

Public Document Pack

Sefton Council 

MEETING: CABINET
DATE: Thursday 7th April, 2022
TIME: 10.00 am
VENUE: Ballroom, Bootle Town Hall

DECISION MAKER: **CABINET**

Councillor Ian Maher (Chair)
Councillor Atkinson
Councillor Cummins
Councillor Doyle
Councillor Fairclough
Councillor Hardy
Councillor Lappin
Councillor Roscoe
Councillor Moncur
Councillor Veidman

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Paul Fraser
Senior Democratic Services Officer
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The Cabinet is responsible for making what are known as Key Decisions, which will be notified on the Forward Plan. Items marked with an * on the agenda involve Key Decisions

A key decision, as defined in the Council's Constitution, is: -

- 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
- 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

See overleaf for COVID Guidance and the requirements in relation to Public Attendance.

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.

COVID GUIDANCE IN RELATION TO PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

In light of ongoing Covid-19 social distancing restrictions, there is limited capacity for members of the press and public to be present in the meeting room indicated on the front page of the agenda at any one time. We would ask parties remain in the meeting room solely for the duration of consideration of the Committee report(s) to which their interests relate.

We therefore request that if you wish to attend the Committee to please register in advance of the meeting via email to paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk by no later than **12:00 (noon) the day before the day of the meeting.**

Please include in your email –

- Your name;
- Your email address;
- Your Contact telephone number; and
- The details of the report in which you are interested.

In light of current social distancing requirements, access to the meeting room is limited.

We have been advised by Public Health that Members, officers and the public should carry out a lateral flow test before attending the meeting, and only attend if that test is negative. Provided you are not classed as exempt, it is requested that you wear a mask that covers both your nose and mouth.

A G E N D A

Items marked with an * involve key decisions

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Subject/Author(s)</u>	<u>Wards Affected</u>	
1	Apologies for Absence		
2	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Where a Member discloses a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, he/she must 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, except where he/she is permitted to remain as a result of a grant of a dispensation.</p> <p>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.</p>		
3	Minutes of the Previous Meeting		(Pages 7 - 20)
	Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2022		
* 4	New Realities 2022	All Wards	(Pages 21 - 38)
	Report of the Executive Director - People		
* 5	Activation of the Extensions to the Community Infection Prevention and Control Service Contract	All Wards	(Pages 39 - 46)
	Report of the Executive Director - People		

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|-----|---|-----------|-----------------|
| * 6 | Water Self Supply Services (2022 - 2025) | All Wards | (Pages 47 - 54) |
| | Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services | | |
| * 7 | Business Rates - COVID Additional Relief Fund | All Wards | (Pages 55 - 70) |
| | Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services | | |

THE "CALL IN" PERIOD FOR THIS SET OF MINUTES ENDS AT 12 NOON ON WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH 2022. MINUTE NO.119 IS NOT SUBJECT TO "CALL-IN"

CABINET

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON THURSDAY 10TH MARCH, 2022

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Maher (in the Chair)
Councillors Atkinson, Cummins, Doyle, Fairclough,
Hardy, Lappin and Roscoe

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Moncur and Veidman.

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

112. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2022 be approved as a correct record.

113. GREEN SEFTON – SOUTHPORT GOLF LINKS INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Operational In-House Services updating on the outcome of recent consultation and market testing exercises relating to the current condition, and potential improvements, to Southport Golf Links. It had been established there was much potential and opportunities to develop the user experience, and income generated from both the course and its build facilities for players and non-golfers alike.

The report also sought approval to tender for partner/s to develop the proposals and provide investment models to enact these for the improvements to both the course and/or the Whitehouse Café.

Decision Made:

That

- (1) the outcome of the public consultation and soft market testing exercises to date be noted;

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- (2) the outline Vision for the site as set out in the report be agreed;
- (3) the concept of attracting investment in facilities at Southport Golf Links be supported as a means of delivering the above vision;
- (4) officers be authorised to formally tender for potential partner/investment in Southport Golf Links course itself, as a capital scheme, but for the Council to retain full ongoing management and operational control;
- (5) officers be authorised to formally tender for potential partner/investment in the White House café, for a medium-term lease where they would be expected to invest in the building, and then operate it fully for the agreed term and for an agreed rent;
- (6) regular updates be submitted to the Cabinet Member - Health and Well Being on progress as the process develops; and
- (7) a further report to be presented to Cabinet on the investments proposed for consideration.

Reasons for the Decision:

Southport Golf Links is a popular municipal course in the area however, participation is variable. The course operates at a surplus (generating more income than it costs to provide) but does not currently meet its income targets, including those additional targets set in 2019/20 associated with the development of a potential new driving range and other practice facilities.

The previous approach of reinvestment of income surplus to the target in the 2000's came to an end some time ago, and now the infrastructure of the course is coming to the end of its useful life – capital investment is needed to improve the course and its facilities. The course investment would also include helping to resolve drainage issues and reduce the number of days when the course is closed due to waterlogging.

The concession for the Whitehouse Café came to an end in 2013/14, and the vacant building presents an opportunity to provide a new hospitality facility for both golfers and non-golfers alike.

Recent consultation has shown both golfers and non-players alike would like to see investment in both the Whitehouse Café and on the course itself.

A soft market testing exercise undertaken in 2021 confirmed the private sector interest in working with the Council to develop the course and its facilities, and as outlined in the report, suggests significant opportunity to now tender formally to explore and understand the offers for investment in either, and/or the course and its buildings.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

If no investment in the course is undertaken, the quality of the course and facilities will continue to decline over coming years which will reduce the participation in golf (thereby not reaping the many health and well-being benefits for players), and inevitably therefore, the income generated by the course will reduce further too.

The options considered for the investment route have been explained within the report, and the recommendations are based on considering the risk assessment against these approaches.

114. HOUSING TENANCY STRATEGY 2021-26

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Economic Growth and Housing indicating that the Council had a legal duty under the Localism Act 2011 to have in place a Tenancy Strategy setting out a number of requirements that registered providers of social housing must consider when formulating their policies:

- the kinds of tenancy they grant;
- the circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind;
- where they grant tenancies for a certain term (a fixed term tenancy), the length of the terms; and
- the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.

Each Local Authority within the Liverpool City Region (LCR) published their first Tenancy Strategy during 2012. These strategies were reviewed again in 2016 and it was agreed to conduct a single review on a partnership basis, with LCR Local Authorities working together to produce a shared Tenancy Strategy. The Cabinet approved the adoption of this strategy in October 2016.

Over the previous three months the LCR authorities had been working together to refresh this document which had been developed in accordance with each individual local authority's housing needs and the report sought approval to a finalised Liverpool City Region Tenancy Strategy 2022, which would replace the previous version.

Decision Made:

That

- (1) the Liverpool City Region Tenancy Strategy 2022 be adopted;
- (2) it be noted that:

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- a) a report will be taken to a future meeting of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for endorsement, and
- b) each of the Liverpool City Region authorities will seek approval through their individual formal decision-making processes prior to the adoption of the finalised strategy.

Reasons for the Decision:

Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 places a statutory duty on local housing authorities to prepare and publish a tenancy strategy, and to have undertaken formal consultations in advance.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The Council has a duty to prepare a Tenancy Strategy. The Council could produce a Tenancy Strategy independently of the other LCR authorities; however, this would be contrary to any joined-up or strategic housing plan making of the LCR. As the Tenancy Strategy seeks to influence Registered Housing Providers (RP) own approaches to tenancy management, and most RPs operate across multiple Liverpool City Region council areas, a common strategy was seen as the most advantageous approach.

115. SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Economic Growth and Housing indicating that since 2012, the Council had been part of the Merseyside sub regional social housing allocations scheme known as Property Pool Plus (PPP). Following a review of the policy, which included extensive community consultation and concluded in early 2021, a final draft of the policy which updated the current version of the policy had now been agreed between all the other Liverpool City Region local authorities. Approval was sought on this final revised Allocations Policy and for the arrangements for the introduction of a new IT system to support the operation of the new policy and scheme.

A Member of the Cabinet asked questions/raised matters on the following issue:

- The budget that would be used to fund the scheme.

Decision Made:

That

- (1) the Allocations policy and scheme, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved;

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- (2) the introduction of the new scheme be delayed until a suitable IT system is procured to support the operation of the new policy and scheme;
- (3) authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Growth and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing, to enter into a contract with an IT system supplier following a procurement exercise for the provision of the IT system;
- (4) authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Growth and Housing to approve the financial arrangements for procuring and operating the new IT system;
- (5) recommendations (2), (3) and (4) above be subject to the Council approving a Supplementary Capital Estimate for the scheme of £65,000 funded from the Cost of Change budget;
- (6) authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Growth and Housing to enter into arrangements with the other participating local authorities (Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral), to govern the implementation and future operation of the allocations scheme, including the appointment of a PPP Coordinator to work across all local authority areas; and
- (7) the Council be recommended to approve a Supplementary Capital Estimate for the scheme of £65,000 funded from the Cost of Change budget.

Reasons for the Decision:

In order to ensure that the Allocations Policy is in line with current legislation, case law and good practice it is necessary to update the current iteration. Cabinet authority is required to adopt a new Social Housing Allocations Policy and to approve the work and cost related to an IT system necessary to operate it.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The alternative option would be to not approve participation in this sub-regional scheme, and under that scenario the Council would need to operate its own allocation scheme. In the short term this would require the continued use of the existing policy and therefore extend use of the existing allocation scheme and operational agreements with One Vision Housing (OVH) and Civica, the existing IT system supplier. In order to ensure that the policy in operation was up to date, the Council would need to develop its own allocations policy and scheme, and separately procure a suitable IT system with which to operate it.

However, the opportunity to take advantage of joint sub-regional operational arrangements for an allocations scheme or efficient

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procurement of an improved IT system will not be possible, nor will the efficiencies that are expected to flow from these arrangements be gained.

116. TOWN DEAL: THE ENTERPRISE ARCADE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place updating on the Southport Town Deal project, The Enterprise Arcade, and presenting the preferred option for progressing the commitment of Town Deal funding for the project. The report also included a summary of the business case for submission by the Council, as accountable body, to Government on behalf of the Southport Town Deal Board.

Decision Made:

That:

- (1) the Business Case for this project be endorsed to go forward as part of the Town Deal investment package;
- (2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, in consultation with the Executive Director – Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills, and, the Chair of the Southport Town Deal Board, the signing and returning of the Project Documentation to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in line with Town Deal funding deadlines, in order to trigger the release of funding and commence the project activity; and
- (3) the Council be recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate of £1.25m funded from the Town Deal.

Reasons for the Decision:

Under the Town Deal Heads of Terms, Sefton Council is required to submit businesses cases within 12 months of the offer (by March 2022).

