangements or seek financial advice from Citizens Advice Sefton. However, this initiative met with only a few people contacting the Council to make payment arrangements.
- Collection of Council Tax debt by way of AOB is not the highest priority of debt administered by the DWP. The level of recovery will therefore be affected when a person has multiple debts, e.g. rent and energy debts are given higher priority. The impact of Covid-19 meant that there were no new referrals to the DWP for new deductions between April – October 2020, which is the reason for the drop in live cases in the table below. The Council has recommenced issuing new instructions and these will be processed by the DWP when work priorities allow.
- Many new claimants for local Council Tax Reduction have already accrued debts before an AOB can be considered.
- At the commencement of the scheme in 2013 the maximum deduction of £3.70 was lower than the minimum weekly Council Tax charge for all property bands. The minimum contribution of 20% towards the Council Tax was greater than the amount

Agenda Item 6

that could be collected within the year by AOB. This created a problem of debt being carried forward to the following year. Therefore, whilst debt payments were being collected regularly the amount of debt at the end of each year kept growing.

- To try and break the cycle of debt, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was amended with effect from 1st April 2016 to reduce the minimum contribution rate to 16%. This rate was calculated so that the AOB payment of £3.70 per week was more than would be due from Council Tax for many of the claimants.
- A significant number of customers have arrears for more than one financial year. As only one AOB order may be deducted at a time there has been a significant increase in the number of pending cases. These cases are effectively stacked up until an earlier order is paid. No recovery action may be taken in the interim and the value of such cases is increasing year on year.
- The following table shows the amount of debt being recovered by AOB, and the amount of debt still waiting recovery by AOB as at 31st October 2020: -

	01.04.18	01.04.19	31.10.19	01.04.20	31.10.20
AOB in payment	£916,181	£1,121,179	£1,268,727	£1,160,881	£1,011,275
Number of cases	5,200	6,276	6,642	5,803	4,528
AOB Pending	£3,216,978	£3,987,625	£4,801,112	£4,382,203	£4,425,238
Number of cases	14,083	16,919	19,602	18,163	18,076

2.10 Review of Scheme Principles

The local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is based on five principles and the review is summarised below:

Principle	CTRS working for non-pensioner claimants?
The Council will continue to support work incentives	<p>Yes – The Council continues to operate a system which disregards certain amounts of money from customers earnings through employment and self-employment when calculating entitlement.</p> <p>This results in some additional support to those customers receiving Universal Credit who are in low paid work, following the removal of UC work allowances from April 2016</p>
The Council will continue to recognise the additional	<p>Yes – The Council continues to make additional allowances and give additional support to those</p>

Agenda Item 6

<p>needs of our most vulnerable residents.</p>	<p>receiving certain DWP sickness benefits, disability benefits and benefits for Carers when calculating entitlement.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council continues to disregard certain disability benefits as income when calculating entitlement</p> <p>Procedures were reviewed for the collection of non-payment of Council Tax to ensure non-disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable households. Also budgeting support and advice is made available to all claimants.</p> <p>The Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund is available to those in the greatest financial need with fair and transparent criteria for awards.</p>
<p>The Council will continue to recognise the additional needs of families with children</p>	<p>Yes – Child Benefit and Child Maintenance payments are not considered as income when calculating entitlement to CTRS.</p> <p>Additional allowances are given when calculating entitlement for where there is a disabled child in the family.</p> <p>The CTRS also mirrors provisions in the Housing Benefit scheme by taking child care costs into account for low income working families</p> <p>The Council continues to include the Family Premium when calculating the Council Tax Reduction. This was removed for all new Housing Benefit claims from May 2016. The Council has also chosen not to mirror the Housing Benefit scheme which restricts the amount of support given to families with more than two children within its CTRS;</p>
<p>The Council supports households staying together to make better use of housing in Sefton and reduce homelessness.</p>	<p>Yes - The amount of Council Tax Reduction taken away from a customer when other adults live in the household (known as a non-dependant deduction), was reduced in 2013 and remains at those lower levels.</p>
<p>The Council will continue to have due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant</p>	<p>Yes – War Disablement and War Widows pensions in calculating CTRS, including any Armed Forces compensation in accordance with the covenant is disregarded. This also includes the service attributable element of the armed forces pension could also be disregarded as income when calculating entitlement.</p>

Agenda Item 6

2.11 Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)

A key feature of the local Council Tax Reduction scheme was the creation of an exceptional hardship fund. In 2013/14, the Council set an annual budget for EHF of £150,000, agreeing to increase the budget to £170,000 with effect from 1st April 2020. The scheme was introduced by the Council to mitigate against potential issues that may have arisen because of the abolition of Council Tax Benefit and the introduction of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The fund aims to help vulnerable working age people experiencing financial hardship by reducing their Council Tax bill. Each year, approximately £20,000 is also used to fund council tax discounts for care leavers.

The fund is administrated within an agreed policy, the Discretionary Reduction in liability policy, approved by Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

As part of its response to Covid-19, the Government announced in the Budget Statement on 11 March 2020, that an extra £500 million of new grant funding would be made available to local authorities in 2020/21 to deliver support to economically vulnerable people and households in their local area. Sefton Council's grant allocation was £3,036,603, based on a client caseload of 14,058 working age claimants at 31 December 2019.

The Government's expectation was for billing authorities to provide all recipients of working age local council tax reduction during 2020/21 with a further reduction in their council tax bill of £150, using their discretionary powers to reduce the liability of council tax payers outside of their formal council tax reduction scheme design.

The Council utilised the allocation by providing a grant of £150 to existing working age council tax reduction scheme claimants, with any remaining funds used to provide this discount to new working age claimants in 2020/21 and to provide additional exceptional hardship discounts to council tax payers on a case by case basis in line with the Council's existing policy.

As stated at 2.4 above, it is assumed that the local council tax reduction caseload will continue to increase due to the economic impact of the pandemic and as the Government removes support provided through the job support scheme and the self-employed scheme. Each new claimant during 2020/21 will receive the automatic £150 discount.

The following table shows an illustration of how the Council thought its grant funding may be allocated at the beginning of 2020/21: -

New Hardship Funding 2020/21	£m
<u>Automatic £150 Discount</u>	
Existing Working-Age CTRS caseload 14,244	2.137
25% Increase in case load assumed (+3,500)	0.525
	2.662

Other Exceptional Hardship Discounts*	0.375
Total	3.037

* In addition to the existing £0.150 million already available after care leavers discounts have been applied.

As at 4th November 2020, the Council had allocated £2.491m by way of automatic £150 discounts to working age council tax reduction scheme claimants.

As at 30th November 2020, Exceptional Hardship payments of approximately £125,000 have been awarded. The Council will continue to target spend of the remaining funding to those struggling to make Council Tax payments as a result of the pandemic.

Regular updates about the availability of the Exceptional Hardship fund are shared with partner organisations participating in Sefton's Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty group, such as Citizens Advice Sefton, the local Foodbanks, Sefton CVS and registered social landlords.

2.12 Summary of local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2020/21

The number of claimants has increased in 2020/21 as a result of the impact of Covid-19 on working age households. In the first 6 months of the year the total number of claimants increased by 999 (4.0%) to 26,196 (10,691 pensioner age and 15,505 working age).

The forecast cost of the scheme has increased by £1.879m (8.0%) in 2020/21 to £25.453m (at 30/09/20). This is due to the impact of rising working age claimant numbers and an average council tax increase of 4.0%.

Working-age claimant numbers are expected to continue to rise into 2021/22 as the Government removes support provided through the job support scheme and self-employed scheme.

Council Tax in year collection rates fell by 1.0% to 96.2% in 2013/14 after the replacement of Council Tax Benefit with the local Council Tax Reduction scheme. The collection rate has remained at a similar level since, with a collection rate of 95.8% being achieved in 2019/20. This was 0.8% higher than the average collection rate for all Metropolitan Districts. The in-year collection rates have continued to decline in 2020/21 as a result of the impact of Covid-19. The collection rate recorded at the end of October 2020 was 1.2% lower than at the same point in 2019.

3. Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Consultation

The statutory provisions are silent on the consultation required when a council is not proposing to change its Council Tax reduction scheme.

Letters will be issued to the precepting authorities – Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service notifying them that no change is being proposed. The combined Authority will also be notified of no change.

Agenda Item 6

4. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Equality Impact Assessment

Department for Communities and Local Government issued a report in February 2014 reminding local authorities of their key duties when deciding on local Council Tax Reduction Schemes:

- Public Sector Equality Duty (The Equality Act 2010)
- Duty to mitigate the effects of child poverty (The Child Poverty Act 2010)
- The Armed Forces Covenant
- Duty to prevent Homelessness (The Housing Act 1996)

A detailed equality assessment was undertaken and published as part of the design and implementation of CTRS for 2013/14. This assessment had been reviewed in the context of the proposed options for 2016/17 and found there was no disproportionate impacts as the mitigating actions put in place for the 2013/14 scheme remained. The assessment can be found at Annex D of the Council Report dated 24 January 2013.

ANNEX A

SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2021/22

1. **Setting the Council Tax Base**

- 1.1 The council tax base is the link between the Council's budget and the level of council tax. The tax base will be used to calculate the council tax in Sefton, once the Council's budget has been agreed. The Council is required to calculate its own tax base as well as the tax base for each parish council within its boundary and have them approved by the 31 January 2021.
- 1.2 The calculation of the council tax base takes into account many factors such as the rate of new building and the trends in people living on their own (Sole Occupier Discounts).
- 1.3 The tax base calculation assumes a collection rate of 97.0% in 2021/22, which is 1.25% lower than applied in 2020/21. This reflects the negative impact Covid-19 has had on council tax collection in the current year.

2. **Council Tax Base for Sefton Council in 2021/22**

- 2.1 The tax base for 2021/22 is 82,772.1 Band D equivalent dwellings for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. This is a reduction of 2,182.3 (-2.6%) in comparison with the tax base for 2020/21. An analysis of the changes between the 2020/21 and the 2021/22 tax base is provided in the table below:

Tax Base for Sefton Council		Band D Equivalents		
		2020/21	2021/22	Change
H	<u>Chargeable Dwellings</u>			
	Dwellings on the Banding List	111,059.3	111,551.2	491.9
	Exempt Dwellings	-2,134.1	-2,216.8	-82.7
	Disabled Persons Reductions	-149.6	-150.2	-0.6

Agenda Item 6

		108,775.6	109,184.2	408.6
Q	<u>Discounts</u>			
	Sole Occupier & Status Discounts	-10,092.1	-10,278.5	-186.4
	Empty Property Discounts	-60.6	-49.4	11.2
	Total	-10,152.7	-10,327.9	-175.2
E	Empty Homes Premium	630.8	704.0	73.2
J	<u>Adjustments</u>			
	New Dwellings on the Banding List	309.7	121.7	-188.0
	Banding Reductions	-166.6	-167.3	-0.7
	Exemptions, Discounts, & Premium	-420.4	-634.4	-214.0
		-277.3	-680.0	-402.7
Z	Council Tax Support Scheme	-12,567.8	-13,608.0	-1,040.2
B	Collection Rate Adjustment	-1,512.2	-2,558.2	-1,046.0
	MOD Properties	8.0	8.0	0.0
	Council Tax Base	84,904.4	82,722.1	-2,182.3

2.2 The impact of Covid-19 has seen the Council's tax base reduce for the first time since 2013/14, when local council tax support discounts were introduced to replace the previous system of council tax benefit.

2.3 The main reasons for the changes in the tax base are:

Dwellings on the Banding List: The number of properties on Banding List has increased by 523 (0.4%) in the year.

Exempt Dwellings: The number of dwellings subject to a specific exemption (Class A to W) have increased by 117 (4.6%). The largest increases were in the number of Class F exemptions (dwellings left empty by deceased persons) and Class E exemptions (an unoccupied dwelling which was previously the sole main residence of a person who has moved into a hospital or a care home).

Sole Occupier & Status Discounts: The number of dwellings receiving a 25% discount due to single occupancy or where one person is disregarded, has increased by 871 (1.8%).

Adjustments: A lower level of new house building has been forecast for 2021/22 due to the impact of Covid-19 on the economy. The number of exemptions and discounts are forecast to increase by a greater number than usual in 2021/22 due to the ongoing impact of Covid-19.

Council Tax Support Scheme (CTRS): There has been a significant increase in the number of claims for CTRS discounts since the first Covid-19 lockdown was announced in March 2020. The number of CTRS claimants has increased by 945 (3.8%) between 30 November 2019 and 30 November 2020. A further increase in claimant numbers is anticipated when the Government Furlough Scheme ends in April 2021. The Government anticipate unemployment to peak at the end of the second quarter in 2021/22. The tax base calculation assumes that CTRS discounts will increase by a further 5.0% in 2021/22.

Agenda Item 6

3. Council Tax Base in Parish Areas for 2021/22

- 3.1 There are also new tax base figures for each parish area in 2021/22. The following table provides details of the new tax base for each parish compared to 2020/21:

Tax Base for Parish Areas	Band D Equivalents			%
	2020/21	2021/22	Change	Change
Parish of Aintree Village	2,077.3	2,017.8	-59.5	-2.9%
Parish of Formby	9,205.7	9,010.7	-195.0	-2.1%
Parish of Hightown	873.1	855.0	-18.1	-2.1%
Parish of Ince Blundell	170.5	166.0	-4.5	-2.6%
Parish of Little Altcar	333.3	327.2	-6.1	-1.8%
Parish of Lydiate	2,072.0	2,028.6	-43.4	-2.1%
Parish of Maghull	6,766.5	6,697.7	-68.8	-1.0%
Parish of Melling	1,014.7	1,029.5	14.8	+1.5%
Parish of Sefton	237.2	247.5	10.3	+4.3%
Parish of Thornton	788.8	767.4	-21.4	-2.7%

- 3.2 The tax base calculation for each of the parish areas is based on the same assumptions made in the calculation for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.
- 3.3 Most parish areas are experiencing a reduction in their tax base as a result of the impact of Covid-19. However, some parishes have experienced higher levels of housing growth in the past 12 months which has offset the impact of Covid-19.

Agenda Item 7

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	3 December 2020
Subject:	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 - December Update		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To inform **Cabinet** 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;
4. The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of October 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.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is recommended to:

Revenue Budget

- 1) Note the current estimated impact of COVID-19 on the 2020/21 Budget together with the key issues that will influence the final position.
- 2) Recognise 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, and agree that subsequent reports provide updates and where appropriate remedial actions plans as appropriate;
- 3) Note the Government grant funding that has been received to support individuals and businesses with the response to the pandemic, and which has been

Agenda Item 7

- distributed in accordance with central government guidance;
- 4) Note the current forecast revenue outturn position for 2020/21;
 - 5) Acknowledge that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved;

Capital Programme

- 6) Note the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 7.1.1);
- 7) Note the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 October 2020 of £10.600m (paragraph 7.2.1) with the latest full year forecast of £33.233m (paragraph 7.3.1);
- 8) Note explanations of variances to project budgets (paragraph 7.2.3);
- 9) Recommend to Council to approve the supplementary capital estimate of £0.352m for Ainsdale Coastal Gateway (paragraph 7.4);
- 10) Approve the capital virement of £0.149m to the Bootle Strategic Acquisitions project from Council Wide Essential Maintenance (paragraph 7.5); and,
- 11) Note that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council (paragraph 7.6.3).