The preferred option for Enterprise Arcade is set out in the business case and in the Design Feasibility RIBA Stage 2 Report which will allow for the provision of 898 m² of improved floor space comprising of Crown Building* and 3 adjacent retail units on Eastbank Street, Southport.

(* the Dove Properties management suite is excluded from this initial phase 1 work but may be drawn into the proposed works subject to agreeing a release of this office with the current leaseholder).

Securing a Tenant who will act as an operating partner for the Enterprise Arcade will be integral to the long-term success of the project. Through agreeing a Property Lease, with embedded contractual obligations, the risks of ongoing financial liability for the operation and day-to-day costs of running the building will be transferred to the Tenant partner, meaning that

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there will be no ongoing financial burden to the Council relative to any operating costs. The Council will continue to have responsibility for the structural integrity of the building and associated services, and provision will be made in the lease agreement for a contribution to these costs from the lessee/operator. The freehold of the building will remain with the Council as will the long-term benefit of the Town Deal funding for improvements to the asset.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The RIBA Stage 2 report lists the alternative options considered in delivering Enterprise Arcade across 8 options differentiated by scale/levels of finish and associated cost.

The Do-Nothing option is rejected on the basis of not meeting the Core Objectives of the Project and output requirement committed within the Town Investment Plan and related Heads of Terms.

The preferred option delivers to the required level of outputs within the available budget and all associated Project Risks for this project at Design Stage 2 are addressed in the Stage 2 Design Feasibility Report.

117. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TRAINING - BUSINESS CASE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place updating on the Southport Town Deal project, Building Better Customer Experience, and presenting the preferred option for progressing the commitment of Town Deal funding for the project.

A Member of the Cabinet placed thanks on record to Councillors Waterfield and Halsall for their input on the matter in facilitating engagement with Southport Access for Everyone (SAFE) regarding disability awareness on this and other Town Deal projects.

Decision Made:

That

- (1) the Business Case for this project be endorsed to go forward as part of the Town Deal investment package;
- (2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, in consultation with Executive Director - Place and the Chair of the Southport Town Deal Board the signing and returning of the Project Documentation to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in line with Town Deal funding deadlines, in order to trigger the release of funding and commence the project activity; and
- (3) the fact that the Executive Director - Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills and Section 151 Officer

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will be requested to approve a supplementary revenue estimate of £200,000, as per the Financial Procedure Rules, to be fully funded by the Town Deal, be noted.

Reasons for the Decision:

Under the Town Deal Heads of Terms, Sefton Council is required to submit business cases within 12 months of the initial offer (i.e. by March 2022).

The preferred option for Building Better Customer Experience is set out in the business case and reflects an understanding of the needs of the Town in order to make key improvements in the quality of the local workforce to underpin the transformation of the Town.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The Do-Nothing option has been rejected on the basis that we have recognised there are key issues connected with the skills and aptitudes of the local workforce which are necessary to address in order to achieve the level of transformation we envisage in the Town Deal Investment Plan, with increased visitor footfall, increased length of stay and return visit and higher levels of satisfaction in key attractions, leisure facilities, catering and hospitality settings.

118. TRANSFORMATIONS DE SOUTHPORT - BUSINESS CASE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place that provided an update on the Southport Town Deal project, *Les Transformations de Southport*, and presented the preferred option for progressing the commitment of Town Deal funding for the project. The report also included the business case for the project for submission by the Council, as the accountable body, to Government on behalf of the Town Deal Board.

Decision Made:

That

- (1) the proposals for committing the Town Deal funding for delivery of the first phase of the project be approved;
- (2) the business case for the project be agreed and be submitted to Government on behalf of the Town Deal Board;
- (3) the agreement and return of the Project Documentation to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) be delegated to the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, in consultation with the Executive Director - Place and the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills and the Cabinet Member - Locality

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Services, on behalf of the Town Deal Board and in line with Town Deal funding deadlines; and

- (4) the Council be recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate of £2.75m funded from the annual transportation capital programme (£0.25m), for the development of the scheme, and the Town Deal (£2.5m) for the delivery of the first phase of the project.

Reasons for the Decision:

Under the Town Deal Heads of Terms, Sefton Council is required to submit business cases within 12 months of the offer (by March 2022). The business case for the *Les Transformations de Southport* project has been developed in accordance with the guidance provided for Town Deal projects and takes account of consultation feedback and the results of previous studies in recommending the first phase of delivery for the project. The business case needs to be approved for the submission to be made to the Government to facilitate the provision of the grant funding.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Failing to complete and agree the business case would risk losing the funding so that is not an acceptable option.

A range of different transport interventions were considered for inclusion in the project as part of the Town Deal process and a project focussed on improving movement, access and connectivity across the town was agreed by the Town Deal Board for inclusion in the Town Investment Plan.

119. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER REVIEW REVISIT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services seeking endorsement for a Peer revisit to take place in relation to the 2018 Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Assessment.

Decision Made:

That the LGA's intention to undertake a Peer Review Revisit in April 2022 be welcomed.

Reasons for the Decision:

Peer Reviews are a proven tool for sector-led improvement and the Council has always been open to learning from others and sharing good practice. The peer challenge that took place in 2018 provided external recognition of the things it believed the Council was doing well, highlighted where the Council could learn from other councils considering best practice elsewhere and recommended several key actions.

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In January 2019 the Cabinet considered and agreed an action plan responding to the Peer Review Team's recommendations and in March 2020 the Cabinet received a progress update.

The report sought to keep Members informed of the LGA peers revisit intentions to assess progress against their recommendations.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not applicable.

120. ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that provided assurance on the progress made to implement the Council's Health and Safety policy during the 2020/21 financial year.

A Member of the Cabinet commended the work of the Council's Health and Safety Team during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Decision Made:

That the progress on implementing the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy for the 2020/21 financial year be noted.

Reasons for the Decision:

The annual report provides assurance to the Cabinet, which has strategic responsibility for employee health and safety, that there is continued progress to implement and enhance an effective health and safety system across the Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

121. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2021/22 TO 2024/25 AND FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE 2020 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2021/22 INCLUDING THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE 2021/22 BUDGET - MARCH UPDATE

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

1. The current financial implications of COVID-19 on the 2021/22 Budget.
2. The current position relating to the 2021/22 revenue budget.
3. The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2021/22.

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4. The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of January 2022:
 - 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 were also presented for approval.

Decision Made:

That

A. in respect of the Revenue Budget:

- (1) the current financial implications of COVID-19 on the 2021/22 Budget together with the key issues that will influence the final position be noted;
- (2) the current position relating to the 2021/22 revenue budget be noted;
- (3) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2021/22 revenue budget be recognised and that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved be acknowledged;
- (4) the fact that a grant offer from the Rural Payments Agency for Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier funding has now been formally accepted and a fully funded revenue estimate of £0.483m and a fully funded capital estimate of £0.012m have been approved in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules be noted;

B. in respect of the Capital Programme:

- (5) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme, as set out at paragraph 7.1 of the report, be noted;
- (6) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 January 2022 of £22.093m, as set out at paragraph 6.4 of the report; the latest full year forecast is £41.761m, as set out at paragraph 7.6 of the report, be noted;
- (7) the explanations of variances to project budgets, as set out at paragraph 7.7 of the report, be noted;
- (8) a supplementary capital estimate for £0.455m, as detailed in paragraph 7.11 of the report, be approved; and

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- (9) the fact 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, as set out at paragraph 7.14 of the report, be noted.

Reasons for the Decision:

To ensure the Cabinet is informed of the current position in relation to the 2021/22 revenue budget, including COVID19 pressures and additional funding being made available to the Council.

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 2021/22 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:

Not applicable.

122. INTEGRATED CARE BOARD PLACE DIRECTOR

The Cabinet considered the report of the Interim Chief Personnel Officer indicating that subject to the passing of legislative proposals regarding changes to the Health and Care Bill, a new statutory post of Integrated Care Board Place Director had been created.

The post holder would report to the new Integrated Care Board for Cheshire and Merseyside when it was established on 1 July 2022.

The post holder would be responsible for the leadership, strategy, effectiveness and delivery of a range of NHS functions for integrated health and care services.

Partners in Sefton proposed that the Place Director could be a jointly accountable role to both the Integrated Care Board and the Council, with the post holder carrying on Council responsibilities alongside their accountability to the Integrated Care Board. This model would in principle enable greater integration.

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Following an open and transparent competitive recruitment process, Sefton Council's Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health had been offered the role. However, in order to be able to accept the post Cabinet approval was required.

Decision Made:

That

- (1) the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health be authorised to accept the role of Director of Place;
- (2) the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health be authorised to continue in that substantive role whilst also discharging the role of Director of Place;
- (3) the individual employee will remain on Sefton Council terms and conditions of employment; and
- (4) the fact that there will be salary implications, although those discussions have not yet taken place, be noted.

Reasons for the Decision:

In order to secure Cabinet approval for the appointment of the Director of Place to proceed in accordance with the contents of the report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

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Agenda Item 4

Report to:	Cabinet Council	Date of Meeting:	7 April 2022 21 April 2022
Subject:	New Realities 2022		
Report of:	Executive Director (People)	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	Y	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To consider a revised New Realities Protocol which has been co-produced with the Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) Sector.

Recommendation(s): That

- (1) Cabinet consider the content of the revised New Realities protocol; and
- (2) Council be recommended to approve the revised protocol for adoption.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To approve a revised New Realities protocol.

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

The Council is not obliged to have a protocol in place but it is recommended best practice.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

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There are no revenue costs to this decision.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no capital costs to this decision

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): There are no resource implications beyond the regular engagement with the VCF sector as part of the Council's usual business.	
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
The protocol relates to ways of working with the VCF sector and although there is collaboration on the climate emergency it is not a substantive issue within the protocol.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Most of the work undertaken by the VCF sector protects the most vulnerable
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The VCF sector is pivotal in facilitating strong and resilient communities
Commission, broker and provide core services: Some VCF organisations are commissioned to provide services.
Place – leadership and influencer: The VCF sector and the way the Council works with the sector is a key part of place leadership
Drivers of change and reform: The New Realities protocol won national awards for formalising the relationship between the Council and VCF organisations.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Volunteering opportunities are recognised as steps towards employment

Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener: The council and the VCF sector collaborate on climate emergency response.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6756/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4956/22.) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Consultation has taken place through the New Realities Joint Steering Group and to the following specific networks - Every Child Matters Forum and network members, Health and Social Care Forum network and members and presentation, Sefton Faith Forum network members and workshop, Sefton In Mind network and the Healthwatch Steering Group. It has also been circulated via Sefton CVS's e-bulletin.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Council meeting.

Contact Officer:	Andrea Watts
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 2030
Email Address:	andrea.watts@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

New Realities Protocol 2022

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 New Realities (NR's), is a 'Can-Do' collaborative agreement between Sefton Council and Sefton's Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector (VCFS). The agreement was launched in 2015, alongside an operational framework that aimed to strengthen relationships and help to 'get things done' whilst making the most of all resources available.

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- 1.2 Since June 2021, the New Realities Steering Group (made of VCF organisations across Sefton, Sefton Council and Sefton CVS) have reviewed the 2015 protocol and refreshed the approach.
- 1.3 The Group are also working to complete an action plan associated with the protocol which is included within the document.

NEW REALITIES

A 'CAN-DO' COLLABORATIVE
AGREEMENT BETWEEN SEFTON
COUNCIL & SEFTON'S VOLUNTARY,
COMMUNITY & FAITH SECTOR

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL
COMMUNITIES ARE CHANGING**

"AT THE HEART OF THE CHANGES THAT ARE UNDER WAY
IS A 'RE-IMAGINING' OF LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS, WITHIN
WHICH THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW, BETTER, MORE
EQUAL AND PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN
LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IS KEY"

CLLR. TRISH HARDY, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES & HOUSING, SEFTON MBC



NEW REALITIES IN A COLLABORATION BETWEEN SEFTON COUNCIL &
SEFTON COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE (CVS) REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1024546.
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND, COMPANY LTD. BY GUARANTEE NO. 2832920.

INTRODUCTION

We recognise that as the needs of Sefton's communities change overtime we must adapt and continuously improve the way we work together, in order to facilitate changes which have a positive, lasting impact on the lives and wellbeing of local people.

To help achieve this, since 2015, we have established an operational framework that strengthens working relationships between the local authority and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector. This meant that, during 2020, as Sefton experienced the impact of Covid-19 locally, we were well placed to respond and mitigate the effects.

The 'new normal' has yet to be fully understood, but one certainty is that we must continue to work together, strengthening our new ways of working and networks across organisations as we move towards recovery and life beyond lockdown.

Sefton as a Borough is also moving to become part of an Integrated Care System (ICS), bringing together local health and care organisations and councils to re-design care and improve population health, the scene is set for even stronger partnership working with joint objectives and shared campaigns and resources.

THE VISION

Our overall aim is to help to make Sefton a great place to be and to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in our communities by creating a culture which stimulates and encourages innovation. This enabling culture will be supported by:

- **Systems** - developing constructive ways to improve systems and procedures, to remove barriers and improve consistency to reflect the needs of our communities

- **Relationships** - developing measures that challenge negative / deficit attitudes, which often underpin procedural barriers, and developing measures that promote positive and constructive partnerships. That challenge negative/deficit attitudes that often underpin procedural barriers.
- **Collaboration** and co-produced solutions must become the norm and the added social value they bring must be recognised. This must become a shared approach.
- **Expectations** – communicating and planning together more effectively will enable us to develop realistic and informed expectations for the future. The Voluntary, Community and Faith sector offer vital, local support and services but cannot always be expected to 'pick up the pieces', and communities need to recognise that it is not 'business as usual' for local authorities.
- **Creative solutions** - the ways in which we combine and adapt existing approaches will have to be imaginative and ingenious. Promoting a culture of creativity, social innovation and identifying what creative solutions look like in practice will be a priority
- **Sharing** – the assets unique to our own organisations or areas of work, such as; skills, sharing, expertise, costs, learning. We also share a vision, respect for each other's organisation and success.
- **Adapting** – quickly to unanticipated threats and redesigning how we operate in order to focus priorities to where they most needed and have the biggest impact in Sefton. Public support for each other's roles when tackling common issues.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Our motivations remain the same as they were since we first launched New Realities in 2015.

Because...

- **It is crucial we make the most of ALL available resources.** Not losing sight of this as the ultimate aim is vital.
- **The role of the local authority is changing** in its nature, form and function and we recognise the dramatic impact this is having in communities. In addition, the local health economy is transforming, as it moves towards delivering an integrated model of care and adopts new ways of working.
- **Resources are scarce...** meaning we need to pool resources and think differently about how they are utilised, demands better ways of working together strategically and operationally.
- **Creative solutions are needed.** The core assumptions underpinning the 'status quo' have been challenged and the changes that we all face are sweeping. If we are to make a difference in our communities, we need solutions that reflect the growing importance of collaboration and partnership, and challenge practices that prevent this from happening.
- **Being involved is important** - recognising the changing realities and possibilities in local communities, improving involvement by communities, including local leadership through joint design and delivery of local services.
- **...And yet there are untapped assets in all of our communities.** At times of resource scarcity, identifying untapped assets is critical – the buildings, networks, 'below the radar' services and support, the finances, skills, energy and the goodwill. These assets must be recognised and more effectively mobilised in the years ahead to strengthen our communities and neighbourhoods.
- **More resilient communities** will be needed in the years ahead. Communities will need to be capable of organising, mobilising and responding to the long term changes that are now under way. All partners must come together to enable this to happen.

NEW REALITIES PRINCIPLES

- **Common purpose** – if changes are to be constructive and enduring, the way forward must involve the strengthening of goodwill and trust between all parties in pursuit of common goals.
- **Solutions focused** – if change is to be effective, all parties must be focused on the development of collective solutions as the starting point for working and interacting – a ‘can do’ attitude. We need to establish ‘reasons to do things’ as the norm – rather than ‘reasons why we can’t’.
- **Mutual respect** – relationships and roles are changing; the importance of demonstrating mutual respect, acknowledging the contributions made by all parties and recognising the need to adapt and change together underpins our approach.
- **Risk ‘aware’** – A shift is needed within the local authorities away from a norm that is ‘risk averse’, to one in which risks are identified, analysed and managed in partnership with communities. Moving from ‘Gatekeeper’ to ‘Facilitator’ cannot happen without this shift.
- **Support an inclusive Sefton** - diversity, equality and being a place of welcome and opportunity underpins the social and economic fabric of our borough, where all individuals with protected characteristics are able to thrive free from discrimination and inequality.

ACTIONS

- Local authority and the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector **meeting regularly** to measure how far the local authority has changed and moved towards an enabling culture as a 2 year goal.
- **Use of case studies** – how do you highlight what effective partnership working might look like and how do you disseminate this for impact? Recognising that good practice exists all around us – capturing examples of this so that people can see what ‘success’ looks like as well as highlighting challenges that remain.
- **What if...** would asking the question ‘what if it had been done differently’ be a useful method for addressing problems or system failures? What might ‘differently’ look like?
- **Collaborative Learning Programme** working with all parties – ‘changing together’. This will provide learning for both good and poor practice and will include local authority officers, the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector and elected members. This will be linked to annual events to review progress and celebrate success.
- **Solutions Framework** – establishing mechanisms through which system failures or cultural blockages may be challenged and dealt with quickly and effectively to produce constructive outcomes as well as providing important lessons for all involved.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Outcome 1: Increased investment in the Sefton economy.

- Successful joint investment programmes that access external funding, based on
 - Pooling of knowledge and skills – models and impact.
 - Use of other funds to bring in additional investment.
- Employment opportunities for local people in the Sefton economy arising from improved collaborative working.

Outcome 2: An engaged community working effectively in partnership.

- Collaboration in action - combining the human, social, technical and financial resources of the local authority and communities to produce tangible, beneficial outcomes, for example;
 - Repurposing resources, for example, bring a redundant building or space back into use.
 - Delivery of joint events or actions making a difference at a local level e.g. activities to improve community spirit, 'fun days' or seasonal events, actions to restore community pride, such as litter picks, 'grotspot' clean ups, planting and renovation.
 - Develop a new facilities.
 - Launch a service that is jointly managed and delivered (public/VCF partnership)
 - Embark on a new way of working – co-location, shared services and co-design, such as provider collaboratives and consortia.

- Effective and timely solutions are achieved when 'system blockages' are identified, for example;
 - Issues identified quickly and acknowledged.
 - Steps taken to address.
 - Resolution and positive outcomes achieved.
 - Learning identified and effectively disseminated.

Outcome 3: Improved health and wellbeing for residents and communities point 1 will this be included elsewhere or in a narrative about building on what works?

- Further development of existing networks and sharing of good practice.
- Evidence of improved referral and signposting between community, statutory and other services.
- Evidence of improved, ongoing joint planning and resource allocation at local levels.
- Common endeavour - effective, combined planning and action to address specific issue or event, for example; winter, emergency, flood, covid19
- Respond jointly to unanticipated threats, such as pandemics

THE NEW REALITIES APPROACH

DRIVING COLLABORATIVE CHANGE IN SEFTON

Since its inception in 2015, New Realities has helped to champion collaborative change in Sefton through the following outcomes;

- Established shared values and behaviours which are now embedded within the Professional Development Reviews (PDR's) of Sefton Council staff, resulting in the New Realities ways of working in day to day practice.
- Embedded the New Realities approach into the recruitment and induction process including Councillor's Induction Programmes, which ensures a consistent leadership and governance process across the Council.
- Over 1,400 staff from VCF sector, Department of Work and Pensions, Council and Health and Elected Members trained in Making Every Contact Count (MECC) in 2018/19.
- Participating in this training enables those trained to better engage with local people in conversations about improving their health and wellbeing.
- Improved access to shared Training and Workforce Development opportunities with over 7,627 staff taking up opportunities in the last three years.
- With funding from Barrow Cadbury Trust, Sefton CVS led an intensive capacity building programme for CEO's looking to improve skills, knowledge and access to social investors informed by Sefton Council commissioner priorities.

The impact is that 66% of those organisations are now making applications to investors for project and business ideas.

- Over the last four years, the introduction of a 'New Realities' awards for Sefton MBC staff at the Annual Council Awards (STAR Awards), enables VCF sector organisations to nominate those Council staff who have demonstrated the New Realities approach in their practice.
- By linking the Communications Officers between the Council, CVS, the CCG's, and local VCF sector organisations improving social messaging between agencies, celebrating good news and raising awareness of local services to assist our residents.
- An intelligent commissioning approach adopted by Sefton Council enabled a consortium of local VCF Sector providers through Sefton CVS, as a Lead Contract holder, to come together. This resulted in the creation of Living Well Sefton, a community-based Public Health Programme which adopted common referral pathways, IT and workforce development, with a programme of community grants to meet needs and start up new health and wellbeing initiatives.
- New Realities is embedded within all formal Council papers requiring New Realities principles to be considered in all Council decisions.
- The New Realities approach has been nationally recognised for partnership working through Compact Voice, NHS Health Education England and National Housing Federation Community Impact Awards.

THE NEW REALITIES APPROACH CONT.