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the forecast outturn position for the 2020/21 Revenue Budget as at the end of October 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: (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The report indicates that for 2020/21 there is currently a forecast deficit of £0.598m. Mitigating measures have been identified in order to arrive at this deficit. Should this deficit remain at the end of the financial year this will be a call on the Council's General Balances, therefore further remedial action will be required if the forecast returns to a deficit.

(B) Capital Costs

The Council's capital budget in 2020/21 is £33.122m. As at the end of October 2020 expenditure of £10.600m has been incurred and a full year outturn of £33.233m is currently forecast.

Implications of the Proposals:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out as follows:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
There is currently a budget deficit of £0.598m forecast for 2020/21. However, it should be noted that significant pressure and risk remains in four key business areas, namely Children's Social Care, Children with Disabilities, Education Excellence and Locality Services. These budgets may experience further demand pressure during the remainder of the year in which case corresponding savings will need to be identified. If this cannot take place there will be a call on the Council's General Balances.
Legal Implications:
None
Equality Implications:
There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Effective Financial Management and the development and delivery of sustainable annual budgets support each theme of the Councils Core Purpose.

Protect the most vulnerable:
See comment above
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
See comment above
Commission, broker and provide core services:
See comment above
Place – leadership and influencer:
See comment above
Drivers of change and reform:
See comment above
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
See comment above
Greater income for social investment:
See comment above

Agenda Item 7

Cleaner Greener: See comment above
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What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Services is the author of the report (FD 6188/20)

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer has been consulted and has no comments on the report (LD 4380/20).

(B) External Consultations

N/A

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

Contact Officer:	Paul Reilly
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 4106
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Appendices:

The following appendix is attached to this report:

APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2020, Council approved the budget for 2020/21. This report provides an update on the forecast revenue outturn position for 2020/21, including the significant impact of COVID-19 on the Council's 2020/21 budget.
- 1.2 The report also outlines the current position regarding key income streams for the Authority, namely Council Tax and Business Rates. Variations against expected receipts in these two areas will also affect the Council's financial position in future years.
- 1.3 The capital section of the report informs Members of the latest estimate of capital expenditure for 2020/21 and forecast expenditure for 2021/22 and 2022/23. The capital budget to date is presented in section 7.1. Sections 7.2 and 7.3 review progress of the capital programme. Finally, Section 7.6 confirms that there are adequate levels of resources available to finance the capital programme.

2. Impact of COVID 19 on 2020/21 Budget

- 2.1 At the Cabinet meeting on 30 July 2020, Members received a comprehensive report that outlined the full range of financial issues that were being faced by the Council (and all other councils within the country) arising from the pandemic.
- 2.2 At the Cabinet meeting on 5 November 2020, Members were provided with an update that based on the monthly return to central government (MHCLG) the Council would have a net shortfall of £21.3m in 2020/21 when these issues had been taken into account and the use of the £23.7m emergency fund from central government had been applied. These figures reflected actual expenditure and receipts as at the end of October and estimates until the end of the year. It was acknowledged that these figures could be the subject of material change depending on the impact of local and national restriction measures, social behaviour and the conditions within the local economy that drive employment and business activity.
- 2.3 Subsequently, additional national restrictions were introduced on 5th November for a period of four weeks. Funding had already been provided to support enhanced test and trace capability and enforcement activity, as well as provide additional support to businesses, when the LCR moved into Tier 3 restrictions. In addition, discussions are continuing with the government over additional funding for LCR authorities to support cost pressures and income losses.
- 2.4 Details of new government grant funding that has been received, that will be used to support the response to the pandemic, and which will be distributed in accordance with central government guidance, are outlined in section 3.

Latest Submission to MHCLG - October 2020

- 2.5 As Members will be aware each month the Council has been required to outline its cost pressures in its return to MHCLG. The latest submission relating to the end of October was provided by 7 November 2020. At the time of the previous report being published work was ongoing on the return. The provisional figures were subsequently revised; the provisional and final figures are detailed below:

Agenda Item 7

	October 2020 - Provisional £'m	October 2020 - Final £'m
Forecast cost of responding the pandemic	14.2	16.0
Loss of income from fees and charges	14.9	14.9
Reduced Council Tax receipts	5.3	4.3
Reduced Business Rates receipts	7.0	7.0
Sub Total	41.4	42.2
Government Funding Received	(20.1)	(23.7)
Current Shortfall	21.3	18.5

- 2.6 The forecast cost of responding to the pandemic is expected to increase due to the continued restrictions in place. The current forecast for reduced Council Tax receipts has improved based on the current levels of collection and numbers of Council Tax Reduction Scheme claimants.
- 2.7 The MHCLG have indicated that it is expected that there will be no return required at the end of November.

Central Government Advice and Guidance

- 2.8 As outlined in the last Cabinet report on 5 November, the government has introduced a scheme to cost share the income losses being incurred by the Council from sales, fees and charges.

The Council will make three claims relating to 2020/2021. The first claim was submitted in September 2020 and covered losses incurred between April and July. It is estimated that £9.1m of the overall losses shown in 2.5 fall under the remit and the conditions set out by central government for the scheme. Under the cost sharing arrangement, the Council is estimated to receive £5.6m. Therefore, the Council will need to fund £3.5m of these losses.

Those losses for which the Council is not entitled to any support is estimated to be £5.8m. Therefore, total losses of £9.3m will need to be funded by the Council during the current year.

Potential Impact for Sefton

2020/21

- 2.9 As stated, there are two primary issues that need to be addressed in the current year for the Council:-
- The Council has a statutory responsibility to balance its budget, therefore needs to meet the net loss of fees and charges of £9.3m after government support (this assumes that the approved budget for the year is balanced); and
 - The Council needs to have sufficient cash within its bank account to meet its ongoing costs throughout the year, i.e. cashflow.
- 2.10 The proposed approach to balancing this year's budget was set out in the previous Cabinet report and this remains the Council's preferred approach but will be dependent on the potential cost of responding further to the pandemic and the receipt of any further government support. As previously stated, it is estimated that

the Council's share of this loss of income from fees and charges will be £9.3m and will be met from emergency funding.

- 2.11 In respect of cashflow, the current analysis suggests that the Council will not need to borrow funds before the end of 2020/21 in order to support its expenditure plans. However, if any borrowing is required later in the year the approved Treasury Management Strategy and prudential indicators for 2020/21 can accommodate this.
- 2.12 As Members have discussed in recent months this position will inevitably be the subject of change between now and the end of the financial year and both the approved budget and the impact of the pandemic will require forensic monitoring and cost and income control as the risk to the financial sustainability of the Council has been significantly escalated.

Cost of responding to the pandemic

- 2.13 It can be seen from the table presented earlier in this report that the current forecast is that the Council has potential commitments totalling £16.0m from its emergency fund budget (this includes the contingency sum previously agreed by members). This is an increase of £1.8m from the forecast of the previous month due to the estimated costs arising from additional restrictions being put in place.
- 2.14 When the cost of responding to the pandemic to date and the loss of income that needs to be funded are taken into account then the preferred approach to meeting the cost of the pandemic can be delivered. However, there would be little room for any further expenditure or income losses to be funded. It is clear that the current wave of the pandemic and the restrictions that are being applied will require the Council to support residents as it did in the first wave and will see further pressure being placed upon income streams. Therefore, due to the increase in cases of COVID-19 and national and local restrictions, it is anticipated that the fourth tranche of emergency funding will be fully utilised in directly supporting the Council's response to the pandemic and the further loss of income that is anticipated between now and the end of the year.

2021/22

- 2.15 Quite naturally there is a large focus across the country in how local authorities will balance their 2020/21 budget and the Council's approach to this has been set out and agreed in previous meetings. As progress is made through the financial year there is now increased attention on the 2021/22 budget. A report to Cabinet in October 2020 presented an updated Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2021/2022 – 2023/2024 which included an assessment of the ongoing financial implications of the pandemic. Work nationally continues to progress in terms of engagement and lobbying of government in order that councils receive an indication of the funding they will receive next year and importantly, additional support is provided to compensate for loss of income from council tax and business rates, loss of income for fees and charges which will fall into next year and the additional pressure that is being, and will continue to be, experienced on key demand led services, e.g. Adults and Children's Social Care. It is clear that the pandemic is going to continue into the next financial year, therefore the financial impact will also continue. As such the key risk is what will central government's approach to supporting councils be that will allow them to set and then deliver sustainable budgets.

Agenda Item 7

- 2.16 Work is ongoing within the Council to evaluate the potential impact of these pressures, with the loss of income from council tax and business rates the most significant risk to the 2021/2022 budget position depending on what support is made available by the Government. The table at paragraph 2.5 shows the loss of income from these sources in the current year and this information will be required to inform the setting of a base position for 2021/22. As such it will be critical that additional central government support is provided to offset these reductions. Previous central government advice was that as wave one of the pandemic came to an end there would be a natural return to council tax and business rate collection levels to those pre pandemic, however this is clearly not the case. As such officers and now starting to develop estimates for 2021/22 and any loss that is not supported by central government will need to be added to the financial estimates that were published in the recent MTFP.
- 2.17 The Government is expected to announce the one-year Spending Review for 2021/2022 on 25 November 2020. This will provide details of the overall funding available for local government and will allow officers the opportunity to provide Members with an indication of the funding that might be available for Sefton and what additional support will be provided to address the ongoing impact of COVID into next year and the years beyond. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting on the outcome of the Spending Review and the potential impact on the Council.

Members will be aware that actual funding allocations for the Council will not be known until the Local Government Finance Settlement is announced. It is hoped that this will be in the second week of December, however this is yet to be confirmed.

3. Central Government Grant Programmes in Response to COVID-19

- 3.1 As part of its role in responding to the pandemic, Central Government has requested that all councils administer a number of grant programmes that have been designed to support residents and businesses. These are:-
- Contain Outbreak Management Fund;
 - Local Restrictions Support Grant Scheme – National Restrictions;
 - Local Restrictions Support Grant Scheme – Open Businesses;
 - Additional Funding for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable; and,
 - COVID Winter Grant Scheme.
- 3.2 For each of these programmes, government advice and guidance has been prescriptive with little or no flexibility offered to local government on how to apply them. A summary of each of the programmes, key details and their value is included below.

Contain Outbreak Management Fund

- 3.3 The Government announced a package of support for the Liverpool City Region (LCR) as a result of the latest Covid-19 Tier 3 restrictions being implemented. This funding was to cover enhanced test and trace, enforcement and shielding support. The LCR was due to receive £21.197m of which Sefton's share was £3.917m.

Local Restrictions Support Grant Scheme – National Restrictions

- 3.4 The Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that businesses legally required to close on 5 November 2020 as a result of the implementation of national restrictions, will be eligible for support for each two-week period the measures are in place. The Council will be funded for the cost of these grants.
- 3.5 Assistance will be given in the form of a grant payment for each complete two-week period a business is instructed to remain closed. Grants will be tied to Business Rates liability and the rateable value (RV) of the business property.
- 3.6 Grants will be payable on a complete two-week cycle in accordance with RV of the business property:
- £667 for properties with a RV up to and including £15,000
 - £1,000 for properties with a RV of between £15,001 and £51,000
 - £1,500 for properties with a RV greater than £51,000

Local Restrictions Support Grant Scheme – Open Businesses

- 3.7 The Chancellor of the Exchequer has also announced that businesses that remained open but were severely impacted on or after the 14 October 2020 as a result of the latest Covid-19 Tier 3 restrictions in the Liverpool City Region, will be eligible for support for each two-week period the measures are in place. The Council will be funded for the cost of these grants.
- 3.8 Assistance will be given in the form of a grant payment for each complete two-week period a business was severely impacted. Grants will be tied to Business Rates liability and the rateable value (RV) of the business property. Grants will be payable on a two-week cycle at 70% of the values shown in paragraph 3.6.

Additional Funding for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable

- 3.9 The Government has announced that over £32 million is to be given to Local Authorities to enable them to provide support to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people who need it. This will include helping people to access food and meeting other support needs to enable them to stay at home as much as possible for the 28-day period that the restrictions are in force. The Council has received £0.328m of this funding.

COVID Winter Grant Scheme

- 3.10 The Government has announced that £170 million is to be given to local authorities to fund a COVID Winter Grant Scheme, to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs. The Winter Grant Scheme will enable local authorities to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from early December 2020 and covers the period until the end of March 2021. The Council has received £0.980m of this funding.

Agenda Item 7

4. Summary of the Forecast Outturn Position as at the end of October 2020

- 4.1 Members are provided with updates of the Council's forecast financial position each month during the financial year from June onwards.
- 4.2 Given the unprecedented financial challenges faced by the Council in relation to COVID-19, it is vital that the Council is able to achieve a balanced forecast outturn position for its normal activities, ignoring the impact of COVID-19 pressures. Therefore, the Council undertook initial budget monitoring during April and May to get an earlier indication on the likely pressures to be incurred.
- 4.3 As in previous years, significant pressures have been identified in several service areas at this early stage of the year, particularly Children's Social Care, Communities (Children with Disabilities) Education Excellence (Home to School Transport) and Locality Services. Initial indications of the budget pressures are shown below:

<u>Service</u>	<u>Budget Pressure</u>
	£m
Children's Social Care – Placements & Packages	4.100
Communities – Children with Disabilities / PSR2	1.050
Education Excellence – Home to School Transport	0.200
Locality Services – Security Force	0.350
	5.700

- 4.4 Given the uncertainty around COVID-19 it is vital that the Council ensures the 2020/21 budget does not overspend. Therefore, following the April monitoring position being determined, it was identified that a remedial plan needed to be developed. This has initially focussed on vacancy management with external recruitment being prioritised in Children's Services, Family and Well Being Centres/Early Help and SEND, stopping all non-essential expenditure within the Council, with the exceptions of Children's Social Care (due to the budget issues in that service) and Public Health (due to the current pandemic) and as per the Budget Report of February 2020, bringing through savings from the Framework for Change programme - these will be developed and shared with Members as per the Council's established governance processes. A budget shortfall of £5.7m equates to needing to identify savings to the value of 3.5% of the Council's remaining budget and as this pressure is permanent long-term savings to this value are required moving into next year.
- 4.5 As a result of this work undertaken, the latest forecast of service expenditure indicates an overspend of **£0.598m**, an increase of £0.051m from the September position. However, this represents the forecast with 5 months of the financial year remaining which encompasses the winter period which can have a material impact on the budget in a number of areas hence the outturn forecast and those savings that are being developed will vary in value over the next six months. It is however critical that in the event that budget pressure increases, corresponding savings are identified within the Council's existing budget. The table below highlights the variations:

	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Variance to September Position
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Services				
Strategic Management	3.136	2.965	-0.171	-0.005
Adult Social Care	94.752	94.752	0.000	0.000
Children's Social Care	34.977	39.774	4.797	0.140
Communities	18.359	19.443	1.084	-0.037
Corporate Resources	7.605	7.374	-0.231	0.021
Economic Growth & Housing	5.659	5.779	0.120	0.004
Education Excellence	9.759	10.087	0.328	0.048
Health & Wellbeing	18.498	18.392	-0.106	-0.023
Highways & Public Protection	10.553	10.584	0.031	0.065
Locality Services	12.273	12.672	0.399	0.053
Total Service Net Expenditure	215.571	221.822	6.251	0.266
Budget Pressure Fund	1.000	0.000	-1.000	0.000
In year savings	5.411	0.000	-5.411	0.000
Council Wide Budgets	14.399	18.177	0.958	-0.215
Levies	34.701	34.701	0.000	0.000
General Government Grants	(46.376)	(46.576)	-0.200	0.000
Total Net Expenditure	224.706	225.253		
Forecast Year-End Deficit			0.598	0.051

4.6 The key areas relating to the outturn position are as follows:

- Adult Social Care (forecast nil variance)** – The current forecast assumes that the Adult Social Care budget will break-even during 2020/2021. However, there are a number of significant assumptions and uncertainties relating to COVID-19 that could impact on this position before the year-end. It is currently assumed that £1.7m of expenditure relating to hospital discharges due to COVID-19 will be funded by the CCGs from the allocations of funding they have received for this purpose from the Government, the CCGs have now been invoiced for this funding; there are also ongoing discussions with the CCGs relating to other ongoing costs that need to be funded. Similarly, detailed work is underway to evaluate and then estimate the financial impact of the pandemic on the services residential and day care services budgets. An outline position was reached on this in September however as a result of the recent surge in cases, this will now need to be fundamentally reviewed. This will impact not only this year's budget but also that for 2021/22.