- Sefton Council invited expressions of interest from VCF sector organisations to re-imagine usage of redundant buildings leading to the development of new and improved facilities in local community settings. These include the SWAN Centre, Ykidz Centre and Venus.
- The Council's purchase of the Strand Shopping Centre in Bootle enabled the development of a social highway alongside retail outlets enabling VCF sector organisations such as Bootle Tool Shed, the Veterans in Sefton, Strand By Me, Ykidz, In Another Place and others to provide easier access to services for residents.
- Developed new ways of working across our organisations in response to Covid-19. Staff from all agencies worked together quickly to implement a new process which saw timely referrals into new VCF sector pathways to offer support and signposting to 1,252 residents required to shield and 1,615 residents not required to shield but who needed support.
- Worked together to promote volunteering roles and support the recruitment and placement of volunteers to respond to Covid19 (Sefton Council's community response offer , and the local CCG's Testing and Vaccination sites)
- At the start of lockdown during March 2020, we streamlined our communications across organisations webpages to make sure messages were clear and consistent so that people could access a wide range of local, regional and national information.
- Engaged with VS6 who are providing the VCF sector conduit through to the Metro Mayor, LEP and Combined Authority. Engagement with the Social Justice Advisory Panel, Social Solidarity Panel and actively engaged and supported the LCR Build Back Better submission to central govt.
- VCF sector groups participated in VS6 assemblies sharing intelligence, practice and recommendations focused on the themes of Children and Young people, Vulnerable Shielded and Carers, Mental Health and two events in relations to Equalities Both Covid-19 response and recovery.

NEW REALITIES CREATIVE SOLUTIONS
EXPECTATIONS
RELATIONSHIPS
COLLABORATION

CASE STUDIES - NEW REALITIES IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 1: ASYLUM SEEKERS AND COVID-19

THE CHALLENGE

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Home Office and Serco, arranged for 127 asylum seekers to be housed in the Scarisbrick Hotel in Southport whilst they awaited the outcome of asylum applications or appeals. This was an unprecedented arrangement locally which was made more complex given the impact of Covid-19.

Some of the challenges that presented were;

- Language barriers, particularly regarding communicating any information relating to covid-19
- The local healthcare system responding to an influx of demand and needing to navigate cultural sensitivities
- Concerns being raised by members of the public regarding the suitability of the accommodation and the basic needs of the residents being met
- Incidents of racial hatred.



THE RESPONSE

NHS Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) invited Sefton Council and local VCF sector partners, notably Sefton CVS, to work together, with Serco, in order to ensure the asylum seekers were registered with local GP services and any additional needs were met and address some of the presenting issues. Regular meetings were arranged and all partners attended to consider what support/actions could be taken to assist seekers during their stay in Southport.

Examples of actions undertaken which demonstrate the collaborative and innovative values of the New Realities approach include:

- The group became aware that national communications around covid had been sent out in plain English and not in the language of choice which meant many of the residents in the hotel were at risk of being ill informed around covid messaging. The VCF had already worked with the CCG around the NHS England shielding letter that had similarly been sent out in plain English which was brought to the attention of all Sefton GP services with BAME and other patients being contacted regarding the shielding information. This resulted in all CCG's in the Liverpool City Region, following Sefton's approach.

This outcome was replicated by the partners working together to compile information around COVID for the residents in the hotel and subsequent information regarding the vaccine programme.

- Residents were supported to register with local GP Practices in order to access healthcare services. GP Practices were provided with information about cultural sensitivities which were presenting, alongside direct work with the asylum seekers to increase understanding of

how primary care worked in England and explain basic protocols which should be followed. This approach was welcomed by the GPs and resulted in a more efficient and calmer interaction with primary care services for all involved.

- The Sefton district of the British Red Cross and local church leaders/community groups though not members of the partnership group provided a much needed drop-in facility which enabled asylum seekers to obtain items such as clothing and toiletries, as well information about getting to know the local area.
- Following an incident at the hotel where far right members briefly entered the hotel and began taking photographs and asking questions of residents, it was discovered that the event had not been recorded by the local Community Safety Partnership as a Hate Crime. This was raised by the VCF sector group at the Sefton hate crime joint action group (JAG) resulting with the incident being recorded correctly. Moving forward members of the JAG partnership are to deliver additional training to ensure services are fully aware of what constitutes a hate incident, that will hopefully improve the situation for all involved, the asylum seekers themselves, and the wider BAME community across the Liverpool City Region.
- The Serco lead on the partnership emailed the partnership thanking all those involved CCG and VCF members for their support throughout period the asylum seekers were in the hotel and to work with all involved again.

CASE STUDIES - NEW REALITIES IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 2: ALLEYWAY IMPROVEMENT

THE CHALLENGE

During lockdown local residents of Rufford Road in Bootle realised how much potential there was to create a usable outdoor space in the alleyway which ran to the rear of their properties.

The alleyway was had become overgrown with weeds and was filled with rubbish, as well as abandoned white goods and unwanted household appliance

Local residents contacted Sefton Council about making improvements to the alleyway. Neighbourhood teams in the Council supported with cleansing, removal of all rubbish and helped with the clean-up. Ward Councillors supported with £500 towards plants and planters.

THE RESPONSE

Local residents worked together to clean up the alleyways and make an inviting space. The area has now been decorated with bunting and garlands along with flower pots, hanging baskets and planters to grow small fruits and herbs.

The alleyway is now an inviting safe space for residents, neighbours can socialise and it is a safe space for children.

The approach demonstrates how local residents, not only have the ability to directly improve their local areas, but the way in which it is achieved, by working together and sharing resources, also strengthens community cohesion and connectivity, as residents work towards a shared goal and benefit from the creation of a space to socialise and connect.



Image: Liverpool Echo

Image: Liverpool Echo

CASE STUDIES - NEW REALITIES IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 3: LIVING WELL SEFTON COMMUNITY RESILIENCE GRANTS

BACKGROUND

Living Well Sefton is a wellbeing organisation with a focus on supporting people with matters that may be affecting their health and wellbeing. Funded through Sefton Council's Public Health Team. It is a collaboration of various Sefton organisations which have the expertise and knowledge to help people reach realistic lifestyle goals. This supports the New Realities approach of working together, sharing knowledge, resources and recognising the unique benefits each partner brings in order to improve the lives of people in Sefton.

Funded via Sefton Council, Community Resilience Grants were made available to community groups as a way of increasing wellbeing for their local areas. During the pandemic there were two rounds of funding in which 28 groups received a share of £44,000 to deliver projects to improve wellbeing.

Many of them had to adapt the original way the project was to be delivered due to ongoing changes to restrictions or lockdowns being introduced. Overall, Sefton's communities were helped to remain strong and resilient in the face of Covid-19's impact. The approach demonstrates how large organisations can encourage innovation by funding smaller organisations to deliver activities within their local communities.

[Read more about the case study here...](#)

GRANT FUNDING DISTRIBUTED

Two Scout Groups received **£2,996** to run ambitious camping projects designed to instil environmentally sustainable ways of living and teach valuable life skills.

Big Love Sista received **£2,000** which specialises in arts-in-health projects, overcame the coronavirus obstacles by developing on-line resources that local residents could access.

Tyred Rides received **£2,000** to run workshop for young people around bicycle restoration and maintenance.

Inclusion Network received **£855** to run a their project 'Get Out, Get Active' was for young people in Bootle to meet up on a Saturday and get walking whilst improving mental wellbeing and tackling social isolation along the way.

Galloways Society for the Blind received **£800** to run their 'A Brush of Fresh Air, workshop to improve the health and wellbeing of blind and partially sighted people by giving them the chance to create artwork outside with natural materials.



CASE STUDY 4: YKIDS & ORRELL LIBRARY

In 2014, Bootle-based charity YKids submitted an expression of interest to Sefton MBC for the acquisition of the Orrell Library site, which was scheduled for closure. Ykids discussed options of acquiring the building with Sefton MBC, who committed to helping YKids, adopting a New Realities approach to overcome barriers.

The initial agreement issued for the building through Sefton Council's legal department proposed a rental cost of £1 a year for the first 5 years, followed by full rent after 5 years – which was an unrealistic request, especially as the original tender had stated 25 year commitment. Following further discussions with Sefton MBC, it was accepted this was wrong approach, as YKids would be unable to access external funds without a longer commitment. YKids then secured a long term lease for 25 years at £1 a year.

In early 2018, YKids announced the official launch of the new site and the change in premises enabled the charity to install a state-of-the-art creative kitchen space and expand their services.

CASE STUDY 5: THE SWAN CENTRE & LITHERLAND LIBRARY

In February 2015, The SWAN Centre contacted Sefton MBC to enquire about the Litherland Library site located on the corner of Linacre Road and Bridge Road as a possible new premises for the charity. This went through a tendering process, with The SWAN centre successful in acquisition.

A challenging refurbishment programme proceeded, with the charity receiving support from the council, The SWAN Centre officially opened the new site in May 2017 and this securing a safe and accessible location for the charity and it's clients. Since 2017, the transformation has allowed for the development of new services and improved community access, enhancing the future sustainability of The Swan Centre and the offer available to women to achieve mental wellbeing.



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CASE STUDIES - NEW REALITIES IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 6: RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN SEFTON

THE CHALLENGE

As Sefton experienced the impact of Covid-19 locally and the first national lockdown was announced, our incredible voluntary, community and faith sector came together, with Sefton Council and NHS Sefton Clinical Commissioning groups to identify residents who were particularly vulnerable to the threat of the pandemic.

In particular, concentration turned to residents who had been advised by the government that they needed to shield for 12 weeks, as well as those residents who weren't clinically required to shield, yet nonetheless had other vulnerabilities which resulted in need for extra help and support.

[Read more about the COVID-19 Support Pathways](#)

THE OUTCOMES

2867 residents assisted with activities such as; shopping, collecting medication and social contact.

632 residents were provided with shopping services and a total of **5705 shops** were completed across all partners.

120 Active volunteers per week were supporting clients during the peak of the pandemic.

In addition to practical support, wellness checks were conducted with residents. Subsequently, volunteers were identified and supported to keep regular contact with those clients feeling isolated to offer support and companionship over the phone.

THE RESPONSE

Residents who had been advised by the government that they needed to shield for 12 weeks were contacted by Sefton Council to identify what their needs were regarding social contact, food and medication. Supported by a family of local voluntary and community sector groups and organisations, Living Well Sefton triaged the enquiries, then forwarded to Sefton CVS whereby Living Well Mentors, local Social Prescribing Link Workers and the Community Connectors, provided ongoing assistance which was supported by a dedicated team of local volunteers. The service offered a response within 4 days For others in need of help and support, but who were not on the shielded extremely vulnerable list, a referral pathway was established to advise people they could access information and help by calling the Council's Contact Centre or by completing an online form.