Agenda Item 7

- **Children's Social Care (£4.797m net overspend)** – Based on the current numbers of Looked After Children, and assuming a further increase in line with the increase seen in 2019/20, the Placement and Packages budget is forecast to overspend by £4.149m in 2020/21.

In addition, there is a forecast overspend on staffing costs of £0.648m. This relates to the cost of additional social workers that have been required to deal with increased caseloads, and agency staff. Levels of staffing and this budget are kept under constant review and relate directly to the level of service that is required.

The pressure in this area of the Council will continue to be evaluated during the remainder of the year and the current and potential final financial position will inevitably be further impacted by the current COVID restrictions. As a result, work will be undertaken to determine to what extent central government support via the emergency fund will contribute to this pressure.

As has been regularly reported over the last two years, the cost of Placements and Packages is the largest risk to the Council's budget position. The Council is currently working on developing a range of options to address the inherent demand and costs of Looked After Children whilst supporting the most vulnerable residents, but this budget remains under pressure and purely from a financial point of view this is likely to continue during this year and into the next financial year.

- **Communities – (£1.084m overspend)** – The cost of placements and packages for Children with Disabilities is forecast to overspend by £0.920m (excluding the estimated additional costs relating to COVID-19). This budget has been under increasing pressure in recent years but overspends have previously been offset by underspends elsewhere on the service.

In addition, there is a residual savings target from PSR2 of £0.584m for which specific savings have yet to be identified. In 2019/20 these were achieved by vacancy savings and a number of one-off measures which are only partially contributing to achieving the target in 2020/21.

- **Education Excellence (£0.328m overspend)** - Home to School transport external provision has a projected overspend of £0.681m due to an increase in the number of children being transported plus an increase in the number of children in receipt of personal travel budgets. These demand pressures have meant the budget has overspent for a number of years, despite increases being made to the budget, including £0.200m in 2020/21.
- **Locality Services (£0.399m overspend)** – Some of the service pressures experienced in 2019/20 have continued into 2020/21.
 - Security Service (£0.710m overspend) – The forecast deficit is a reflection of an under recovery of income to support the cost base. The forecast overspend is based on a prudent view of the income due. The Service is to undertake a full review as part of the saving proposals below.
 - Cleansing (£0.368m underspend) – The underspend is mainly due to the reduced costs of vehicles as the purchase of the new fleet will occur later than originally anticipated, resulting in lower prudential borrowing costs.

Measures to close the residual gap in 2020/2021

- 4.7 The forecast budget deficit as at October 2020 is **£0.598m**. This reflects the risks that are inherent in the Council's financial position, particularly around demand for Children's Social Care and other demand led services. With a budget deficit being forecast and further pressure likely based on experience in previous years and the need to manage the impact of COVID on the Council's financial sustainability, financial principles utilised over the last decade will once again be maintained:
- All Heads of service as a minimum should contain expenditure within the budget forecast that had been made at the end of June - if there is to be any budget pressure above this, remedial measures will be required to meet the pressure or further savings being required across all services.
 - To that end expenditure should only be incurred on essential activities during the year and a targeted approach to vacancy management as set out.
 - Heads of Service and senior managers to place an increased emphasis on budget monitoring throughout the year to ensure all financial forecasts are robust and can be substantiated.
 - The remedial action plan and mitigations proposed by Services be tracked for the remainder of the financial year to ensure they are being achieved.
- 4.8 As has been discussed previously, the financial landscape for local government this year is uncertain – it is hoped based on some briefings that central government will support the sustainability of the sector in future years and this is critical especially in respect of the Collection Fund however this budget position will not be helped by that process so as a minimum this in year budget must be balanced as this also directly impacts the Council's reserves and cash flow position which are two of the biggest risk areas arising from the current pandemic. As the year progresses monthly reports will be provided to members on all financial issues and proposals for how financial sustainability can be maintained and the decisions that are required to enable this. It should also be noted that the pressures identified this year will be permanent, i.e. will exist next year. These will need to be funded from that point therefore an assessment will be needed as to whether the measures included in the remedial plan can be extended into next year. The implications for 2021/2022 and beyond were considered in the report on the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2021/2022 – 2023/2024 presented to Cabinet in October 2020.

5. Council Tax Income – Update

- 5.1 Council Tax income is shared between the billing authority (Sefton Council) and the three major precepting authorities (the Fire and Rescue Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Combined Authority – Mayoral Precept) pro-rata to their demand on the Collection Fund. The Council's Budget included a Council Tax Requirement of £139.830m for 2020/21 (including Parish Precepts), which represents 84.1% of the net Council Tax income of £166.267m.
- 5.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of October 2020 is a deficit of +£1.241m. This variation is primarily due to: -

Agenda Item 7

- The deficit on the fund at the end of 2019/20 being higher than estimated (+£0.047m);
- Gross Council Tax Charges in 2020/21 being higher than estimated (-£0.199m);
- Exemptions and Discounts (including a forecasting adjustment) being higher than estimated (+£1.393m). This is mainly as a result of a significant increase in the number of claimants for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS).

5.3 It should be noted that the deficit is expected to increase due to an increasing number of CTRS claimants and the impact of a reduction in the amount of Council Tax being collected (currently estimated at £2.8m).

5.4 Due to Collection Fund regulations, the Council Tax deficit will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2020/21 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.

5.5 A forecast deficit of £2.348m was declared on the 23 January 2020 of which Sefton's share is £1.975m (84.1%). This is the amount that will be recovered from the Collection Fund in 2020/21. Any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in 2021/22 and future years.

6. **Business Rates Income – Update**

6.1 Since 1 April 2017, Business Rates income has been shared between the Council (99%) and the Fire and Rescue Authority (1%). The Council's Budget included retained Business Rates income of £66.169m for 2020/21, which represents 99% of the net Business Rates income of £66.838m. Business Rates income has historically been very volatile making it difficult to forecast accurately.

6.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of October 2020 is a deficit of £37.847m on Business Rates income. This is due to:

- The surplus on the fund at the end of 2020/21 being higher than estimated (-£1.119m);
- Reduction in the gross charge on rateable properties (£0.624m);
- A number of additional reliefs were announced after January 2020 to support businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. These include expanded retail discount, pub relief, newspaper relief, and private nursery relief. The loss of income as a result of these reliefs will be covered by Section 31 grant payments. Due to the timing of these announcements the impact of these reliefs could not be incorporated into the budget figures reported in the NNDR1 return (+£38.342m).

6.3 When taking into account the additional Section 31 grants due on the additional reliefs, a net surplus of £0.785m is forecast. However, it should be noted that this doesn't take account of the impact of the number of appeals being registered by businesses in response to the pandemic or the reduction in the amount of Business Rates being collected. A significant forecast deficit is therefore anticipated with the current estimate being a £7.0m deficit.

6.4 Due to Collection Fund regulations, a Business Rates deficit will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2020/21 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.

6.5 A forecast surplus of £0.622m was declared in January 2020. Sefton's share of this is £0.616m. This is the amount that will be distributed from the Collection Fund in 2020/21 and any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in future years.

7. **Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23**

7.1 **Capital Budget**

7.1.1 The Capital Budget and profile of expenditure for the three years 2020/21 to 2022/23 is as follows:

2020/21	£33.112m
2021/22	£31.651m
2022/23	£1.452m

7.1.2 Officers have conducted a full mid-year review of the Capital Programme and, mainly as a result of COVID19, the budget for 2020/2021 has reduced from £39.2m to £33.1m. The following updates have been made since the last report to Cabinet:

- **Adult Social Care:**

- £0.242m has been rephased to 2021/22 pending delivery of new vehicles for the replacement Community Equipment Stores fleet.
- £0.090m has been rephased from 2021/22 to 2020/21 to fund additional project work on ICT development and transformation.

- **Corporate Resources:**

- Victoria Baths Essential Works – £0.147m of works scheduled for 2021/22.

- **Growth and Strategic Investment:**

- An additional £0.900m has been added to the budget for Southport Market Redevelopment following an award of grant funding from the Southport Town Deal and approval by Council on 17th September 2020 for a supplementary capital estimate. This is in addition to the £0.500m already approved from the Town Centre Commission bringing the total project to £1.400m phased over 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years.
- £1.900m for Crosby Lakeside Development has been phased into 2021/22 following an evaluation of the impact of Covid-19 on proposals and the signing of the grant funding agreement with the Combined Authority.

Agenda Item 7

- Education Excellence:
 - £0.236m has been rephased to 2021/22 for schemes that are now programmed for delivery next year: Forefield Juniors, Linaker Primary, Waterloo Primary and Woodlands Primary.
 - £0.050m has been rephased to 2020/21 for initial fees on a SEND project at Rowan High 6th Form.
- Vehicle Replacement Programme:
 - £4.059m has now been rephased to 2021/22 following an update on the delivery timescales for new vehicles. A significant number of new cleansing vehicles will be delivered in May 2021 and this will fall within in the next financial year.

7.2 Budget Monitoring Position to October 2020

7.2.1 The current position of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of October 2020 is shown in the table below. It should be noted that budgets are profiled dependent upon the timing of when works are to be carried out and the anticipated spend over the financial year. For example, Education Excellence will typically carry out most of its capital works during key school's holiday periods such as the summer recess (quarter two), whilst Highways and Public Protection will complete most of its programmed works during quarters two and four. The budget to date in the table below reflects the profiles of each individual scheme.

Service Area	Budget to Oct-20	Actual Expenditure to Oct-20	Variance to Oct-20
	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care	0.747	0.837	0.090
Communities	0.089	0.077	-0.012
Corporate Resources	0.099	0.097	-0.002
Economic Growth & Housing	0.802	0.690	-0.112
Education Excellence	2.528	2.517	-0.011
Highways & Public Protection	5.592	5.703	0.111
Locality Services	0.704	0.678	-0.026
Total Programme	10.561	10.600	0.039

7.2.2 Due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, delivery of schemes during the first five months (April to September) has been relatively low and the budget has been profiled accordingly, similarly the opportunity to conduct large elements of the schools' programme during summer 2020 will also have been lost. It is anticipated that spending will increase towards the end of quarter two as contractors return on site to complete scheduled works. The budgets will therefore reflect increases in activity later in the year. It may also be necessary to reprofile allocations to future years where schemes have been delayed and cannot be completed in the current year. These schemes will be kept under review and any adjustments to the budgets will be reported to Cabinet on subsequent monitoring reports.

7.3 Capital Programme Forecast Outturn 2020/21

7.3.1 The current forecast of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of 2020/21 and the profile of budgets for future years is shown in the table below:

Service Area	Full Year Budget 2020/21	Forecast Out-turn	Variance to Budget	Full Year Budget for Ongoing Schemes 2021/22	Full Year Budget for Ongoing Schemes 2022/23
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care	2.721	2.901	0.180	7.885	-
Communities	0.258	0.258	-	0.265	-
Corporate Resources	1.463	1.463	-	4.077	-
Economic Growth & Housing	5.252	5.252	-	3.756	-
Education Excellence	3.411	3.352	-0.059	5.584	0.427
Highways & Public Protection	15.348	15.348	-	1.884	-
Locality Services	4.660	4.660	-	8.199	1.025
Total Programme	33.112	33.233	0.121	31.651	1.452

A full list of the capital programme by capital scheme is at **appendix A**.

7.3.2 Analysis of significant spend variations over budget profile in 2020/21:

Adult Social Care

Scheme	Variation	Reason	Action Plan
Disabled Facilities Grants	£207,113	Forecast over-achievement against initial estimates for provision of grants in 2020/21.	External funding, available through the Better Care Fund, can be utilised to meet the extra demand.

Education Excellence

Scheme	Variation	Reason	Action Plan
Linaker Primary – Additional 1 Form Entry Classroom	-£59,631	Project is now complete and a saving on the scheme has been identified.	Surplus resources will be used to fund essential works on the Schools General Planned Maintenance budget.

7.3.3 Schemes will be kept under review, but it is anticipated that due to the limited amount of resource available to complete delivery, plus the impact of COVID-19, some schemes may have to be rescheduled into 2021/22 financial year. An update will be provided on subsequent monitoring reports.

Agenda Item 7

7.4 Ainsdale Coastal Gateway

7.4.1 Ainsdale Beach saw significant visitor numbers in 2020. To cope with these additional visitors, beach parking was provided free of charge for a number of months until August and portable temporary toilets and skips were provided to deal with the extra numbers.

7.4.2 There are now opportunities for improvements to parking facilities at the coastal gateway in advance of the 2021 summer season, that will mitigate the impact of larger visitor numbers on local communities and will create long-term revenue streams for the council.

7.4.3 It is proposed to make a capital investment in the Ainsdale Gateway over Winter 2020, so that by Spring/Summer 2021 there are new and semi-permanent facilities in place to provide for anticipated increased visitor numbers, to reduce impact on local communities, and to create potential income streams.

7.4.4 Cabinet is therefore recommended to recommend to Council to approve a supplementary capital estimate of £0.352m for inclusion in the capital programme funded by Council resources (Public Works Loans Borrowing and other available funding sources) the cost of which will be met from income generated. In the event of a deficit existing this will be funded by the service's existing revenue budget.

7.5 Bootle Strategic Acquisitions – Phase Two

7.5.1 The 2020/21 capital programme includes a budget of £0.749m for the acquisition of land and property adjacent to the Strand Shopping Centre in Bootle. This is a key regeneration and economic development project for the Council and the acquisitions are fully funded by a grant from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (CA).

7.5.2 Further funding of £0.650m (as per the October Cabinet Budget Report) has now been secured from the CA for the second phase of the project to carry out demolition and temporary site treatment work to enable wider repurposing of the site. To support this work and the ongoing acquisitions, of the two-year Essential Maintenance Programme approved in January 2020, £0.149m will now need to be deployed on this Strand project as per the original CA grant conditions. Approval is therefore sought for a capital virement of £0.149m from the Essential Maintenance budget to the Bootle Strategic Acquisitions budget for phase two in 2021/22.

7.6 Programme Funding

7.6.1 The table below shows how the capital programme will be funding in 2020/21:

Source	£m
Grants	23.630
Contributions (incl. Section 106)	0.671
Capital Receipts	1.577
Prudential Borrowing	7.234
Total Programme Funding	33.112

7.6.2 The programme is reviewed on an ongoing basis to confirm the capital resources required to finance capital expenditure are in place, the future years programme is fully funded, and the level of prudential borrowing remains affordable.

7.6.3 The Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services will continue to manage the financing of the programme to ensure the final capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council.

Agenda Item 7

APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23

Capital Project	Budget		
	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
Adult Social Care			
Care Homes - Fire Alarms & Emergency Lighting	102,000	-	-
Core DFG Programme	666,000	1,158,000	-
Wider Social Care Programme	1,952,773	6,726,937	-
Communities			
Crosby Lakeside Watersports	2,217	-	-
Libraries - Centres of Excellence	83,623	265,088	-
Bootle Library	38,749	-	-
S106 - Derby – South Park Hut Extension	50,614	-	-
S106 - St Oswalds – Marion Gardens Play Equipment	3,022	-	-
S106 - Netherton & Orrell – Abbeyfield Park Play Area	11,942	-	-
S106 - Cambridge – Hesketh Park Improvement Works	15,016	-	-
S106 - Netherton & Orrell – Zebra Crossing, Park Ln West	19,540	-	-
S106 - Linacre - Strand Living Wall	33,000	-	-
Corporate Resources			
Corporate Maintenance	17,799	2,631,283	-
STCC Essential Maintenance	100,000	1,298,634	-
Victoria Baths Essential Works	393,873	147,374	-
St John Stone Site - Infrastructure Works	623,210	-	-
Magdalen House Alterations	44,004	-	-
ICT Transformation	30,038	-	-
Southport Town Hall Community Base	7,872	-	-
Family Wellbeing Centres	245,738	-	-
Economic Growth & Housing			
Housing Investment (HMRI)	18,078	36,180	-
Southport Pier Project	179,920	-	-
Strategic Acquisitions - Land at Bootle	1,398,500	-	-
Town Centre Fund	-	250,000	-
Southport Market Redevelopment	900,000	500,000	-
Cambridge Road Centre Development	1,253,717	70,000	-
Crosby Lakeside (CLAC) Development	1,200,000	1,900,000	-
Strategic Acquisitions - Sandbrook Way	301,859	1,000,000	-
Education Excellence			
Healthy Pupils Fund	26,241	-	-
Schools Programme	2,292,439	4,847,690	401,625
Planned Maintenance	400,831	-	-
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities	691,238	736,499	25,000
Highways and Public Protection			
Accessibility	107,320	180,000	-
Completing Schemes/Retentions	20,000	-	-
Healthy Lifestyles	2,912,200	148,000	-
Road Safety	140,000	-	-

Agenda Item 7

	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
A565 Route Management and Parking	1,090,000	970,000	-
Strategic Planning	303,000	45,000	-
Traffic Management and Parking	1,064,550	40,000	-
Emergency Active Travel Fund	610,457	-	-
Port Access	179,000	-	-
Highway Maintenance	4,425,433	400,000	-
Bridges & Structures	232,670	1,000	-
Drainage	50,000	-	-
Street Lighting Maintenance	300,000	-	-
UTC Maintenance	193,660	-	-
Winter Service Facility	2,632,000	-	-
Major Transport Schemes	1,087,500	100,000	-
Locality Services			
Burials & Cremation Insourcing - Vehicles & Equipment	135,210	-	-
Formby Strategic Flood Risk Management Programme	-	43,851	-
Merseyside Groundwater Study	10,000	21,508	-
Four Acres Multi Agency Flood Options	-	1,570	-
CERMS	458,213	220,000	-
Natural Flood Risk Management	10,000	-	-
The Pool & Nile Watercourses	38,179	-	-
Crosby Flood & Coastal Scheme	56,439	48,561	785,839
Seaforth & Litherland Strategic Flood Risk	-	30,000	-
Hall Road & Alt Training Bank – Rock Armour	6,000	44,000	-
Ainsdale & Birkdale Land Drainage Scheme	4,000	25,340	-
Surface Water Management Plan	134,478	-	-
Surface Water Modelling & Mapping	20,020	-	-
Small Watercourse Works	15,000	-	-
Water Level Monitoring Pilot	18,000	-	-
Parks Schemes	119,112	163,455	-
Tree Planting Programme	85,750	38,600	126,783
Golf Driving Range Developments	256,080	280,280	-
Green Sefton – Plant & Machinery	300,000	-	-
Vehicle Replacement Programme	1,344,000	7,281,905	113,000
Wheeled Bins	1,650,000	-	-
TOTAL PROGRAMME	33,112,124	31,650,755	1,452,247

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Agenda Item 8

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)	Date of Meeting:	5 January 2021
	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)		12 January 2021
	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)		19 January 2021
	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)		26 January 2021
Subject:	Executive/Scrutiny Protocol		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To advise of the decision of Cabinet (Minute No. 69) of its meeting held on 3 December 2020 approving the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol for use in Sefton.

Recommendation:

That the decision of Cabinet in approving the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol for use in Sefton be noted and welcomed.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To comply with previous decisions of the Cabinet, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees seeking the production of an Executive/Scrutiny Protocol in Sefton.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

Agenda Item 8

No alternative options have been considered because the production of an Executive/Scrutiny Protocol in Sefton was requested by Cabinet.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

There are no direct financial implications arising from the production the protocol. Any financial implications that do arise will be reported to the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees at the appropriate time.

(A) Revenue Costs

See above

(B) Capital Costs

See above

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): None
Legal Implications: None
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: None directly applicable to this report.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: None directly applicable to this report.
Commission, broker and provide core services: The development of an Executive / Scrutiny protocol should improve relationships between Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Members and contribute towards more effective scrutiny in Sefton.
Place – leadership and influencer: As above
Drivers of change and reform: As above
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: None directly applicable to this report.
Greater income for social investment: None directly applicable to this report.
Cleaner Greener: None directly applicable to this report.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD 6213/20) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4405/20) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following this meeting.

Contact Officer:	Paul Fraser
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2068
Email Address:	Paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

Executive/Scrutiny Protocol – Appendix A

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 Members will be aware that during the last cycle of meetings the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board recommended that that Cabinet approve an Executive / Scrutiny Protocol. The Protocol had been produced by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

2. Cabinet Consideration

2.1 At its meeting held on 3 December 2020 Cabinet considered the Executive / Scrutiny Protocol and approved its use in Sefton.

2.2 At the Cabinet meeting, Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services highlighted the importance of a similar approach in engaging with and holding Partners to account.

2.3 The Protocol has now been published on the Council's website and will be used as part of future Member Induction and Member Development Programmes.

3. Conclusion

3.1 This report is for information and to advise that Cabinet had approved the Executive / Scrutiny Protocol for use in Sefton.

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EXECUTIVE / SCRUTINY PROTOCOL



ONECOUNCIL Working Together

Agenda Item 8

APPENDIX A

PROTOCOL ON EXECUTIVE & OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RELATIONS IN SEFTON

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aims of the Protocol
3. Functions of Overview and Scrutiny
4. The Conduct of Meetings
5. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme
6. Pre-Scrutiny
7. “Call-In” of Decisions
8. Working Group Reviews
9. Public Participation in the Overview and Scrutiny Process
10. Specific Duty of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) – Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements

APPENDIX A

1. Introduction

- 1.2 This Protocol applies to all Members of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committees, co-opted members who sit on O&S Committees, all Members of the Cabinet and senior officers.
- 1.3 The Protocol is not intended to replace *Chapter 6 – Overview and Scrutiny* of the Council's [Constitution](#), nor is intended to replace *Chapter 2 – Members – Code of Conduct*, rather it is intended to enhance and supplement the requirements of the Constitution and set out guidance for good practice.
- 1.4 Scrutiny should be a strategic function of the authority. It should be central to the organisation's corporate governance; a crucial cog in the decision-making machine.

2. Aims of the Protocol:

- 2.1 Clarify Relationships
- 2.2 The aim of the Protocol is to clarify relationships between O&S Members and Cabinet Members, to ensure an efficient O&S function, including holding the Cabinet to account on behalf of the electorate, and to encourage good communication between O&S and the Cabinet.
- 2.3 Positive Interaction
- 2.4 The Protocol refers to the respective powers, roles and responsibilities for both O&S Members and Cabinet Members. Guidance is set out on the way in which both O&S Members and Cabinet Members should interact, in order that Members maximise their roles and for the Authority to have an effective O&S function for the benefit of the Council as a whole. It also offers guidance to senior officers who support this process.
- 2.5 Promote a Culture of Mutual Respect
- 2.6 The Protocol aims to promote a culture of mutual respect, trust and courtesy in the relationships between O&S Members, Cabinet Members and senior officers, and to foster a climate of openness leading to constructive debate and communication, with a view to ensuring service improvements for the benefit of Sefton citizens.
- 2.7 Parity of Esteem
- 2.8 "Parity of esteem" means that the scrutiny function of the Council deserves the same respect, and has the same importance in the governance system, as

Agenda Item 8

APPENDIX A

executive decision-making activities. Requests from scrutiny to engage with, and recommended changes to, policies, plans and activities should be treated with the same respect and consideration as if they came from a Cabinet Member.

3. Functions of Overview and Scrutiny

3.1 The general role and specific functions of the O&S Committees can be found within Chapter 6 of the Council's Constitution. The key responsibilities of O&S are to:

- (a) Hold the Cabinet, Cabinet Members and senior officers to account for their decisions, on behalf of the electorate;
- (b) Review Council policy, the way policies are implemented and their impact on local citizens;
- (c) Scrutinise Executive decisions before they are made and before they are implemented; and
- (d) Contribute to the development of policy by investigating issues of local concern and making recommendations to the Cabinet, to the Council and to partner organisations.

4. The Conduct of Meetings

- 4.1 Cabinet Members are actively encouraged to attend meetings of O&S Committees relevant to their Portfolio, in order to present their Cabinet Member Update Reports and to respond to questions/comments from O&S Members.
- 4.2 Cabinet Members may be required to attend meetings of O&S Committees in particular circumstances, e.g. the consideration of "called-in" items.
- 4.3 The principle of the "critical friend" should always be adhered to between Scrutiny Members and Cabinet Members, senior officers and any external partners.
- 4.4 All Members should promote an atmosphere of openness at the O&S Committee meetings and should strive to ensure that questioning and debate takes place within a climate of mutual respect and trust.
- 4.5 O&S Committee Members should be prepared to ask searching questions and where necessary, provide constructive challenge to Cabinet Members on issues that fall under their Portfolio.

APPENDIX A

- 4.6 Cabinet Members should be willing to respond to any question put. However, it should be noted that that Cabinet Members may not necessarily be in a position to answer every question immediately or in detail. In such circumstances the matter may be referred to a senior officer in attendance or a written answer may be sought.
- 4.7 Cabinet Members should value the contribution of O&S Committee Members who raise issues and respond in an appropriate and manner, in order to make a positive contribution to Scrutiny meetings.
- 4.8 Cabinet Members should, with the permission of the Chair, be permitted by the O&S Committee to speak upon any item on the agenda under discussion and may at any time offer to assist the Committee by the provision of factual information or advice in relation to the matters under discussion.
- 4.9 The Chair, supported by senior officers, shall provide leadership and guidance to the Committee on all scrutiny matters and shall promote the Committee's role in improving services and monitoring the effectiveness of Council policies, through effective scrutiny.
- 4.10 Party politics and the use of the Party Whip shall be avoided during O&S Committees.
- 4.11 Senior officers shall liaise and agree their attendance at meetings of O&S Committees during the Municipal Year.

5. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

- 5.1 The Council's Strategic Leadership Board, comprised of the Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Heads of Service, shall be invited to identify any appropriate items for inclusion in the Work Programme of O&S Committees.
- 5.2 The Work Programme of items submitted to O&S Committees at the beginning of each Municipal Year shall be drafted in liaison with the appropriate Heads of Service, whose roles fall under the remit of the Committee.
- 5.3 A manageable number of items should be identified in order to demonstrate that the scrutiny function "adds value" to the Council.
- 5.4 The O&S Committees will be responsible for setting their own work programme.
- 5.5 O&S Members are reminded at each meeting that they are able to request other items for inclusion within the Work Programme, provided such items fall within the terms of reference of the Committee.

Agenda Item 8

APPENDIX A

- 5.6 A Member of an O&S Committee is entitled to give notice to the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that they wish an item relevant to the functions of the Committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Committee.
- 5.7 The Cabinet and/or the Council may refer a matter to one or more O&S Committees.
- 5.8 The Chair of the O&S Committee may consider alternative methods of dealing with items in order to avoid over-loading Committee agendas. These may include informal presentations, visits to front-line services, site visits / informal discussions with external partners, etc.
- 6. Pre-Scrutiny**
- 6.1 The Key Decision Forward Plan sets out the list of items to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration during the following four-month period. The Forward Plan is updated and published each month. The Forward Plan appears on the Council's website and an email alert is sent to all Members of the Council when a new Forward Plan is published.
- 6.2 A summary of the latest Forward Plan, setting out the Key Decisions that fall under the remit of each O&S Committee, is submitted to each meeting of the O&S Committees and appears under the Work Programme item, a standing item on each O&S agenda.
- 6.3 O&S Members should peruse Decisions to be taken and may request to pre-scrutinise items from the Key Decision Forward Plan that fall under the remit (terms of reference) of the O&S Committee.
- 6.4 The pre-scrutiny process assists the Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made. Pre-scrutiny can be used to resolve potential disagreements.
- 6.5 Any items agreed for pre-scrutiny will be included within the O&S Committee's work programme.
- 6.6 Where O&S Committees request to pre-scrutinise a Key Decision, the relevant Cabinet Member should endeavour to attend the meeting concerned, in order to respond to questions, and consider the views put by O&S Members.
- 6.7 Relevant senior officers shall attend an O&S Committee meeting where a Key Decision is pre-scrutinised by O&S Members, in order to respond to questions, and consider the views put by those Members.