The Council's Contact Centre then shared the information Sefton CVS , following which the referral was triaged and people were connected with appropriate support which met their needs. Support included signposting people into various localised offers across our borough, so residents received a localised response where possible. The service offered a response within 3 days.

National support for shielded residents was withdrawn from 1st August 2020; the partnership of VCF groups worked in partnership with Sefton Council to identify those residents who would require ongoing support. There were 64 individuals identified by Sefton Council, of which only 25 were not known to VCF partners. Contact was made with these individuals in order to determine level of need and appropriate referrals to partner organisations. The main request was for ongoing telephone befriending or support to reduce isolation. The VCF organisations remained on standby to work with the Council should shielding be reintroduced nationally.

[Watch the COVID-19 Response video here](#)



ACTIONS AND VISION FOR 2020 - 2025

- Under take a **full refresh of the New Realities** way of working and focus on ensuring the approach is discussed at relevant Senior Leadership Teams.
- Encourage other Public Partners to **adopt the New Realities approach** both Strategically and Operationally.
- Sefton 2030 Vision - Identify the **key priorities** in which the New Realities approach can achieve positive outcomes.
- Continue to **extend workforce development opportunities** through shared investment programmes, improved access & encourage new initiatives.
- **Two-way shadowing programme** between local authority and VCF sector.
- Identify 2 areas of work for **impact and critique**. Aspire to invest in Common Leadership programmes between Sectors.
- Aspire to the **principles and values of the 21st century Public Servant**;
 - Benevolence
 - Predictability
 - Ability
 - Integrity

[More information here](#)

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Agenda Item 5

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	7 April 2022
Subject:	Activation of the Extensions to the Community Infection Prevention and Control Service Contract		
Report of:	Executive Director People	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Health and Wellbeing		
Is this a Key Decision:	Y	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	N		

Summary:

The Sefton Community Infection Prevention and Control Service is currently provided by Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust. The core contract period ends on 31st August 2022.

The available options are:

1. To activate the 2 x 12month contact extension clauses within the contract
2. To re-procure the Service with a start date of 1st September 2022.

Recommendation(s):

(1) Approval is requested for the Director of Public Health to be granted delegated authority to activate both of the 2 x 12-month contract extension clauses in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing. The first contract extension would be activated on the 1st September 2022. The second contract extension clause to be activated on 1st September 2023 subject to continued satisfactory delivery of the Service against the service specification and annual work programme.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent increased requirement for the Community Infection Prevention and Control Services in Sefton. The Service was reviewed in 2020 and an expanded Service Specification was developed with a corresponding increase to funding for this Service.

Additional demands on the Service have continued with both responsive work due to outbreaks and additional expert infection prevention and control advice and support across the community health and care sector to support quality and safety for those receiving care in Sefton.

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The Service continues to deliver against the additional priorities identified during the Service review in 2020:

- Management and prevention of outbreaks in complex community settings, cases,
- Clusters and outbreaks involving people in vulnerable groups,
- Increasing skills and knowledge in community settings around prevention in order to reduce the number of community outbreaks in Sefton

The Service has continued to perform well against the agreed annual work plan, supporting community providers to improve quality, through supportive visits, advice and guidance, audit, and training.

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

The alternative option is not to extend the current contract with the Service and move to procure a new Community Infection Prevention and Control Service with a contract start date of 1st September 2022.

Moving to a procurement exercise has the potential to destabilise current Service delivery and to stall progress against agreed workplan objectives.

Additionally, there would be an opportunity cost associated with the officer time required for a procurement which would reduce capacity to deliver against key priorities in Sefton. This would include an impact on health protection capacity within the Sefton Council Public Health team.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The service will be financed through Public Health budgets currently allocated to the community infection control service. The current annual cost and budget for this Service is £271,000.

The cost and budget for this Service was increased following a review of the Service in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the development of an expanded service specification. The expanded Service offer began in 2021 when the new service specification was introduced through a contract variation with the current provider. There are no plans to reduce the budget for this Service as it is a key priority to support vulnerable and complex community settings to reduce the risks of outbreak associated with COVID-19 or other existing or emerging pathogens.

The costs of this service are in-line with the costs of other similar services commissioned in Cheshire and Merseyside.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no capital costs for the Council associated with this service.

Implications of the Proposals:

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

The activation of the contract extension aims to offer maximum value for money through

<p>supporting ongoing Service development aimed at preventing infections and outbreaks in community settings and improving quality and safety for those receiving community care provision in Sefton. Whilst there has been a recent increase in the costs of delivering this service in Sefton, it has been a key priority to ensure that complex and vulnerable community settings in Sefton are supported to reduce the risks of infections and outbreaks of COVID-19 and other existing or emerging pathogens.</p>								
<p>Legal Implications: The contract extension clauses are part of the existing contract with the Provider.</p>								
<p>Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.</p>								
<p>Climate Emergency Implications:</p> <p>The recommendations within this report will</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Have a positive impact</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Have a neutral impact</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">Y</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Have a negative impact</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">Y</td> </tr> </table> <p>This Service has a neutral climate impact. The Service provides expert advice and support to community care providers and in doing aims to reduce the impact of communicable diseases within complex and vulnerable community settings.</p>	Have a positive impact	N	Have a neutral impact	Y	Have a negative impact	N	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
Have a positive impact	N							
Have a neutral impact	Y							
Have a negative impact	N							
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y							

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable: The Community Infection Prevention and Control Service provides support to complex and/or vulnerable settings, supporting the quality of provision to the most vulnerable in Sefton.</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The Community Infection Prevention and Control Service work-programme aims to increase knowledge and skills for those working in complex settings and with vulnerable groups in Sefton.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services: Commissioning the Community Infection Prevention and Control Service is a core public health responsibility of the Local Authority</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable.</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform: The Community Infection Prevention and Control Service offer will support quality improvements in relation to infection prevention and control in key community settings. This will be achieved through providing leadership to key provider and stakeholder sectors, increasing their capacity, skill and knowledge</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Effective management of cases and outbreaks of communicable disease in community settings is key to sustainable economic growth throughout the Borough.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment:</p>

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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 6749/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD 4949/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

The Service provides specialist input to Services in the community commissioned by the Local Authority, such as care homes, and some services, such as hospices, commissioned by South Sefton and Southport and Formby Clinical Commissioning Group. The Service also provides expert advice to the Local Authority and the two CCGs regarding infection prevention and control in the community.

Therefore, the two CCGs are key stakeholders for this Service, and consultation and engagement regarding this Service is ongoing.

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

The following background papers, from the Cabinet Meeting Agenda and Minutes 1st November 2018 and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing decision paper 4th November 2020 can be accessed on the Council website www.sefton.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1. In accordance with Part 2 of the Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013,

Regulation 8, the aim of the community infection prevention and control service is to promote infection prevention and control standards within primary and social care providers. In order to protect Sefton residents from communicable disease this service provides root cause analysis, education, advice and audit support. The service also responds to cases, clusters, and outbreaks of communicable disease within the community, in partnership where necessary and following agreed protocols.

- 1.2. The Community Infection Prevention and Control Service was procured in 2019 through an OJEU light touch open procedure. The contract started 1 September 2019 and has a three-year core contract ending on 31 August 2022 with two, one-year built in extension options (3+1+1). Following this procurement process the contract was awarded to Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust.

2. Review and expansion of Service in 2020

- 2.1. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent increased requirement for the community infection prevention and control services in Sefton. The Service was reviewed in 2020 and an expanded service specification was developed with a corresponding increase to funding for this service.
- 2.2. The key elements to the new expanded Service are related to;
 - 2.2..1. Management and prevention of outbreaks in complex community settings,
 - 2.2..2. Responses to cases, clusters and outbreaks involving people in vulnerable groups
 - 2.2..3. Increasing skills and knowledge in community settings around prevention in order to reduce the number of community outbreaks in Sefton.
- 2.3. In November 2020 a decision paper to extend the scale and scope of the Community Infection Prevention and Control Service was approved by the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.
- 2.4. The cost of the Service increased from £128,000 per annum to £271,000 per annum, an increase of £143,000 per annum, in Quarter 2 of the 2021/22 financial year, following mobilisation of the new Service offer.

3. Key Elements of the Service

- 3.1. The aim of the community infection prevention and control service is to promote infection prevention and control standards within primary, community social care providers.
- 3.2. The Service provides root cause analysis, education, advice and audit support.
- 3.3. The Service also responds to cases, clusters, and outbreaks of communicable disease within the community, in partnership where necessary and following agreed protocols.
- 3.4. A key focus of the Service is around responding to cases, clusters, and outbreaks of COVID-19 in primary care, and in community health and social care settings. This response prioritises vulnerable people and complex settings, including care homes, supported living, hospices, settings that provide care for older or clinically vulnerable people, hostels and shelters for people experiencing homelessness, social care providers, general practice and schools and early years settings.
- 3.5. As well as providing the expertise required to respond to communicable diseases, the Service aims to provide strategic leadership, supporting community health and social care providers, and complex settings to improve infection prevention and control competence and compliance. This will be achieved through engagement, education and training and supporting sector led improvement. This preventative

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and upstream input will support COVID-19 responses in Sefton and will help to mitigate future impacts of emerging pathogens, outbreaks, or pandemics.

- 3.6. The Service will continue its work to reduce and sustain reductions in healthcare-associated infections. In particular, the Service will support commissioners to achieve a reduction in the rate of Health Care Acquired Infections with a particular focus on gram negative blood stream infections (GNBSIs) and Clostridium difficile infection (CDI), in line with national objectives and support the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to deliver on the requirement for zero tolerance of avoidable Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) bacteraemia.