APPENDIX A

- 6.8 Cabinet Members may wish to seek views from Scrutiny Members on a Key Decision, particularly on policy development and review, before it is taken. The relevant senior officer will be responsible for forwarding the details through to the Scrutiny Manager for inclusion on the agenda.
- 6.9 The O&S Committee may express views or make recommendations in relation to Decisions to be taken.
- 6.10 The Cabinet will consider any recommendations or views expressed by the O&S Committees and to take such action it sees fit.
- 6.11 Utilising the option for pre-scrutiny does not exclude the Decision from being subject to “call-in”. However, it will allow the Cabinet Member(s) the ability to consider different views and perspectives of a Decision, before it is taken and avoid potential conflict and a requirement for “call-in”.
- 6.12 Heads of Service shall be requested to identify any policy/strategy items for pre-scrutiny by the relevant O&S Committee.

7. “Call-In” of Decisions

- 7.1 Decisions taken by the Cabinet appear within the Minutes of Cabinet Meetings. The Minutes indicate the “call-in” period for the Decisions made.
- 7.2 Decisions taken by individual Cabinet Members are subject to “call-in”, are published on the Council’s website, and an email alert is sent to all Members of the Council.
- 7.3 “Call-in” can occur when three non-Executive Members have reasons/evidence to challenge the Decision, based on the guidance set out within Chapter 6 of the Council’s Constitution.
- 7.4 A decision shall only be the subject of one “call-in” by non-Executive Members.
- 7.5 Non-Executive Members shall refer to a specific Decision and in instigating the “call-in”, are required to provide as much information, detail, explanation, evidence and/or facts as possible, within the requisition. This will enable appropriate officers to determine whether the “call-in” is valid or not.
- 7.6 Non-Executive Members shall trigger the “call-in” electronically, using the Council’s Modgov system. This will alert the relevant officers and prevent the Decision from being actioned.

Agenda Item 8

APPENDIX A

- 7.7 During 2017/18, the O&S Management Board developed a [Call-In Procedure](#) to be used at O&S Committees when dealing with “called-in” items. This was agreed by the four O&S Committees and shall be adhered to at all meetings held to consider “call-in items”.
- 7.8 The following are required to attend the O&S Committee meeting to consider the “called-in” item, in order to address O&S Members on the item and respond to questions / comments raised by O&S Members:
- (a) the lead “call-in” Member;
 - (b) the Leader of the Council and/or relevant Cabinet Member; and
 - (c) relevant senior officer representative(s).
- 7.9 Only the lead call-in Member shall be permitted to:
- Address the O&S Committee, explaining the reason for “call-in”;
 - Respond to questions put by Committee Members; and
 - Sum up the case for “call-in”.
- 7.10 Subject to the agreement of the O&S Committee, a representative of the public may make representations in relation to the “called-in” item, in accordance with the Call-In Procedure previously agreed by O&S Committees.
- 7.11 The “call-in” procedure should not be abused. It should not be used as a substitute for early involvement in the decision-making process. Its use as a party-political tool should be avoided.

8. Working Group Reviews

- 8.1 Heads of Service will be requested to consider potential topics for review via the Strategic Leadership Board and these will be submitted to O&S Committees for consideration, along with any other suggestions from O&S Members. The Committee shall approve any topics to be reviewed.
- 8.2 The [Criteria Checklist for Selecting Topics for Review](#) shall be considered in approving topics to be reviewed.
- 8.3 At least 3 Members of the Committee shall be required to sit on a Working Group and one Member will be appointed as the Lead Member. Co-opted Members may sit on a Working Group.
- 8.4 Heads of Service have a valuable role to play in the review process in terms of suggesting appropriate topics for review, possibly contributing to the scope for the review, the provision of factual evidence, and identifying suitable witnesses.

APPENDIX A

Officers involved in the review shall be open and honest in their discussions with Working Group Members.

- 8.5 The role of the Lead Officer for the review will be to assist in drafting the scope for the review, to provide professional advice and to ensure access to relevant information and personnel for Working Group Members.
- 8.6 Further to a report on Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities being agreed by O&S Committees during October/November 2019, Working Groups shall consider if it is appropriate to seek the views of the general public on the matter under their consideration and, if so, how this should be carried out.
- 8.7 Working Group meetings shall be conducted in the manner outlined within paragraph 4 above. Working Group Members shall adhere to the principle of the “critical friend” during the course of a review. Constructive challenge may be adopted during discussions with Council officers, external partners, key stakeholders, etc. However, a culture of mutual respect shall be maintained at all times.
- 8.8 A final report, including any recommendations from the Working Group, will be drafted by the relevant officer from Democratic Services to reflect the views and wishes of the Working Group concerned, subject to any legal and/or financial implications provided by Legal and Finance officers.
- 8.9 Recommendations may be produced that impact on the Council or external partners.
- 8.10 The final report will be presented to the parent O&S Committee, the Cabinet, and finally to full Council.
- 8.11 The Lead Member of the Working Group concerned will normally present the final report to the Cabinet and to the Council. Where this is not possible, an alternative Member of the Working Group will be asked to present.
- 8.12 The relevant senior officer shall ensure that an update on the implementation of recommendations is presented to the parent Committee approximately six months following approval of the final report by the Council. Actions taken since approval of the recommendations should be outlined within the update, together with progress on any implementation required. Where actions have not been carried out, reasons should be given, together with an anticipated timeline for implementation.

9. Public Participation in the Overview and Scrutiny Process

Agenda Item 8

APPENDIX A

- 9.1 O&S Members should represent the voice of the public.
- 9.2 As outlined in paragraph 3.1 above, key responsibilities of O&S are to:
 - (a) Hold the Cabinet, Cabinet Members and senior officers to account for their decisions, on behalf of the electorate; and
 - (b) Review Council policy, the way policies are implemented and their impact on local citizens;
- 9.3 The Constitution indicates that O&S Committees allow citizens to have a greater say in Council matters by holding public inquiries into matters of local concern.
- 9.4 Citizens may contribute to Council considerations by participating in question time at Council meetings, making representations to the Cabinet, a Cabinet Member or a Committee and may be asked to contribute to O&S Working Group reviews.
- 9.5 The Council's petitions scheme, detailed within the Constitution, allows citizens to address O&S Committees.
- 9.6 As outlined in paragraph 7.11 above, subject to the agreement of the O&S Committee, a representative of the public may make representations in relation to the "called-in" item, in accordance with the Call-In Procedure previously agreed by O&S Committees.
- 9.7 As outlined in paragraph 9.5 above, O&S Working Groups shall consider if it is appropriate to seek the views of the general public on the matter under their consideration and, if so, how this should be carried out.
- 9.8 Senior officers may advise O&S Committees of particular matters of public concern, with a view to the possible establishment of a Working Group review to address such matters.
- 10. Specific Duty of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) – Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements**
- 10.1 Local authorities may review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service in its area.
- 10.2 The NHS Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012) places a statutory duty on commissioners and providers of NHS / health services to consult local authority health overview and scrutiny committees on any proposals for significant development or substantial variation/reconfiguration in health services.

APPENDIX A

- 10.3 Section 30 of The Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 provides that where more than one local authority is consulted on proposals for significant development or substantial variation in health services, a joint overview and scrutiny committee may be established to comment on the proposals for change.
- 10.4 The Council has delegated its duties relating to health services to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health).
- 10.5 At its meeting on 3 June 2014, the Council approved the [Protocol for the Establishment of Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements for Cheshire and Merseyside](#).
- 10.6 The Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) shall adhere to the Protocol in relation to substantial variations and joint health scrutiny arrangements.

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**Cabinet Member Brief
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
(Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)
12 January 2021**

Welfare Reform & Anti-Poverty Update

The Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Cabinet Member Reference Group met on 16 December 2020. The following updates were received:

Winter Programmes

Officers from Communities reported on two new funding streams to local authorities across the country from Central Government. One is to support local authorities to provide ongoing advice and direct support for clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) residents in the borough. The other fund is called a Covid Winter Grant Scheme and is to enable local authorities to provide support to children, families and individuals between until 31 March 2021.

Officers also updated Cabinet Members regarding opportunities for the local authority to bid for community champions funding and holiday activity funding. Cabinet Members noted and endorsed the development of bids for these funding streams.

Cabinet Members noted updates regarding the food programmes, affordable warmth, winter coats and the Mayor's toy appeal.

Healthy Start Vouchers

Public health officers provided an overview regarding healthy start voucher scheme, a government scheme to improve the health of low-income pregnant women and families on benefits and tax credits. Women who are at least 10 weeks pregnant and families with children under four years old and are in receipt of qualifying benefits are eligible for healthy start. Women also qualify during the whole of their pregnancy if they are under 18 when they apply, even if they don't receive any benefits or tax credits.

In Sefton, application forms for healthy start vouchers are provided by health visitors and midwives or applied for online directly by the applicant.

Cabinet Members raised concerns regarding the low uptake of the healthy start vouchers in Sefton and it is requested for officers to develop an action plan to develop a greater understanding of the barriers and to work with partners to encourage take up.

Childhood Poverty

Cabinet Members recognised that a lot of work is taking place to support families within the borough and the need to also focus on childhood poverty as a thematic priority under welfare reform and anti-poverty was agreed.

It was noted that poverty has a significant impact on physical and mental wellbeing issues, and infant mortality.

Cabinet Members emphasised the need to fully understand childhood poverty in Sefton. Officers are requested to work with internal groups and community voluntary partners and report on local data to develop an understanding of childhood poverty in Sefton and inform planning.

Agenda Item 9

Cabinet Members also emphasised the need for childhood poverty to be a theme consistent throughout policies and plans for welfare reform and anti-poverty and the Council.

Debt Issues

Cabinet Members and officers discussed the impact of redundancies in the latter part of 2020, the full consequences of which are expected to be felt in 2021 when government funding and support is removed.

Officers highlighted that there is a new portion of the population who are experiencing financial disruption who have not accessed welfare or other support before. It was noted that a pilot has taken place in Lydiate to support those finding themselves in this situation.

Officers from Customer Centric Services provided Cabinet Members with an update in relation to universal credit and discretionary funds.

ELAS Update

Cabinet Members received a report providing a summary of demand and provision for the period 1 April 2020 – 29 November 2020.

There has been an increase in applications for ELAS being received compared to previous periods reported. It was noted that additional resource has been allocated to support ELAS.

Overall, 3,768 applications have been received for the specified period of which 59% were awarded.

Mental Wellbeing

The negative legacy of the covid pandemic was discussed in relation to the impact of mental wellbeing. Issues highlighted include the impacts upon mental wellbeing of:

- redundancy and debt
- loss of loved ones
- family break-up
- loss of loved ones.

Public health officers reported that Sefton has not seen an increase in suicide rates, however, it is noted from the partnership that there is an increase in clients reporting suicidal thoughts and self-harm.

It was reported to Cabinet Members that there is a small fund being utilised to support the mental wellbeing of middle-aged men in the borough.

Cabinet Members endorsed the use of a proportion of the unringfenced covid funds to be utilised to promote good mental wellbeing and support people accessing the correct services.

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	12 January, 2021
Subject:	Work Programme 2020/21, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To seek the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for 2020/21, identify potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by a Working Group(s) appointed by the Committee; identify any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; receive an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and receive an update on the Armed Forces Covenant/Toolkit.

Recommendation:

That:

- (1) the Work Programme for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be considered, along with any additional items to be included and thereon be agreed;
- (2) the Committee considers the establishment of a Working Group to review a topic during the remainder of the 2020/21 Municipal Year;
- (3) the Committee considers items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, which fall under the remit of the Committee and any agreed items be included in the work programme referred to in (1) above;
- (4) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (5) the update on the Armed Forces Covenant/Toolkit be noted; and
- (6) the update on the Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Strategy be noted.

Agenda Item 10

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To consider the Work Programme of items to be considered during the Municipal Year 2020/21 and identify scrutiny review topics which would demonstrate that the work of the Overview and Scrutiny 'adds value' to the Council. To comply with a decision of the Committee to update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The pre-scrutiny process assists Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues before making formal decisions.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

No alternative options have been considered as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to approve its Work Programme and identify scrutiny review topics.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications arising from the consideration of a key decision or relating to a recommendation arising from a Working Group review will be reported to Members at the appropriate time.

(A) Revenue Costs – see above

(B) Capital Costs – see above

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): None
Legal Implications: None
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: None directly applicable to this report but reference in the Work Programme to the approval of, and monitoring of recommendations contained in Digital inclusion Working Group Final Report will help with the aim of ensuring that people have the capability to use the internet to do things that benefit them on a day to day basis - whether they be individuals, businesses or other entities e.g. the voluntary sector; and aim to reduce digital exclusion and the digital divide that can exist within society for a variety of reasons.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: None directly applicable to this report. See reference to the Digital Inclusion Working Group referred to above.
Commission, broker and provide core services: None directly applicable to this report but reference in the Work Programme to the presentation on the update on the Commissioning and the Procurement Policy will raise awareness of associated issues with Members. The Working Group established by the Committee to review the Council's Ethical Business Practices will look into ethical procurement. See also reference to the Digital Inclusion Working Group referred to above.

Place – leadership and influencer: None directly applicable to this report.
Drivers of change and reform: None directly applicable to this report. See reference to the Digital Inclusion Working Group referred to above.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: None directly applicable to this report. See reference to the Digital Inclusion Working Group referred to above.
Greater income for social investment: None directly applicable to this report.
Cleaner Greener: None directly applicable to this report but reference in the Work Programme to the submission of the report on Air Quality Monitoring will raise awareness of associated issues with Members.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Work Programme Report is not subject to FD/LD consultation. Any specific financial and legal implications associated with any subsequent reports arising from the report will be included in those reports as appropriate

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

Contact Officer:	Paul Fraser
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2068
Email Address:	paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2020/21 – Appendix 1
- Criteria Checklist for Selecting Topics for Review – Appendix 2
- Latest Key Decision Forward Plan items relating to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Appendix 3
- Bronze Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – Appendix 4

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Introduction/Background

1. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

- 1.1 The Work Programme of items to be submitted to the Committee for consideration during the Municipal Year 2020/21 is set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The programme has been produced in liaison with the appropriate Heads of Service, whose roles fall under the remit of the Committee.

Agenda Item 10

1.2 Members are requested to consider whether there are any other items that they wish the Committee to consider, that fall within the terms of reference of the Committee. The Work Programme will be submitted to each meeting of the Committee during 2020/21 and updated, as appropriate.

1.6 The Committee is requested to comment on the Work Programme for 2020/21; and note that additional items may be submitted to the Programme at future meetings of the Committee during this Municipal Year.

2. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS 2020/21

2.1 It is usual practise for the Committee to appoint a Working Group(s) to undertake a scrutiny review of services during the Municipal Year.

2.2 Last year the Committee agreed to establish a Working Group to review the topic of the Council's Ethical Business Practices. This review has now been completed. Previous meetings of the Committee have not established a new Working Group.

2.3 The Committee's views are therefore sought on the establishment of a new Working Group for 2020/21; and the appointment of Members to serve on it.

2.4 A criteria checklist for selecting and rejecting potential topics to review is attached at Appendix 2.

3. PRE-SCRUTINY OF ITEMS IN THE KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

3.1 Members may request to pre-scrutinise items from the Key Decision Forward Plan which fall under the remit (terms of reference) of this Committee. The Forward Plan which is updated each month, sets out the list of items to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration during the next four-month period.

3.2 The pre-scrutiny process assists the Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.

3.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has requested that only those key decisions that fall under the remit of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be included on the agenda for consideration.

3.4 The latest Forward Plan is attached at Appendix 3 for this purpose. For ease of identification, items listed on the Forward Plan for the first time appear as shaded.

3.5 Should Members require further information in relation to any item on the Key Decision Forward Plan, would they please contact the relevant Officer named against the item in the Plan, prior to the Meeting.

3.6 The Committee is invited to consider items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, which fall under the remit of the Committee and any agreed items be included in the Work Programme

referred to in (1) above.

4. LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.1 As Members will be aware the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees considered a report on the guidance produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government relating to Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities following on from the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's inquiry into Overview and Scrutiny. This Committee considered the matter at its meeting held on 22 October 2019 (Minute No. 20).

4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees all agreed the recommendations contained in the report, one of which being that updates on Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (LCRCAO&S) be included in the Work Programme report considered at each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

4.3 In accordance with the above decision, information on the LCRCAO&S is set out below.

4.4 Role

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established by the Combined Authority in May 2017 in accordance with the Combined Authorities Order 2017.

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to:

- Scrutinise the decision and actions taken by the Combined Authority or the Metro Mayor;
- Provide a 'critical friend to policy and strategy development;
- Undertake scrutiny reviews into areas of strategic importance for the people of the Liverpool City Region; and
- Monitor the delivery of the Combined Authority's strategic plan.

4.5 Membership

The Committee is made up of 3 elected Members from each of the constituent Local Authorities of the LCR Combined Authority, along with one elected Member from both the Liverpool City Region Liberal Democrat Group and the Liverpool City Region Conservative Group.

Sefton's appointed Members are Councillors Dowd, Howard and Waterfield. Councillor Dowd is Sefton's Scrutiny Link.

Councillors Pugh and Sir Ron Watson are the respective representatives of the Liverpool City Region Liberal Democrat Group and the Liverpool City Region Conservative Group.

Agenda Item 10

4.6 Chair

The Chair of the LCRCAO&S cannot be a Member of the majority group. Councillor Thomas Crone, a Green Party Councillor serving on Liverpool City Council has been appointed Chair for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

4.7 Quoracy Issues

A high number of meetings of the LCRCAO&S have been inquorate.

The quorum for meetings of the LCRCAO&S is 14, two-thirds of the total number of members, 20. This high threshold is not set by the Combined Authority but is set out in legislation.

The Combined Authority's Monitoring Officer will be looking to work with the Monitoring Officers from the other Combined Authorities to identify what problems they are experiencing with Scrutiny and how/if they had overcome them. Representations to Government would also be considered once all options locally to resolve the quorum issue had been exhausted. The CA Monitoring Officer would then be able to provide evidence to Government that the quorum level was obstructing the work of scrutiny within the CA.

4.8 Meetings

Information on all meetings and membership of the LCRCAO&S can be obtained using the following link

<https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=365&Year=0>

4 November 2020

The last meeting of the LCRCAO&S was held on 4 November 2020 and considered the following items:

- Metro Mayor S Rotheram's Update
- Youth Unemployment
- The Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy - Phase 2 Engagement Proposals
- Finalising the Liverpool City Region's Air Quality Action Plan
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019-20
- Public Engagement at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- LCR LEP Task and Finish Review - Outcome of Consideration by the LCR LEP Board & The LCR Combined Authority
- Work Programme 2020/21
- Public Engagement at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Details of all the meetings can be obtained using the link referred to above.

4.9 The Committee is requested to note the update on the Liverpool City Region

Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5. ARMED FORCES COVENANT/TOOLKIT

5.1 In accordance with the Committee's Work Programme Members had requested regular updates regarding the Armed Forces Toolkit. The following information can now be provided.

5.2 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served, and their families, are treated fairly. This commitment is made in recognition of the sacrifices they make on behalf of the country. The Armed Forces Covenant is not designed to give the Armed Forces, Veterans and their families' preferential treatment compared with other citizens but it should ensure that they get a fair deal and are not disadvantaged because of their Service.

The Armed Forces Covenant relies on the government, communities, businesses, and individuals of the UK to actively support it in order to make a difference. Local Authorities are at the heart of that support group. The six councils in the Liverpool City Region have all signed the Covenant, and this ensures that they are working hard to make sure that Servicemen and women, veterans and their families get a fair deal.

The Armed Forces Community is part of the local community, and as such, ensuring that they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged should be integrated into all the services, support, engagement and work councils do in their local community.

5.3 When considering how local authorities should approach the Armed Forces Covenant they need to be mindful that underlying the promise that the Armed Forces Community should be treated fairly lay two principles:

- The Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases for those who have given the most, such as the injured, psychologically scarred, or bereaved.

Via email correspondence between the City Region Lead Officer and the Merseyside Officers It was agreed that as a next step the City Region Covenant should apply for the Bronze Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme; and each authority was tasked to fill out the paperwork which was not exhaustive. Sefton was successfully awarded this on 17 March 2020. The next stage of this is to look at achieving the silver and gold award.

A copy of the Bronze Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme is attached as Appendix 4

5.4 In terms of the actual 'toolkit' document there have not been any current updates. However as this is a constantly evolving document, further updates may occur in the new year. To this end, there is a meeting scheduled for Tuesday 5 January

Agenda Item 10

2021 were there may be further updates on the document.

5.5 Any updates from the meeting on 5 January 2021 will be reported to the meeting.

6. DIGITAL INCLUSION

6.1 The Work Programme indicates that a report would be submitted to this meeting updating on progress of the Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Strategy.

6.2 Andrea Watts, Executive Director has advised that the LCR digital Infrastructure programme is in the process of procuring a joint venture partner – due to be announced on 15th January 2021.

The LCR Digital Strategy is currently out for consultation until 13th Jan 2021 and is available at the following link

<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/engagement-campaign-launched-on-liverpool-city-region-digital-strategy/>

The Council's digital strategy is on the Forward Plan for Cabinet in February 2021

Both of the last 2 strategies include sections on digital inclusion.

APPENDIX 1

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

	16 JUNE 20	8 SEPTEMBER 20	20 OCTOBER 20	12 JANUARY 21	9 FEBRUARY 21 (BUDGET MEETING)	2 MARCH 21
Cabinet Member Update Report - Paul Fraser			X	X		X
Work Programme - Update Paul Fraser		X	X	X		X
Service Operational Reports:						
Covid-19 Response – Dwayne Johnson		X				
Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Stephan Van Arendsen				X		
Disposal of Surplus Council Owned Land/Asset - Management Strategy Stephan Van Arendsen			X			
“Manage my Requests” (iCaseWork) system – Statistical Update Report - Wayne Leatherbarrow			X			
Members’ Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update Margaret Jones			X	X		X
Scrutiny Review Progress Reports:						
Air Quality Monitoring - Peter Moore				X		

APPENDIX 1

Public Health Annual Report on Air Quality - Helen Armitage				x		
Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and Sickness Absence Monitoring - Mark Dale						x
Digital Inclusion Working Group – Update on Recommendations - Paul Fraser			x			
Update on Progress of LCR Digital Inclusion Strategy - Stuart Barnes				x		
Ethical Business Practices Working Group - Update on Recommendations - Paul Fraser			x			x
“Tool-Kit” for Armed Forces Covenant - Shaun Pimblett				x		
Financial Scrutiny:						
Budget Report 2021/22 to 2022/23 - Stephan Van Arendsen					x	
Financial Performance Monitoring - Stephan Van Arendsen			x		x	
Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities – Prudential Indicators - Stephan Van Arendsen					x	

APPENDIX 1

Treasury Management Policy and Strategy - Stephan Van Arendsen					x	
Capital Strategy 2020/21 and Future Years - Stephan Van Arendsen					x	
Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy - Stephan Van Arendsen					x	
Robustness of the 2020/21 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – local Government Act 2003 – Section 25 - Stephan Van Arendsen					x	
Presentations						
How the Council used Social Media in its response to the Covid-19 Pandemic - Elena Lloyd			x			

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APPENDIX 2

CRITERIA CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING TOPICS FOR REVIEW

Criteria for Selecting Items
▪ Issue identified by members as key issue for public (through member surgeries, other contact with constituents or volume of complaints)
▪ Poor performing service (evidence from performance indicators/benchmarking)
▪ Service ranked as important by the community (e.g. through market surveys/citizens panels)
▪ High level of user/general public dissatisfaction with service (e.g. through market surveys/citizens panels/complaints)
▪ Public interest issue covered in local media
▪ High level of budgetary commitment to the service/policy area (as percentage of total expenditure)
▪ Pattern of budgetary overspends
▪ Council corporate priority area
▪ Central government priority area
▪ Issues raised by External Audit Management Letter/External audit reports
▪ New government guidance or legislation
▪ Reports or new evidence provided by external organisations on key issue
▪ Others

CRITERIA FOR REJECTION

Potential Criteria for Rejecting Items
▪ Issue being examined by the Cabinet
▪ Issue being examined by an Officer Group : changes imminent
▪ Issue being examined by another internal body
▪ Issue will be addressed as part of a Service Review within the next year
▪ New legislation or guidance expected within the next year
▪ Other reasons specific to the particular issues.

Agenda Item 10

APPENDIX 2

SCRUTINY CHECKLIST DO'S AND DON'TS

DO
◆ Remember that Scrutiny <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Is about learning and being a "critical friend"; it should be a positive process◆ Is not opposition
◆ Remember that Scrutiny should result in improved value, enhanced performance or greater public satisfaction
◆ Take an overview and keep an eye on the wider picture
◆ Check performance against local standards and targets and national standards, and compare results with other authorities
◆ Benchmark performance against local and national performance indicators, using the results to ask more informed questions
◆ Use Working Groups to get underneath performance information
◆ Take account of local needs, priorities and policies
◆ Be persistent and inquisitive
◆ Ask effective questions - be constructive not judgmental
◆ Be open-minded and self aware - encourage openness and self criticism in services
◆ Listen to users and the public, seek the voices that are often not heard, seek the views of others - and balance all of these
◆ Praise good practice and best value - and seek to spread this throughout the authority
◆ Provide feedback to those who have been involved in the review and to stakeholders
◆ Anticipate difficulties in Members challenging colleagues from their own party
◆ Take time to review your own performance

◆ DON'T
◆ Witch-hunt or use performance review as punishment
◆ Be party political/partisan
◆ Blame valid risk taking or stifle initiative or creativity
◆ Treat scrutiny as an add-on
◆ Get bogged down in detail
◆ Be frightened of asking basic questions
◆ Undertake too many issues in insufficient depth
◆ Start without a clear brief and remit
◆ Underestimate the task
◆ Lose track of the main purpose of scrutiny
◆ Lack sensitivity to other stakeholders
◆ Succumb to organisational inertia
◆ Duck facing failure - learn from it and support change and development
◆ Be driven by data or be paralysed by analysis - keep strategic overview,

APPENDIX 2

and expect officers to provide high level information and analysis to help.

KEY QUESTIONS

Overview and Scrutiny Committees should keep in mind some of the fundamental questions:-

Are we doing what users/non users/local residents want?
Are users' needs central to the service?
Why are we doing this?
What are we trying to achieve?
How well are we doing?
How do we compare with others?
Are we delivering value for money?
How do we know?
What can we improve?

INVESTIGATIONS:-

To what extent are service users' expectations and needs being met?
To what extent is the service achieving what the policy intended?
To what extent is the service meeting any statutory obligations or national standards and targets?
Are there any unexpected results/side effects of the policy?
Is the performance improving, steady or deteriorating?
Is the service able to be honest and open about its current performance and the reasons behind it?
Are areas of achievement and weakness fairly and accurately identified?
How has performance been assessed? What is the evidence?
How does performance compare with that of others? Are there learning points from others' experiences?
Is the service capable of meeting planned targets/standards? What change to capability is needed.
Are local performance indicators relevant, helpful, meaningful to Members, staff and service users?

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SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 FEBRUARY 2021 - 31 MAY 2021

This Forward Plan sets out the details of the key decisions which the Cabinet, individual Cabinet Members or Officers expect to take during the next four month period. The Plan is rolled forward every month and is available to the public at least 28 days before the beginning of each month.

A Key Decision is defined in the Council's Constitution as:

1. any Executive decision that is not in the Annual Revenue Budget and Capital Programme approved by the Council and which requires a gross budget expenditure, saving or virement of more than £100,000 or more than 2% of a Departmental budget, whichever is the greater;
2. any Executive decision where the outcome will have a significant impact on a significant number of people living or working in two or more Wards

Anyone wishing to make representations about any of the matters listed below may do so by contacting the relevant officer listed against each Key Decision, within the time period indicated.

Under the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution, a Key Decision may not be taken, unless:

- it is published in the Forward Plan;
- 5 clear days have lapsed since the publication of the Forward Plan; and
- if the decision is to be taken at a meeting of the Cabinet, 5 clear days notice of the meeting has been given.

The law and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in the Forward Plan in accordance with Rule 26 (General Exception) and Rule 28 (Special Urgency) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

Copies of the following documents may be inspected at the Town Hall, Oriol Road, Bootle L20 7AE or accessed from the Council's website: www.sefton.gov.uk

- Council Constitution
- Forward Plan
- Reports on the Key Decisions to be taken
- Other documents relating to the proposed decision may be submitted to the decision making meeting and these too will be made available by the contact officer named in the Plan
- The minutes for each Key Decision, which will normally be published within 5 working days after having been made

Some reports to be considered by the Cabinet/Council may contain exempt information and will not be made available to the public. The specific reasons (Paragraph No(s)) why such reports are exempt are detailed in the Plan and the Paragraph No(s) and descriptions are set out below:-

Agenda Item 10

APPENDIX 3

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or b) to make an order or direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime
8. Information falling within paragraph 3 above is not exempt information by virtue of that paragraph if it is required to be registered under—
 - (a) the Companies Act 1985;
 - (b) the Friendly Societies Act 1974;
 - (c) the Friendly Societies Act 1992;
 - (d) the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 to 1978;
 - (e) the Building Societies Act 1986; or
 - (f) the Charities Act 1993.
9. Information is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission pursuant to regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992
10. Information which—
 - (a) falls within any of paragraphs 1 to 7 above; and
 - (b) is not prevented from being exempt by virtue of paragraph 8 or 9 above, is exempt information if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Cabinet and Council which are held at the Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle or the Town Hall, Lord Street, Southport. The dates and times of the meetings are published on www.sefton.gov.uk or you may contact the Democratic Services Section on telephone number 0151 934 2068.

NOTE:

For ease of identification, items listed within the document for the first time will appear shaded.