4. Annual work-plan and performance

- 4.1. Performance of the Service is measured against the annual work programme, with quarterly review meetings held between the local authority public health team, the local clinical commissioning groups, and the service managers.
- 4.2. The annual work programme utilises a dynamic risk stratification matrix to support the prioritisation of service planning and activity. This allows for the management and prioritisation of both planned and responsive work.
- 4.3. The annual work programme includes the following key objectives:
- 4.4. **COVID-19 and emerging pathogens or pandemics**
 - 4.4..1. The Service will prioritise the response to cases and outbreaks of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. Work will include preparation and planning for surges in cases and outbreaks and potential novel emerging pathogen which pose a risk to public health.
- 4.5. **Root Cause Analysis**
 - 4.5..1. The Service is responsible for supporting or undertaking, when necessary, a robust root-cause analysis (RCA) process for community-associated infections, such as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), on behalf of the commissioners and in collaboration with partners.
 - 4.5..2. The Service supports implementation and management of the new MRSA Post Infection Review (PIR) process.
- 4.6. **Audit**
 - 4.6..1. The Service will undertake a targeted audit programme for primary care (excluding dental practices), care homes, and other providers, including service provider applicants under the NHS Any Qualified Provider (AQP) procurement arrangements, as agreed with commissioners, and based on an agreed risk-assessment process.
 - 4.6..2. Repeat audits will be carried out based on a risk assessment, and stratification, and identified within the annual work programme.
- 4.7. **Education and Training**
 - 4.7..1. The Service will provide infection control education and training to primary and social care providers in the community. The Service will support development of a competent group of infection control link workers and champions in primary care and social care providers, including care homes, general practice, and hospice settings, to assist in cascading information.
- 4.8. **Decontamination and Environmental Cleanliness**
 - 4.8..1. The Service will support general practices (GPs) and care homes to implement National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) tools and related audit tools to support providers to demonstrate high standards of cleanliness and equipment decontamination in compliance with legislation.
- 4.9. **Incident and Outbreak Management and Contact-Tracing**

- 4.9..1. The Service will manage, document and report community outbreaks and incidents in relation to infection prevention and control and perform contact tracing – using national protocols - for specific infections/ infectious diseases as agreed between the DPH and UKHSA.
- 4.9..2. This will include responses to COVID-19 in community settings. An agreed minimum data set will be collected and shared as required and a record of cases, clusters, outbreaks that have been responded to will be produced and will be used to monitor service activity, and support prioritisation of key/critical settings.
- 4.10. Frequent communications between the local authority, the clinical commissioning groups and the Service have facilitated prioritisation of support to vulnerable and complex settings experiencing outbreak. As a consequence, the scheduling of planned work, such as audits, has been adjusted within the annual work plan.
- 4.11. The Service has performed well against targets agreed in the annual work programme.

5. Summary

- 5.1. The Sefton Community Infection Prevention and Control Service core contract expires on 31st August 2022.
- 5.2. Contract extension clauses provide 2 x 12-month optional contract extensions.
- 5.3. Approval is sought for the Director of Public Health to be granted delegated authority to activate the contract extension clauses within the current service contract in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.
- 5.4. The first contract extension would be activated on the 1st September 2022.
- 5.5. The second contract extension clause to be activated on 1st September 2023 subject to continued satisfactory delivery of the Service against the service specification and annual work programme.

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Agenda Item 6

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	7 April 2022
Subject:	Water Self-Supply Services (2022 - 2026)		
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:

Report to seek approval of the continuation of water utility 'self-supply' arrangement with the support of the existing Managing Agent after a positive evaluation of the initial first full year of operation.

That members note the investment in 'mobile data loggers' as a cost-effective approach to address 'unaccounted water losses' to net financial/environmental benefit across the Council portfolio (Corporate, Schools and New Directions).

Recommendation(s):

That

- (1) the continuation of the wholesale contract, which is deemed to be 'rolling' (without end date); and that the contract can only be terminated should Sefton Council choose to revoke its licence or break the terms of business be noted; and
- (2) authority be granted for the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, to directly award the Contract for a managing agent to Waterscan, for a maximum period of 4 years comprising an initial 3 year period with an option to extend for up to 1 period of 12 months.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Current arrangements expire on 30 September 2022. All options available to the Council have been assessed and the option of self-supply with a managing agent is recommended based on an assessment of the first full year of operation which highlighted

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- A substantial increase in reliable/real meter readings. This reduces the reliance on estimated readings being used for billing, keeping expenditure in line with water consumption.
- A data cleanse and monthly billing tariff analysis (yielding £25K of savings/refunds) and ongoing financial benefits.
- Ongoing/real time proactive support to manage high/unaccounted for (e.g. leaks) water consumption.

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

Option 1

Do nothing – Under self-supply, the wholesale contract would not expire under the terms of the licence agreement. Sefton would still be required to operate under the terms of the licence. Allowing the current Managing Agent contract to expire (30 September 2022) would mean Sefton Council would operate under self-supply unsupported as there is no in-house capacity to deliver this service. This would expose the Council to significant risk of (a.) paying water & sewerage charges without validation and (b.) breaching licence conditions which could lead to significant financial, legal and operational demands and risks. Therefore, this option was rejected.

Option 2

Exit self-supply and return to the retail market – Existing retailers could displace all retail functions (meter readings, billing and customer service). However, under the current arrangement, Sefton have experienced benefits in improved data collection, financial savings and now has a 'voice in the market'. Returning to the retail market would mean Sefton would lose these benefits. Therefore, this option was rejected.

Option 3

Carry out an open procurement exercise for the appointment of a managing agent – This is not an option available to Sefton currently. Only one suitably qualified managing agent operates in the market (Waterscan) as confirmed by OFWAT and the market operator MOSL.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The day to day costs of self-supply is met from individual departmental revenue budgets.

(B) Capital Costs

The anticipated costs of the mobile data loggers is estimated as £2K - £5K and would be fully funded from year one savings already secured.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
None	
Legal Implications:	
None	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	Y
Have a neutral impact	N
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
The overall strategy to reduce wasted water, especially heated water, has potential to reduce Scope 1 carbon emissions and therefore contribute positively to the Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030.	
Equality Implications:	
There are no equality implications.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable:</p> <p>The vulnerable are highlighted as those most likely to be affected by climate change. More efficient use of water and disposal of wastewater supports the wider aspects of the Sefton Council climate change strategy (to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change).</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</p> <p>The efficient use of water and disposal of wastewater contributes to adapting to the effects of climate change which is a key element of having a resilient community.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services:</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer:</p> <p>The more efficient use of water and disposal of wastewater allows the council to lead (by example) the community on its commitment to reduce carbon footprint of water and adapt to climate change.</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform:</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>

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Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Positive, through securing competitive prices and reducing waste.
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable.
Cleaner Greener: Reducing the demand for water/wastewater helps protect the environment.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6669/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4869/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Procurement & Legal Services regarding the procurement options for a managing agent.

(B) External Consultations

The water industry regulator (OFWAT) and the market operator for the non-household retail market in England, MOSL (Market Operator Services Ltd) both confirm the lack of existence of an alternative qualified Managing Agent at this moment in time.

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer:	Stephanie Jukes
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 4552
Email Address:	stephanie.jukes@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 In July 2019 Cabinet approved the decision to access water services directly from the regional wholesaler, United Utilities, via the support of a Managing Agent. In the current water market, United Utilities is the only water wholesaler for the North West region, however, non-domestic customers are able to access the wholesale supply through either a retailer or via a self-supply licence (with an internal or external managing agent).
- 1.2 This move was designed to improve service and reduce costs. Having an external managing agent has ensured that Sefton Council can operate without the need for a retailer, displacing retail support such as meter readings, billing, validation of consumption and customer service. It also provides 100% compliance according to its self-supply licence conditions.
- 1.3 Within two years of the service being introduced, an assessment was to be made of the move from retail services to self-supply, and a recommendation made. This report outlines performance to date and a recommendation on future water services.

2. Cost reductions/savings

- 2.1 Following the first full year of operating 'self-supply' (Nov 20 – Nov 21) the annual wholesale cost to the Council (Council, schools and New Directions) portfolio was approximately £1.280M per annum. With additional fees (Regulatory and Managing Agent fees) added, the total cost is approximately £1.345M per annum.
- 2.2 In order to provide a comparison of the equivalent retailer costs, the following estimate is provided. The 'retail margin' previously applied prior to self-supply was estimated to add 8-9% (approx. £109K) on to the annual wholesale charge. If the same percentage uplift is applied to current wholesale charges it is likely that remaining as a retail customer would have meant the full charges for water services would have been £1.389M. This equates to an avoided cost of approx. £44K p.a. Additionally, small savings have been achieved on the charges and fees which are returned to Sefton Council. A net saving of approximately £1K per month is achieved and ringfenced to provide small water saving projects and interventions that avoid cost/ generate savings to the Council.
- 2.2 In addition to the operational savings detailed in 2.1 and 2.2, the Managing Agents stewardship of Sefton Councils water accounts have also achieved the following savings by correcting incorrect surface water tariffs.

Site	Saving over 2-year period
Southport Crematorium	£6,299.38
Sports Pavilion Buckley Hill Lane	£3,181.02
Cambridge Nursery	£495.77
Rowan High School	£1,102.27
Strand Shopping Centre car park	£1,212.98
Sefton Security	£1,212.98
Total	£13,504.41

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3. Other efficiencies

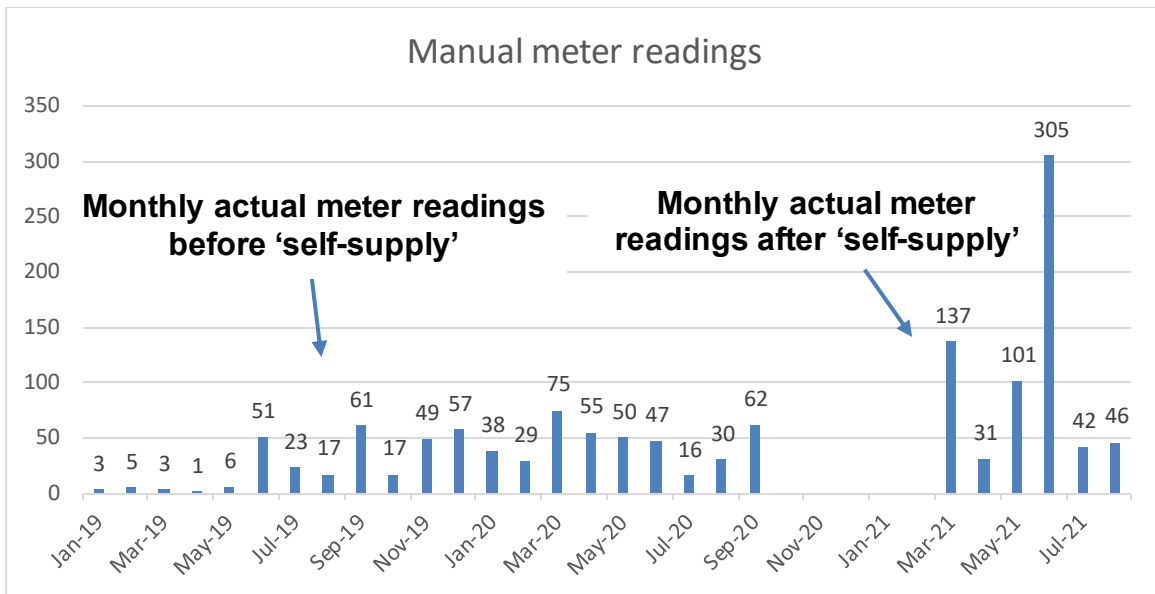
- 3.1 In addition to financial benefits from improved billing practices, increased meter reading (in spite of the pandemic), has greatly improved Sefton's ability to identify and resolve water consumption issues. These have also led to financial savings, including a school that had not received a meter reading for several years that had been overcharged. Sefton was able to attain a refund of £11.4K for the school and ensure correct charges were applied going forward.