Dwayne Johnson
Chief Executive

APPENDIX 3

FORWARD PLAN INDEX OF ITEMS

Item Heading	Officer Contact
Digital Strategy	Helen Spreadbury helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk
Financial Management 2020/21 to 2023/24 and Framework for Change 2020 - February	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106
Revenue and Capital Budget Plan 2021/22 – 2023/24 and Council Tax 2021/22	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106
Capital Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100
Prudential Indicators 2021/22	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100
Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2021/22	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100
Robustness of the 2021/22 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – Local Government Act 2003 - Section 25	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106
Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2020/21 - March	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106
Financial Management 2020/21 to 2023/24 and Framework for Change - Issues Arising from COVID-19 - March Update	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Digital Strategy To approve Sefton's Digital Strategy			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	4 Feb 2021			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	No	Community Impact	Yes

Agenda Item 10

APPENDIX 3

Exempt Report	Open
Wards Affected	All Wards
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services
Method(s) of Consultation	emails, face to face interviews and meetings
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Digital Strategy
Contact Officer(s) details	Helen Spreadbury helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Financial Management 2020/21 to 2023/24 and Framework for Change 2020 - February Financial updates and Policy decisions relating to the Council's Framework for Change 2020, including the monthly Revenue and Capital budget monitoring reports			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	4 Feb 2021			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Cabinet, Chief Executive, Strategic Leadership Board, Trade Unions, Staff and relevant organisations as appropriate.			
Method(s) of Consultation	Individual budget saving options / amendments to the budget will be subject to consultation – internal and external to the Council (as appropriate).			

APPENDIX 3

List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2020/21 - February
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Revenue and Capital Budget Plan 2021/22 – 2023/24 and Council Tax 2021/22 To approve the Revenue and Capital Budget Plan for 2021/22 – 2023/24, including individual budget options, external funding levels and other budget changes.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet Council			
Decision Expected	11 Feb 2021 4 Mar 2021			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Cabinet, Chief Executive, Strategic Leadership Board, Trade Unions, Staff and relevant organisations as appropriate			
Method(s) of Consultation	Individual budget saving options / amendments to the budget will be subject to appropriate consultation – internal and external to the Council (as appropriate).			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Revenue and Capital Budget Plan 2021/22 – 2023/24 and Council Tax 2021/22			
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106			

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item 10

APPENDIX 3

FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Capital Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26 The Capital Strategy document sets out the long-term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made and considers the impact of these decisions on the priorities within the Council's Core Purpose and Framework for Change Programme and the promises made in the 2030 Vision for Sefton.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet Council			
Decision Expected	11 Feb 2021 4 Mar 2021			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	none			
Method(s) of Consultation	not used			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Capital Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26			
Contact Officer(s) details	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100			

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Prudential Indicators 2021/22 This report details a number of measures / limits / parameters (Prudential Indicators) that are required to be set each financial year under the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The approval of these
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APPENDIX 3

	limits will provide a benchmark to measure actual performance against, to help ensure that the Council complies with relevant legislation, is acting prudently and that its capital expenditure proposals are affordable.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet Council			
Decision Expected	11 Feb 2021 4 Mar 2021			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	none			
Method(s) of Consultation	not used			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Prudential Indicators 2021/22			
Contact Officer(s) details	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100			

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<p>Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2021/22 This report sets out the following proposed policy and strategy documents to be approved for 2021/22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Treasury Management Policy b) Treasury Management Strategy c) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement
Decision Maker	Cabinet Council

Agenda Item 10

APPENDIX 3

Decision Expected	11 Feb 2021 4 Mar 2021			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	none			
Method(s) of Consultation	not used			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2021/22			
Contact Officer(s) details	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100			

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<p>Robustness of the 2021/22 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – Local Government Act 2003 - Section 25</p> <p>To comply with statute, the Chief Financial Officer is required to report to Council prior to the approval of the budget and the setting of the Council Tax, to give assurance that the budget is robust and that there are adequate reserves and balances.</p>
Decision Maker	Cabinet Council
Decision Expected	11 Feb 2021 4 Mar 2021

APPENDIX 3

Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Cabinet, Chief Executive, Strategic Leadership Board, Trade Unions, Staff and relevant organisations as appropriate			
Method(s) of Consultation	Individual budget saving options / amendments to the budget will be subject to appropriate consultation – internal and external to the Council (as appropriate).			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Robustness of the 2021/22 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – Local Government Act 2003 - Section 25			
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106			

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2020/21 - March Budget Monitoring Position for Revenue and Capital (based on January 2021)			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	4 Mar 2021			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Cabinet, Chief Executive, Strategic Leadership Board, Trade Unions, Staff and relevant organisations as appropriate.			
Method(s) of Consultation	Individual budget saving options / amendments to the			

Agenda Item 10

APPENDIX 3

	budget will be subject to consultation – internal and external to the Council (as appropriate).
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2020/21 - March
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Financial Management 2020/21 to 2023/24 and Framework for Change - Issues Arising from COVID-19 - March Update An update of the financial impact of COVID-19 on the Council in 2020/21 and future years, including funding being made available.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	4 Mar 2021			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Cabinet, Chief Executive, Strategic Leadership Board, Trade Unions, Staff and relevant organisations as appropriate.			
Method(s) of Consultation	Individual budget saving options / amendments to the budget will be subject to consultation – internal and external to the Council (as appropriate).			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Financial Management 2020/21 to 2022/23 and Framework for Change - Issues Arising from COVID-19 - March Update			
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106			



**ARMED FORCES
COVENANT**

**EMPLOYER
RECOGNITION
SCHEME**

BRONZE AWARD

2020



This certificate is awarded to

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

In national recognition of their
commitment to the Armed Forces.



Ministry
of Defence

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Wallace".

Secretary of State for Defence



Nick Carter.

Chief of the Defence Staff

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	12 January 2021
Subject:	Cabinet Member Report – October 2020 to December 2020		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To submit the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services report for the period October 2020 to December 2020 relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services report relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

Reasons for the Recommendation:

In order to keep Overview and Scrutiny Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No alternative options have been considered because the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

Any financial implications associated with the Cabinet Member report that are referred to in this update are contained within the respective reports.

(A) Revenue Costs – see above

Agenda Item 11

(B) Capital Costs – see above

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
Legal Implications:
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: None directly applicable to this report. The Cabinet Member update provides information on activity within Councillor Lappin's portfolio during a previous two/three-month period. Any reports relevant to her portfolio considered by the Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Committees during this period would contain information as to how such reports contributed to the Council's Core Purpose.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: As above
Commission, broker and provide core services: As above
Place – leadership and influencer: As above
Drivers of change and reform: As above
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: As above
Greater income for social investment: As above
Cleaner Greener: As above

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Cabinet Member Update Report is not subject to FD/LD consultation. Any specific financial and legal implications associated with any subsequent reports arising from the attached Cabinet Member update report will be included in those reports as appropriate

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

Contact Officer:	Paul Fraser
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2068
Email Address:	paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

Cabinet Member - (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) update report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 In order to keep Overview and Scrutiny Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.2 The most recent Cabinet Member report for the Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services is attached.

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CABINET MEMBER REPORT		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) -		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Paulette Lappin	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services	January 2021

Corporate Resources and Customer Services

During the last 2 weeks the service, as with the rest of the council has been focussed on supporting members, staff, residents and business in responding to and dealing with the pandemic.

Finance

Within the finance service, there has been significant activity on five key issues, namely

- Monitoring the Council’s overall budget, excluding the impact of COVID-19;
- Understanding issues relating to COVID-19 that need to be met from the emergency fund and other funding sources provided by the Government;
- Understanding the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on the Council’s income sources;
- Updating the Medium-Term Financial Plan, including the potential ongoing impact of COVID-19; and,
- Supporting the implementation of new Government grant schemes which offer financial assistance to individuals who are self-isolating and businesses that are forced to close or face significant financial challenges due to local lockdown.

Since June, reports have been presented to each Cabinet meeting on the first three issues. These have highlighted:

- Due to the early identification of financial pressures within some services, mitigating actions have been taken to ensure the majority of these pressures can be met, with only a relatively small overall net overspend currently being forecast.
- The Council has currently received £23.7m of emergency funding to meet the cost and loss of income in the current year. Overall expenditure pressures relating to COVID-19 forecast to be £16.0m at this stage.
- The loss of income from sales, fees and charges is currently estimated to be £14.9m. The Government has introduced a compensation scheme whereby Councils can claim for certain types of lost income for which the Government will provide funding for a proportion. It is estimated that after this Government funding, the Council’s share of the loss of income from fees and charges will be in the region of £9.3m. This also needs to be met from the emergency funding.
- The loss on income from Council Tax and Business Rates is currently estimated to be £11.3m. This would normally have to be funded in the 2021/2022 financial year, however, under new regulations being proposed this deficit could be funded across three financial years. There may be further support from the Government to help mitigate some of these losses as part of the 2020 Spending Review.

In October, Cabinet was presented with a report updating the MTFP for 2021/2022 to 2023/2024. Due to a number of uncertainties, particularly around Government funding, at this stage there is a range of potential budget gaps that are currently being forecast – between £13.5m to £23.2m in 2021/2022 and between £25.5m to £44.2m across the three years (before any decisions are made about potential increases in Council Tax). **Page 131**

Agenda Item 11

The audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2019/2020 by EY will be completed in early December. The Accounts are set to be approved at Audit and Governance Committee on 16th December.

Customer Centric Services

The focus for the service since October 2020 has been supporting residents and businesses affected by the pandemic and restrictions imposed in the Liverpool City Region and then at national level.

The Business Rates team is working with colleagues in Invest Sefton to provide grant-support to businesses forced to close due to restrictions in line with the Local Restrictions Support Grant guidance issued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The Benefits Service has started processing Test and Trace Support Payments to residents unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and will lose income as a result. The payments are designed to help ensure that people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts self-isolate for the required period to stop the onward spread of the virus.

Customer Services has handled a high volume of COVID-related enquiries from customers asking about how and where to get a COVID-test and the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. The team also supported a Council-initiative during the October half-term to provide vouchers to school children in receipt of free school meals.

For the month of October, Bootle One Stop Shop handled a total of 1,177 appointments, the majority of which were for Taxi Licensing. Bootle One Stop Shop has remained open since the national lockdown started on 5th November to continue to provide a taxi-licensing service with enquiries for all other council services being handled by the Contact Centre or online. Preparations are also underway to make grant payments to taxi-drivers from funding provided by the Liverpool City Region COVID-19 Taxi-Support fund.

Risk and Audit

The **Internal Audit** team are continuing to work on delivering the internal audit plan with a current focus on providing assurance on the Covid related business grants that have been provided to local businesses. Work is continuing with the Locality Services Procurement and Conduct Review, with two internal audit staff involved. A recently completed audit was the Ethics and Code of Conduct (graded as Major audit risk opinion) review which identified that the area requires improvement to ensure that it was effective in managing the risks surrounding employee conduct in the public sector.

Insurance Team have completed and are working on the following initiatives to improve the Council's risk management.

- Completed the renewal of the insurance portfolio for the Council and associated subsidiary companies (Sefton New Directions, Sandway Homes) took place on 29 September 2020 with negotiations proving to be challenging and protracted between the Council's Insurance Broker and panel of insurers.
- The team has completed a tender exercise to value a sample of Council properties for insurance purposes to ensure that the current rebuild values used are accurate and will protect from insurers using average clause in the event of major loss.
- We are working with insurers and the Council's liability insurers to robustly defend claims and in limited circumstances will pursue through the Courts claimants to recover Council costs where the claims are proven to be exaggerated
- Team also continues to work extensively with Service Teams including Highways and Tourism to improve the management of insurable risk in areas where there are high numbers of claims or areas of concern.

Agenda Item 11

- The Team continue to develop an approach for the Council's Maintained Schools which is designed to be attractive against the Government's Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) scheme and is to be shared for consultation with the Schools Forum in December 2020.

The **Risk and Resilience Team** have been actively involved in the initial Covid-19 response and have been involved in a number of cells within Sefton (Business Continuity and Death Management). There has been a focus this years during the pandemic of working on the development of Service Business Continuity Plans across the organisation enhancing the existing planning framework.

The **Risk and Resilience Team** are also working on developing a proposal for the Council's Risk Appetite as well as facilitating the updates of the Council's Corporate Risk Register working with the Risk Owners to update the risk register. Other work includes:

- Working with the Merseyside Resilience Forum
- Developing plans for the winter period

The Assurance team have been involved in the development of fraud risk assessments following the self-assessment against the CIPFA Code of Practice on Fraud for each Service Area. The team have also been involved in providing support to Internal Audit in a review of the Business Grant review undertaking some sampling of grant applications.

A range of assurance checks continues to be undertaken across Customer Centric Services, which includes refunds, Council Tax discounts and exemptions, Business Rates Reliefs and Exemptions, including Small Business Rates Relief. This work complements any audit activity undertaken during the year.

A Counter Fraud Profession pilot is being undertaken in the North West, which will deliver Apprenticeship Levy Funded Counter Fraud Training. The training is due to commence in January 2021 and Sefton has nominated a member of the Audit team to take part. Sefton's Learning and Development team have been assisting in the process.

The Council's Counter Fraud Strategy is in development and consultation with the Strategic Leadership Board will be commence after December 2020 with a projected timescale for Cabinet approval of the Strategy in April/May 2021.

For the Health and Safety Team there will be a continued focus during the next quarter of delivering the Health and Safety Improvement Plan and also the ongoing recovery programmes from COVID-19 with planned priorities –

- Continue to support to assist Managers with the recovery programmes from COVID-19.
- Continue to review, update and monitor the Health and Safety Standards and Policies, with focus on working from home, display screen and workstation assessments and stress risk assessments.
- Continue to develop the Council-wide training needs assessment which will eventually build into the health and safety training plan and provision.
- Continuing the delivery of risk assessment training for the managers who have responsibility to undertake risk assessments, in collaboration with the Corporate Learning Centre. Following up with the managers who have not responded to the initial request for their risk assessments and evaluating the quality of the risk assessments.
- Focus on improving the accuracy of incident reporting across the Council will continue to ensure incidents of threatening and abusive behaviours towards staff are reported.

Agenda Item 11

- Continue to deliver a health and safety management audit and inspection regime across the Council, to schools with a Service Level Agreement with the Council and those schools where the Council retains responsibility for the health and safety as the employer. This will provide assurance that health and safety management systems are suitable and effective.

The Council has a contract with its liability insurers which includes an allocation of free training or service days to assist with implementing effective risk management across the Council. Health and Safety, including COVID-Secure audit support and school Governor training is planned for late 2020.

ICT

The ICT Service continues to respond to changing business requirements in line with the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. As well supporting the establishment of the local Test and Trace team the ICT client team has also facilitated the setup of the local mass testing centres with the provision of tactical solutions to deliver connectivity requirements. In addition, the team have deployed mobile telephones as scale to support agile working.

We continue to encounter challenges with the capacity of the corporate network due to the significant increase in network traffic, as a result of increased agile working and the use of Microsoft teams. Emergency work has been completed on the network to alleviate the issues whilst work is underway to complete split tunnelling on the network. This split tunnelling will redirect all Microsoft traffic away from the corporate network for all staff working from home thereby maximising the use of corporate networks for critical applications located in the data centre, testing of these solutions are now underway.