4 Recommendation to remain 'self-supply'

- 4.1 Given the financial savings, efficiencies and carbon savings made to date, as well as the potential for further improvement, it is recommended that Sefton remain 'self supply' and maintain the services of the managing agent for the period 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2025, with a possible 12 month extension.
- 4.2 This will require a direct award to procure the services of the managing agent Waterscan, allowable under Regulation 32 of the Public Contract Regulations (2015). The justification for a direct award is that Waterscan are currently the only supplier who can deliver the services, required to maintain Sefton's licence obligations. This has been confirmed by both OFWAT & MOSL.
- 4.2.2 Members note the continuation of the wholesale contract, which is deemed to be 'rolling' (without end date). The contract can only be terminated should Sefton Council choose to revoke its licence or break the terms of business.
- 4.2.3 Waterscan have provided a recent quotation for maintaining their existing services over the next three year period. This represents a 6.5% increase in year 1 with no further price increase. This is within the margin that we would expect to pay to a retailer which demonstrates good value to money to the Council. Within this period, a watching brief will be maintained, for any developments and new agents entering the market.

5 Future performance improvements- increased water meter readings

- 5.1 The water industry requires retail water companies to manually read water meters just once every 2 years for 95% of all accounts. This industry standard is set (by the regulator, OFWAT) to ensure water companies bill accurately and any cumulative errors from billing from estimated readings does not fall to far out of line. However, in practice, difficult to access water meters can go un-read for several years. These sites may not be geographically remote, it may be only the meter e.g. in an underground water chamber, may be difficult to access.
- 5.2 This has meant that some of Sefton Councils sites have experienced large 'catch-up' bills, leaving a large liability to pay un-budgeted for expenditure.
- 5.3 The current Managing Agent works on a standard of 2 readings per year. This has been difficult to achieve, especially due to site restrictions due to COVID but a noticeable improvement has been achieved (see chart below).



- 5.4 Improved frequency of meter readings allows for better water management as well as more accurate billing. Actual 'true' water meter readings help identify high unaccounted water losses such as leaks, faulty cistern/urinal controls or general unaccounted for higher daily consumption. Identifying such issues allows for interventions to be targeted more efficiently, such as water audits, leakage detection as well as assisting at site level on checks and behavioural change.
- 5.5 During 2022/23 with the support of the Managing Agent 'mobile data loggers' will be installed on sites that demonstrate the need for investigation. Typically, sites which lack data or have readings that indicate high consumption and warrant further investigation
- 5.6 The full cost of this work is estimated cost between £2k and £5K depending on the number of sites identified for analysis. This will be fully met through the income generated in the first year of self supply operation.
- 5.7 The option of installing Automatic Meter Readers (AMR) at all of Sefton Councils sites has been explored and it was concluded that this would not be the most effective option for Sefton. Whilst it would lead to a saving of approximately £10K annually on the services provided by the managing agent in providing true meter readings, the set-up fees (with the Wholesaler application charges) and annual delivery charges would likely add an overall additional cost of £95K per annum in the first year and £44K in following years. This option would also likely add a further administrative burden currently beyond the capacity of the existing Energy & Environmental Management Team.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	7 April 2022
Subject:	Business Rates COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Services and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To consider adoption of a local discretionary business rates policy – the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF).

The policy will provide for the award of relief from business rates for one year only. Relief will be applied retrospectively to the 2021/22 Rate liability in accordance with guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.

Sefton Council has been allocated £4,447,663 by Government to disburse in relief.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) That the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund Policy referred to in Appendix 1 is adopted as Council Policy
- (2) Delegate administration of the scheme to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services
- (3) That any variance to the awards of relief set out in Section 4 of the policy document is delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Service in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, where the number of applications received would result in an underspend or overspend of the funds allocated.
- (4) It be noted that the proposal was a Key Decision but it had not been included in the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Consequently, the Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services had given their consent under Rule 29 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution for these decisions to be treated as urgent on the basis that determination of applications must be

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completed within regulatory timescales.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

- (1) Government has allocated funds to each local authority to assist businesses that otherwise have missed out on alternative business rates reliefs allocated to aid them through the COVID-19 pandemic. Relief will be granted using discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 that require individual billing authorities to adopt a local scheme.
- (2) It is expected that there will be several hundred applications. Delegating administration of the scheme will allow officers to make decisions in line with other business rates relief.
- (3) The business rates database does not contain information that would enable the Council to accurately predict how many businesses may apply and qualify for the additional relief. When the application window has closed and applications have been reviewed, detailed calculations of the awards can be made. However, to comply with business rates regulations referred to in (1) above decisions on awarding relief must be made no later than 30 September 2022. Delegating a decision to vary the awards will enable businesses to receive the awards earlier.

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

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

None

The Council has been granted an allocation of £4,447,663. Awards made from the COVID-19 Relief Fund that comply with the Government guidance will be reimbursed through the Council's Section 31 grant up to that value. Any awards made above this amount would reduce the amount of business rates retained by the Council, CARF awards will therefore not exceed this amount.

(B) Capital Costs

None

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
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None	
Legal Implications: None	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
This report sets out an administrative process only.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Not Applicable
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: The proposal set out in this report, and the attached policy, provide for financial assistance to businesses that have not previously received relief from business rates during the COVID-19 pandemic. Awards of relief will contribute to the economic recovery of the eligible businesses and encourage their continued participation in Sefton.
Greater income for social investment: Not Applicable
Cleaner Greener Not Applicable

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

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he Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6755/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4955/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee / Council meeting.

Contact Officer:	Mark Barry – Collections & Recovery Manager
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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

1. Business Rates - COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund Policy (CARF)
2. the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF): Local Authority Guidance can be accessed using the following link

<https://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD2998&ID=2998&RPID=33047651>

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 On 25 March 2021, the Government announced a new Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund' (CARF). The fund will be available to support those sectors which have not received business rates related support for Covid-19.
- 1.2 The Government further announced on the 15 December 2021 that they would provide additional relief to businesses who did not qualify for any previous reliefs announced as part of the response to COVID-19.
- 1.3 CARF is a discretionary award with each authority required to use their discretionary powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to distribute the funds. The scheme will apply retrospectively to the 2021/2022 rating year only and Sefton Council has been allocated £4,447,663.

- 1.4 The Government requires Local Authorities to exercise their local knowledge and discretion in distributing this relief and recognises that economic needs will vary. Although national criteria have been published local authorities will be able to determine which sectors or businesses will receive the relief and the value to be awarded.
- 1.5 The Government has suggested within the guidance that Local Authorities may wish to consider collaborating as they design their relief schemes to ensure there is consistency where they are working across a functional economic area. Sefton Council have consulted with colleagues in the Liverpool City Region, Knowsley, St Helens, Halton, Liverpool, and Wirral in developing this policy.

2 Scope and Eligibility

- 2.1 It is the responsibility of each individual authority for designing the discretionary relief schemes that are to operate in their areas. However, the guidance specifically states that local schemes:
- a. must not award relief to ratepayers who for the same period of the relief (i.e. for the period from the 1 April 2021 to the 31 March 2022) either are or would have been eligible for the Extended Retail Discount (covering Retail, Hospitality and Leisure), the Nursery Discount or the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS),
 - b. must not award relief to a hereditament for a period when it is unoccupied (other than hereditaments which have become unoccupied temporarily due to the government's advice on COVID-19), and
 - c. should direct their support towards ratepayers who have been adversely affected by the pandemic (in a way that prevents success or development; harmfully or unfavourably) and have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact.
 - d. the ratepayer has exceeded the subsidy control limits
 - e. In line with the legal restrictions in section 47(8A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, billing authorities may not grant the discount to themselves or to a precepting authority.
- 2.2 Funding for this relief is limited. Government guidance (which can be accessed using the link <https://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD2998&ID=2998&RPID=33047651>) provides details of how the funding calculations have been arrived at. An assessment has been provided in that guidance of the business sectors most affected by the pandemic. That information has been used, alongside consultations with colleagues in the Liverpool City Region, to determine business types to be included or excluded from eligibility.

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- 2.3 It is intended that the relief scheme adopted will provide the maximum support to businesses whose main trading address is within Sefton. This will provide valuable extra assistance to businesses in Sefton, protecting jobs and enabling businesses to continue to trade.
- 2.4 In order to qualify for an award, the applicant must be the registered Business Rates payer of the premises for which the application is made and have occupied the property in Sefton for the whole of the financial year 2021/22.
- 2.5 The premises must have been occupied from the 1 April 2021 and not have been unoccupied during the financial year 2021/2022 unless required to close under COVID restrictions.
- 2.6 The business must not be in one of the identified sectors which either, from the government guidance, or local conditions would not be considered for an award. Details are set out in Section 2.2 of the policy at Appendix 1
- 2.7 In particular it is intended that this scheme will predominately support small and medium sized businesses who can clearly demonstrate that they have been adversely affected by the pandemic during 2021/2022.
- 2.8 Eligible business must be able to evidence a loss of turnover of a minimum of 30% due to the impact of the COVID pandemic.

3. Amount of the award

- 3.1 The CARF relief is a cash limited award which can only be applied to business rates accounts for the financial year 2021/2022. The total amount received by Sefton is £4,447,663 and the total value of the reliefs granted cannot exceed this figure.
- 3.2 Relief will be applied to eligible businesses during 2021/22 financial year only. The actual value of relief granted will only be determined once the number of eligible applications have been received and prioritised.
- 3.3 Section 4 of the policy document at Appendix 1 sets out target awards of between 50% and 100% according to type of business and rateable value. Awards will be capped at a maximum of £50,000 to limit the risk of spending breaching the limit of the funding provided
- 3.4 It may be necessary to vary the amount of relief awarded according to the number of applications received.

4. Administration

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- 4.1 Government guidance does not require an application process as mandatory. However, to enable relief to be awarded to businesses most affected by the pandemic an online application process will be provided.
- 4.2 Applicants will be requested to declare eligibility but may be required to provide supporting evidence before eligibility is confirmed. Business that cannot provide evidence upon request will be deemed ineligible.
- 4.3 Applicants will need to confirm on the application that they have not exceeded subsidy limits.
- 4.4 As funding is cash-limited, a four-week application window will be introduced to enable eligible businesses to apply under the scheme. Applications will not be accepted after the application window has closed. It is intended that the application window will be open from 1-30 June 2022.
- 4.5 Relief will only be applied to businesses that remained in occupation for the whole period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. Should the Council receive information that a business moved out of the property prior to 31 March 22, and after an award of relief has been made, then the relief would be removed. The business would then be liable for the business rates after the relief has been removed.
- 4.6 Where the Valuation Office Agency issues a notice to amend the rateable value of a property with an effective date prior to 31 March 2022, then relief will be calculated in accordance with the amended liability arising from the change in value
- 4.7 It is proposed that the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, and officers, will consider applications against the criteria in the policy document at Appendix 1.
- 4.8 Decisions to award relief will be final and no appeals will be allowed. However, applicants who consider the incorrect amount of relief has been awarded, or has been incorrectly rejected, in accordance with the policy at Appendix 1, can request a review in writing within 14 days of the date of the decision. No further reviews will be considered.

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Business Rates COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund Policy (CARF)

7 April 2022

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Business Rates - Covid 19 Additional Relief Fund Policy (CARF)

1 Background

- 1.1 On 25 March 2021, the Government announced a new Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund' (CARF). The fund will be available to support those sectors which have not received business rates related support for Covid-19.
- 1.2 The Government further announced on the 15 December 2021 that they would provide additional relief to businesses who did not qualify for any previous reliefs announced as part of the response to COVID-19.
- 1.3 CARF is a discretionary award with each authority required to use their discretionary powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to distribute the funds. The scheme will apply retrospectively to the 2021/2022 rating year only and Sefton Council has been allocated **£4,447,663**.
- 1.4 This policy sets out the criteria under which businesses will qualify to make an application to the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund and the evidence required to support an application. This policy is aligned with the government guidance issued on 15th December 2021.
- 1.5 The Government requires Local Authorities to exercise their local knowledge and discretion in distributing this relief and recognises that economic needs will vary. Although national criteria have been published local authorities will be able to determine which sectors or businesses will receive the relief and the value to be awarded.
- 1.6 The Government has suggested within the guidance that Local Authorities may wish to consider collaborating as they design their relief schemes to ensure there is consistency where they are working across a functional economic area. Sefton Council has consulted with colleagues in the Liverpool City Region, Knowsley, St Helens, Halton, Liverpool, and Wirral in developing this policy.

2 Scope and Eligibility

- 2.1 It is the responsibility of each individual authority for designing the discretionary relief schemes that are to operate in their areas. However, the guidance specifically states that local schemes:
 - a. must not award relief to ratepayers who for the same period of the relief (i.e. for the period from the 1 April 2021 to the 31 March 2022) either are or would have been eligible for the Extended Retail Discount (covering Retail, Hospitality and Leisure), the Nursery Discount or the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS),

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- b. must not award relief to a hereditament for a period when it is unoccupied (other than hereditaments which have become unoccupied temporarily due to the government's advice on COVID-19), and
- c. should direct their support towards ratepayers who have been adversely affected by the pandemic (in a way that prevents success or development; harmfully or unfavourably) and have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact.
- d. the ratepayer has exceeded the subsidy control limits
- e. In line with the legal restrictions in section 47(8A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, billing authorities may not grant the discount to themselves or to a precepting authority.

2.2 In addition to the guidance provided by the Government Sefton Council may not consider the following businesses as eligible for an award:

- a) Hereditaments which do not have employees directly working at them. (For example, advertising rights, communications stations, electronic lockers, energy generation and distribution networks).
- b) Public sector organisations and other bodies directly funded by government grants, including education and health related sectors.
- c) Schools and Colleges
- d) Logistic warehouses used by food, online or other retailers which have not been adversely affected by the pandemic.
- e) Businesses that predominantly provided online sales or services prior to the pandemic.
- f) Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, bureau de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawn brokers)
- g) Other services (e.g. estate agents, letting agents,)
- h) Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
- i) Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents / financial advisers,)
- j) Premises used for personal usage or storage.
- k) Car parking spaces related to office accommodation.
- l) Those businesses which only supply storage facilities such as warehouses.
- m) The business is not in liquidation, dissolved, struck off or subject to a striking off notice or under notice.

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2.3 Eligible Business

- 2.3.1 It is intended that the relief scheme adopted will provide the maximum support to businesses whose main trading address is within Sefton. This will provide valuable extra assistance to businesses in Sefton, protecting jobs and enabling businesses to continue to trade.
- 2.3.2 In order to qualify for an award, the applicant must be the registered Business Rates payer of the premises for which the application is made and have occupied the property in Sefton for the whole of the financial year 2021/22.
- 2.3.3 The premises must have been occupied from the 1 April 2021 and not have been unoccupied during the financial year 2021/2022 unless required to close under COVID restrictions.
- 2.3.4 The business must not be in one of the identified sectors which either from the government guidance or local conditions would not be considered for an award.
- 2.3.5 In particular it is intended that this scheme will support small and medium sized businesses who can clearly demonstrate that they have been adversely affected by the pandemic during 2021/2022.
- 2.3.6 Eligible business must be able to evidence a loss of turnover of a minimum of 30% due to the impact of the COVID pandemic.

3. Application Process

- 3.1 Businesses will need to complete an online application form to be eligible for the relief. The application form will request sufficient information in order for a decision to be made on the relief to be granted which will include the following information requirements:
 - a. The name of the business rate payer
 - b. The business address
 - c. Business use of the property
 - d. Manufacturing & Supply Chain business to provide detail of products and services provided.
 - e. Company Number (where the ratepayer is a Limited company registered with Companies House).
 - f. Rateable value of the business
 - g. Number of employees at the premises for which the application is being made
 - h. Percentage adverse effect of the pandemic on income for 2021/2022.
 - i. A declaration that the award of relief will not result in a breach of Subsidy Control thresholds.

Business may be requested to provide evidence in support of the application including loss of turnover by way of accounts and an accountants letter. Business will have two weeks to provide evidence from the date of request. A template will be provided for the accountants letter where this is required.

- 3.2 Applicants will need to confirm on the application that they have not exceeded subsidy limits.
- 3.3 As funding is cash-limited, a four-week application window will be introduced to enable eligible businesses to apply under the scheme. Applications will not be accepted after the application window has closed.
- 3.4 The ratepayer should complete a separate application form in respect of each hereditament it wishes to claim relief for. Applications will need to clearly demonstrate what the hereditament is used for and how the business has been severely impacted by the pandemic.
- 3.2 The ratepayer may be asked to supply supporting information including governance arrangements (e.g. Constitution, Articles of Association) and recent financial statements (or financial forecasts) to support their application.

4. Amount of the award

- 4.1 The CARF relief is a cash limited award which can be applied to business rates accounts for the financial year 2021/2022 only. The total amount received by Sefton is £4,447,663 and the total value of the reliefs granted cannot exceed this figure.
- 4.2 Relief will be applied to the 2021/22 financial year only. The actual value of relief granted will be determined once the number of eligible applications have been received and prioritised.
- 4.3 Subject to available funding, applications will be prioritised as follows:
 - a) Businesses that have been most severely impacted by the pandemic in the Retail Hospitality & Leisure sectors. This will include manufacturers, wholesalers and supply chain businesses that support the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors:
 - i. Rateable value less than £51,000 to receive 100% of net liability, after the application of all other reliefs.
 - ii. Rateable value £51,000 or up to and including £100,000: 75% of the net liability after the application of all other reliefs.
 - iii. Rateable Value greater than £100,000 50% of net liability after the application of all other reliefs.
 - b) Other businesses up to 50% of net liability after the application of all other reliefs

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- c) All awards in a) and b) above will be capped at a maximum value of £50,000.
- 4.4 Sefton Council reserves the right to vary the amount of relief awarded according to the number of applications received. This may mean awards higher or lower than the amounts stated in 4.3 above.
- 4.5 Where the award of relief results in a credit balance against the 2021/22 rate liability, a refund will only be issued provided payment of all other liabilities are up to date including the rate liability for 2022/23.

5. Retrospective Changes to Liability

- 5.1 Relief will only be applied to businesses that remained in occupation for the whole period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. Should the Council receive information that a business moved out of the property prior to 31 March 22, and after an award of relief has been made, then the relief would be removed. The business would then be liable for the business rates after the relief has been removed.
- 5.2 Where the Valuation Office Agency issues a notice to amend the rateable value of a property with an effective date prior to 31 March 2022, then relief will be calculated accordance with amended liability arising from the change in value

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost of awarding this discretionary rate relief is funded from a government grant. Sefton Council will not provide any additional funding for this scheme.

7. Subsidy Control (State Aid)

- 7.1 Any relief provided under this scheme, must comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations including the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), World Trade Organisation rules on subsidy and other international subsidy control commitments. The limits stated below are per economic actor, i.e. a holding company and its subsidiaries. This is split into three areas.

7.2 Small Amount of Financial Assistance Allowance

Under this element, a business must not have received more than £343,000¹ of financial assistance during the current and previous two financial years, i.e. for the periods 2019/20 to 2021/22. Financial assistance includes COVID-19 related business grants and any other discretionary rate relief (excluding expanded retail discount awarded in 2020/21 and 2021/22).

7.3 The COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund Allowance

If a business (or holding company and its subsidiaries) has exceeded the £343,000 allowance above, it may be permitted to receive additional relief up to £1,900,000 for COVID-19 related losses. This can be combined with the Small Amount of Financial Assistance Allowance to provide a total of £2,243,000 of relief.

7.4 COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund Further Allowance

If a business has exceeded the £2,243,000 limit above, then it may still be able to receive up to a further £10 million of support if it satisfies the following conditions:

- a) The relief relates to uncovered fixed costs (i.e. costs not covered by profits or insurance etc) during the period of COVID-19 (commencing 1 March 2020). An economic actor may benefit from relief up to 70% of their uncovered costs. A small business with fewer than 50 employees and less than £9 million turnover may benefit from 90% of their uncovered costs.
- b) The enterprise has shown a decline in turnover during the eligible period of at least 30% compared to the same period in 2019.

7.5 A ratepayer must inform Sefton Council if it exceeds any of the above allowances.

8. Applying the Policy

8.1 The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, or nominee, in consultation with other officer(s) will consider applications against the criteria outlined above.

8.2 Awards of relief will be notified by way of an amended bill for 2021/22. Decisions to reject applications will be made in writing with the reason for rejection.

8.3 Where the award of relief results in a credit balance for 2021/22 that credit will be offset against any other arrears outstanding for any year, including any unpaid instalments for 2022/23. Where credits have been offset against other years liability, amended bills will also be issued for those years.

8.4 Where the award of relief results in a credit balance requiring a refund, this will be issued automatically. Payment of refunds will only be made directly into the businesses bank account. Sefton Council will issue a request for details where bank details are not already held on file.

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- 8.5 Decisions to award relief will be final and no appeals will be allowed. However, applicants who consider the incorrect amount of relief has been awarded, or has been incorrectly rejected, in accordance with this policy, can request a review in writing within 14 days of the date of the decision. No further reviews will be considered.