Alongside core business activity the team have completed a full technical review of the Cloud migration strategy and have worked alongside colleagues in Microsoft and Agilisys to firm up proposals, which will support the migration of the data centre out of St Peters to the Azure Cloud. Proof of concept work is due to commence in January and will last approximately 5 weeks.

Procurement of a new Cloud Based Telephony solution is well underway and it is hoped we will be able to award a contract to the successful supplier by the end of January 2021.

Schools ICT is also a key priority and we have procurement activity ongoing for a new Schools Connectivity Service, which will significantly improve the service offer to Schools in the Borough. In addition, the Procurement and Contracts team within the ICT Client have now established a Procurement roadmap to ensure delivery of critical services for Sefton, at the time of writing the team are supporting; HR and Payroll, Revs and Bens and Sefton at Work colleagues to procure new ICT solutions in line with business requirements.

Property Services

The Property Services Department are a Multi-Disciplinary team delivering various services, professional advice and initiatives across the Borough of Sefton. Below are some examples of ongoing pieces of work throughout the department.

Asset Management

- Ongoing work to deliver Phase 1 Asset Disposals
- Considering Phase 2 Asset Disposals
- Asset records input and liaison with Building Maintenance colleagues for new (property based) IT system in support of Corporate Landlord Implementation
- Agreement of terms and reporting for Lease of various assets
- Ongoing management of 'day to day FM operations' to also include the COVID-19 measures and management within buildings.

Maintenance Management & Building Services

- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Corporate Buildings
- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Education Capital programme
- Delivery of reactive maintenance and statutory compliance services to Corporate and Educational buildings
- Professional advice and support on a broad range of regeneration programmes
- Development and implementation of a new coordinated (property based) IT system in support of Corporate Landlord Implementation
- Delivering services in support of major adaptation to vulnerable and disabled residents

Project Management

- Provide professional support to Growth Board on several projects
- Completed various projects despite the current constraints.
- Provide support to other teams on asset disposal, Building Maintenance, Asset Management and Statutory Compliance colleagues.

Energy Management

- Continued active support of those in fuel poverty and the most vulnerable – taking place remotely.
- Bid for Grant funding to target the worst performing homes.
- Running switch off fortnight campaign for schools in November
- Skills bid for decarbonisation of public buildings submitted.
- Working on the 10 year Carbon plan.
- Managing energy and water contracts.

Agenda Item 11

Legal and Democratic Services

Legal Services

- Continuing to advise on Covid-response contractual variations, extensions, emergency/extraordinary procurements, including advising on the applicable procurement regime, often in novel and evolving ways in addition to advising on sensitive Council projects negatively impacted by Covid which has often required early and extensive support senior legal support in evaluating the risks, opportunities and the viability of proposals
- Implementation of central Government schemes/funding which are being deployed via the local authority sector with advice around complex state aid issues
- Continuing advice on major projects (including supporting the Growth Investment Plan, Sandway Homes, construction & development projects etc.)
- Advising on and successfully concluding a number of keystone grant funding agreements with LCRCA (including Crosby Lakeside and Southport Pleasureland) and other Governmental departments/agencies including DHSC and Homes England
- The Childcare Team has seen a rise in care proceeding of 38% which has seen a corresponding increase in all aspects of the work that the Team carries out
- An increase in international cases which are legally challenging; this is expected to increase as we move towards the EU exit
- Planning committees continue virtually and more frequently to clear delays caused by the initial COVID-19 lockdown. And currently a large amount of attention is presently drawn to delivering a robust defence of a number of Judicial Review challenges whilst maintaining normal operational capacity
- Sefton Magistrates Court started hearing prosecution matters again 25 August 2020 after delays relating to Covid-19. The Team has prosecuted a backlog of matters this has resulted in a number of successful prosecutions with awards of fines and costs in relation to: counterfeit cigarettes and alcohol, trading standards, fly tipping, taxi licensing, landlord licensing, planning enforcement notices and a health and safety prosecution for a Southport hotel
- The team is providing continuing legal advice in relation to the interpretation and enforcement of the new Covid Regulations, which has included serving a direction upon a hairdressers and beauty salon in Bootle to close.
- The Team's specialised debt recovery team has recovered over £200K this financial year. The team has also started to recover charges from enforced sales. In addition to recovering money for the Authority it means that empty / derelict properties are back in the system which brings direct benefits to communities

Electoral Services

- The Electoral Services team have now completed the annual canvass for the 2021 Register of Electors which was published on the 1 December 2020. Preparations for the combined Local Government, Police & Crime Commissioner and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Mayoral elections, which will take place on Thursday 6 May 2021.

Agenda Item 11

- All aspects of the election have been evaluated in line with the current situation and restrictions in place. Each element of the elections has been assessed and some areas will require changes to be made to the process to ensure it is compliant, but ensuring transparency and the secrecy of the ballot are maintained.
- The team have now commenced the annual process of refreshing and update the details of those electors who vote by post and have done for the last five years.

Personnel

Operational Issues

Advice and support continues to be provided to all service areas. Predominantly, issues have been, and continue to be, related to the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact on resources in terms of staffing and service provision in all areas. Regular discussions are taking place at departmental management team meetings and with the trade unions. Meetings are being conducted through Microsoft Teams.

The majority of staff are working from home with occasional agile working at office sites as required, with social distancing measures in place. Reviews and restructures across the organisation relative to budget savings have been put on hold, with the exception of Customer Centric Services, where consultation with the trade unions regarding this review has recommenced.

Matters relating to disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work have been less over the past few months, but where necessary, formal meetings have been held via Microsoft Teams. Advice and support in the management of sickness absence, particularly Covid-19 related absences, has been the main focus. Formal action under the sickness absence policy and procedures was put on hold during April to June, but where action is considered necessary this is now being gradually addressed. Support is also being provided in respect of the temporary redeployment of staff during the restrictions placed on the Authority for certain services.

Pay & Grading and Establishment Control Team

Job evaluation continues relative to all Council and School posts for new or revised roles. Job evaluations are also conducted relative to any operational and service reviews to maximise efficiencies as part of restructuring exercises across the Council. The Establishment Control team are then responsible for building any revised structures and changes to reporting hierarchies into the Councils operating systems.

The Establishment Control Panel takes place every 2 weeks to consider requests in relation to the release of vacancies and the approval of any changes to the Establishment held in ResourceLink. All changes to the Establishment are mapped to ensure correct procedures are followed.

Establishment Control review safeguarding checks held against posts e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS formally CRB), Health Care Professional Council (HCPC) etc. with Heads of Service and amend as required. This now includes safer recruitment checks. Guidance for managers on all aspects of safeguarding has been produced and is available to managers to ensure that the adequate checks are carried out on all roles. The team also manages and controls the temporary end dates relative to all fixed term contracts and provides establishment control information reports for the Council and schools.

Regrading applications and appeals are processed in line with the Council protocol.

Agenda Item 11

The team undertakes the review of HAY graded positions for new posts and the evaluation of HAY posts stemming from any revised proposals to the HAY grading structure.

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services have amended the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service relative to the calculation of Term-time only (TTO) salaries. Team members were involved in the adoption of the NJC advisory model and the revised calculations have been processed from September 2020.

Consideration of new case law on holiday pay is also taking place.

Team members are involved in service reviews and work to support transformational proposals and potential changes to service delivery

The team manage the Matrix contract relative to the recruitment of all Agency workers.

The team manage sickness absence data, including production of management reports, sickness absence analysis and quarterly absence figures for SLT. Team members have been heavily involved in COVID 19 testing administration via the Government portals and the production of managers guidance relative to track and trace, isolations requirements etc.

Transactional HR Payroll & Pension (THRP) Services

ResourceLink is the Payroll/HR system used by the Council and the current contract expires 30th September 2021, so in conjunction with other HR colleagues the procurement process is progressing and a decision is to be taken later in 2020.

Since March 2020 many of the staff have move to working from home and this has gone really well. Some processes have had to be changed and the staff have embraced these changes There are some staff who have to still go into the office due to various issues, Internet, paper etc. The number of staff going into the office is being closely monitored.

The Team have recently processed:

- Teachers Pay award backdated to 1st September 2020 in November 2020
- Youth Pay award backdated to 1st September 2020 in November 2020

They are currently looking at the following:

- Christmas processing
- Shut down working/refunds
- Weekly to monthly pay on 1st February 2021

The team are looking at a solution for removing the need for paper claim forms and this is in the early stages of development and will hopefully be trialled in Leisure Centres first, due to their high volume of paper claims.

The Team are also working on a pilot with Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF) to produce a monthly data file to replace the year end return for all members of LGPS. The files from April 2020 to September 2020 have been sent to MPF and the initial feedback from MPF is good.

The Pensions Officer is looking at the recent changes to legislation regarding the £95K exit cap and how this will impact on the Council and employees. The Pensions policies and discretions will need to be updated once further detail is received from the Government and MPF.

Occupational Health

During October 2020, a total of 50 referrals for SMBC employees were made to the Health Unit. This is significantly less than the 73 referrals made within the previous October and has obviously been affected by the current pandemic.

Referrals during this month were from Education Excellence (58.0%), Adult Social Care (12.0%) and Communities (10%). This is the first time for several years where the number of referrals from Locality Services has not featured in the top two departments. As usual the main reasons were stress and mental health related (70.0%), acute medical illness (10.0%) and musculoskeletal and bereavement (8.0%).

The Health Unit, together with Public Health has been asked by the Council's Learning & Development Section to be involved in a number of short on-line sessions to promote the support available to Council employees during the current pandemic. The first of these has been scheduled for 26 November.

Workforce Learning and Development (CLC)

Apprenticeships

The Corporate Apprenticeship Team met the 2.3% apprenticeship levy target for 2019/20. A report was recently submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency detailing our performance and this was shared with the Chief Personnel Officer, Director for Corporate Resources and the Cabinet Member.

There are currently 9 managers enrolled on the **Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship Degree programme (MBA)**, delivered by Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). 4 managers have progressed to semester 2, 4 managers are returning to university following a break in learning to re-take semester 1 (covid-19 related) and 1 manager has requested a break in learning until January 2021 due to workload (covid-19 related).

Semesters 1 and 2 commenced from September 2020 and all modules are being delivered virtually until December 2020 at the earliest. LJMU are hoping to resume classroom training from January 2021 however this will depend on Covid-19 and if there are further lockdown restrictions.

We will be offering the **Level 6 Social Work Apprenticeship Degree** from January 2021. The contract was awarded to the University of Chester and LJMU under the YPO framework and 6 staff (3 from Adult's and 3 from Children's Social Care/Early Help) will be joining the three-year programme from January 2021.

Training delivery

The Workforce Learning and Development Team have worked incredibly hard since the Covid-19 outbreak to adapt the way we deliver classroom training – this includes offering virtual training using MS Teams and adapting existing classroom courses to eLearning, pre-recorded webinars, self-help guides and commissioning new eLearning courses. Examples include:

- **Safeguarding Adults and Children's training** was converted to pre-recorded webinars back in April 2020 and are available on Me Learning.
- **Health and Safety Awareness** will be available as an eLearning course from October 2020. We have worked with our H&S team to launch a number of other eLearning titles that fit within our Health and Safety offer.
- **Equality and Diversity** - We purchased Equality and Diversity eLearning for a period of 6 months (to begin with) and have now extended this until June 2021.

Agenda Item 11

- **Unconscious Bias** – The course proved to be very popular, over 400 staff completed this course during the month of June 2020, we have commissioned this course until October 2021.
- **Coronavirus Awareness training** – sourced free Coronavirus awareness eLearning for Sefton Council employees, schools and partners.
- **Adult, Children's and Early Help Case Management Training** sessions have/are being delivered virtually to staff and partners.
- Produced **9 eLearning packages** for the Educational Psychology Team to enable Teachers and those supporting the education system to help transition children and young people back into schools.
- **Domestic Abuse Awareness training** – we've worked with SWACA to provide virtual classroom Domestic Abuse training sessions. More sessions are planned for the autumn due to popular demand.
- **Child Exploitation (CE) Assessment Tool virtual briefing** – we developed and delivered a virtual briefing and systems demo to staff in CSC, Early Help and YoT to launch the pan Merseyside Child Exploitation Policy and introduce the new CE Assessment Tool.
- We're currently delivering essential **First Aid and Fire Warden** socially distanced classroom training in line with current Covid-19 guidelines.

We continue to work closely with the Care Homes cell to develop an **Education and Training Programme** for Care Homes, Community Services and recipients of direct payment affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme includes local and national resources covering the following topics:

- Infection, Prevention and Control
- Medication
- End of Life Care
- Bereavement
- Moving and Handling
- Look after You – Health and Wellbeing Resources
- Further sources of support

The resources are updated on a fortnightly basis and are available in PDF format and as separate eLearning modules on Me Learning.

We also worked with the Care Homes Cell to coordinate and submit a bid to Health Education England (HEE) to deliver an End of Life Education and Training programme to Care Homes working across Sefton. Unfortunately, the bid wasn't successful however we were given the opportunity to re-submit. We've informed HEE we will re-submit our bid in the next couple of weeks.

Strategic Support

The Communications team continue to be at the heart of all activity across the Council and are playing a critical role in supporting all areas of the Council in order to ensure that residents and business are informed at the earliest opportunity of all key issues and information is provided in a clear and concise manner. All internal and external communication channels are being used extensively.

Agenda Item 11

The Procurement team is playing a key role in many initiatives across the Council including the procurement the HR/Payroll system. Work on the Procurement Strategy is underway but has been delayed as a result of capacity required to support the Council's response to the pandemic. Work relating to providing an effective mechanism for improving the social impact/social value from our contracted providers, particularly its focus on "Achieving Community Benefit", which includes "obtaining social value has continued. This work has included:

- The development of question banks which include for example questions on employability and local supply chain
- Securing access to the use of the Social Value Portal
- Identification of training opportunities and associated delivery – the Procurement Manager has completed the CIPS Ethical Test

The team will prioritise this work over the coming months as it will play a key part in recovery.

Business Intelligence team are continuing to support many work streams across the Council including Economic Regeneration, Education Excellence, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Public Health Services. Key areas of work include daily analysis of Covid-19 pandemic data, processing of National Shielding Service referrals and submission of vulnerable children & young people returns to the DfE. Another key area of work is collating local data in respect of the national immunisation preparation. Furthermore, the teams continue to deal with complaints, subject access requests, consultation & engagement activities and managing the project to digitise the Council's historic paper records.

The Commissioning team are working with Children's and Adults Services as would be expected in order that both services can respond effectively by supporting care providers. Again this will be a critical function and activity as the Council responds to the protection of its most vulnerable.

The Strategic Support team continue to support the delivery of COVID testing in the borough, supporting the Outbreak Management Board and has been working with colleagues from Learning and Development to develop Accessible Information eLearning training for Council staff that will be introduced shortly. The team continue to support the Demand Management programme of work.

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