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Sefton Council 

MEETING: CABINET
DATE: Thursday 6th October, 2022
TIME: 10.00 am
VENUE: Committee Room, Town Hall, Bootle

DECISION MAKER: **CABINET**

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

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Steve Pearce
Interim Democratic Services Manager
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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

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.

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	Declarations of Interest Members are requested at a meeting where a disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest arises, which is not already included in their Register of Members' Interests, to declare any interests that relate to an item on the agenda. Where a Member discloses a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, he/she must withdraw from the meeting room, 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. Where a Member discloses a personal interest he/she must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or staff member representing the Monitoring Officer to determine whether the Member should withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest or whether the Member can remain in the meeting or remain in the meeting and vote on the relevant decision.		
3	Minutes of the Previous Meeting Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2022		(Pages 5 - 22)
4	Cost of Living Crisis Report of the Chief Executive	All Wards	(Pages 23 - 38)
* 5	Sefton's Childhood Poverty Strategy 2022 - 2030: Tackling Childhood Poverty in Sefton Report of the Director of Public Health	All Wards	(Pages 39 - 94)

* 6	Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-2027 Report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education)	All Wards	(Pages 95 - 148)
* 7	Extension of Parking and Environmental Enforcement Contract Report of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection)	All Wards	(Pages 149 - 152)
* 8	Digital Inclusion Strategy Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Service	All Wards	(Pages 153 - 190)
* 9	Financial Management 2022/23 to 2024/25 and Framework for Change 2020 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2022/23 – October Update Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Service	All Wards	(Pages 191 - 208)
10	Appointment to Sefton New Directions Limited Board Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	All Wards	(Pages 209 - 212)
* 11	Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing Schemes Re-designation 2023 - 2028 Report of the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing)	Blundellsands; Cambridge; Church; Derby; Dukes; Kew; Linacre; Litherland; Victoria	(Pages 213 - 304)
12	Exclusion of Press and Public To comply with Regulation 5(2) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, notice has been published regarding the intention to consider the following matter(s) in private for the reasons set out below. No representations have been received on this matter and this agenda satisfies the requirements of Regulation 5(4).		

The Cabinet is recommended to pass the following resolution:

That, under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 6a of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours exclusion of the information from the Press and Public.

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|------|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| * 13 | SERCO – Landlord Licencing | Derby; Linacre;
Litherland | (Pages 305 -
310) |
| | Report of the Assistant Director of Place
(Economic Growth and Housing) | | |
| 14 | Disposal of Land at Southport Old Road and
Holgate, Thornton - Exempt Appendices | Park | (Pages 311 -
342) |
| | Report of the Executive Director of Corporate
Resources and Customer Support | | |
| 15 | Public Session | | |
| | The Cabinet meeting will now move back into
open session to consider the following agenda
item. | | |
| * 16 | Disposal of Land at Southport Old Road and
Holgate, Thornton | Park | (Pages 343 -
354) |
| | 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 THURSDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2022.

CABINET

MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM, TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT ON THURSDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER, 2022

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

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Veidman.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

44. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

45. COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive that summarised the impact of the escalating Cost of Living Crisis on local people and outlined the support available and proposed in Sefton; and which sought consideration of the Indices of Deprivation (2019) at Appendix A, Sefton Children and Young People Living in Low Income and Poverty at Appendix B, a factsheet at Appendix C and the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix D.

Decision Made:

That:

- (1) the support currently provided as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report in respect of the Cost of Living Crisis be noted; and
- (2) the additional assistance proposed to support those struggling families and individuals with practical support to assist in this cost of

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living crisis be supported.

Reasons for the Decision:

For Cabinet to consider the impact of the escalating Cost of Living Crisis on local people and to note the support available and approve plans proposed in Sefton.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

46. MARKET SUSTAINABILITY AND FAIR COST OF CARE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health that updated on work taking place on the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care exercises for Adult Social Care and to seek approval of the governance and approval arrangements for the associated infrastructure costs to drive the programme forward and the required submissions to the Department of Health and Social Care.

Decision Made:

That:

- (1) the work taking place on meeting the Department of Health and Social Care Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care requirements, associated allocations of 2022/23 funding provided to the Council and risks identified to date be noted;
- (2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director Adult Social Care and Health (DASS) / Place Director Sefton, in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care, the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services to formulate, approve and submit the required provisional and final Market Sustainability Plans, spend reports and cost of care reports to the Department of Health and Social Care;
- (3) authority be delegated to the Executive Director Adult Social Care and Health (DASS)/ Place Director Sefton, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, to agree the use of any further funding received for infrastructure costs required to drive forward the programme; and
- (4) it be noted that further reports will be submitted to Cabinet detailing the outcomes of these work programmes and to seek any required approval for the use of further additional funding the Council

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receives from the Department of Health and Social Care.

Reasons for the Decision:

To update Cabinet on the work taking place on meeting the Department of Health and Social Care requirements relating to Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care in relation to Adult Social Care, to seek approval of arrangements for submission of the required plans and reports, to provide details of risks identified to date and to seek approval of arrangements for the infrastructure required to drive forward the programme.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None

47. SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE CONTRACT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Public Health advising that the Integrated Sexual Health Service was currently provided by Southport & Ormskirk NHS Hospital Trust; that the Service was procured in 2018 through an OJEU light touch open procedure; that the contract started 1st July 2018 and had a four-year nine-month core contract ending on 31st March 2023 with three, one-year built in extension options; and that consideration was now required for activating the first of the 12-month extensions.

The report indicated that the available options were:

- (1) to activate the first of x 12month contact extension clauses within the contract and the further 2 extension options available as required; and
- (2) to re-procure the service with a start date of 1 April 2023.

Decision Made:

That the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, be granted delegated authority to activate the first of the 12-month contract extension clauses to the Integrated Sexual Health Service contract and the 2 further 12-month extensions as required; and that the first contract extension be activated on the 1st of April 2023.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Integrated Sexual Health Service is a nationally mandated service which all local authorities are required to provide. The Service continues to deliver against the priorities identified in the service specification to a satisfactory level.

The service has been impacted during the covid pandemic and is still in a period of recovery. The service is reviewing the effectiveness of new

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models of working introduced in response to Covid 19 including a digital offer and telephone triage, to assess how far they meet the needs of the population post pandemic. This will require time for a period of review.

A procurement exercise has the potential to destabilise current service delivery and create uncertainty at a time when it is important to fully re-establish provision. The service is currently the testing site for Monkeypox within the borough and there are national NHS England plans for sexual health services to become local vaccination centres. The stability of the service is important for implementation of local service delivery. Public Health have recently completed a sexual health needs assessment which is intended to inform service developments which will require time to implement across the wider system and will need to be considered within the context of the new Integrated Care Board.

It is expected that a new national sexual health strategy will be launched in 2022/23 and it is advisable to wait and assess any new requirements before entering into a procurement exercise for a new service.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The alternative option is not to extend the current contract with the Service and move to procure a new Integrated Sexual Health Service. This has been rejected due to economic and operational reasons. Moving to a procurement exercise has the potential to destabilise current Service delivery and to stall progress in re-establishing the service post pandemic. Additionally, there would be a resource cost associated with the officer time required for a procurement which would reduce capacity to deliver against other key priorities in Sefton.

48. ALLOCATION OF SUPPLEMENTAL SUBSTANCE MISUSE TREATMENT AND RECOVERY GRANT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Public Health seeking authority to accept the Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant and allocate it accordingly. The report indicated that in February 2022, the Office of Health Inequalities and Disparities (OHID) Department of Health and Social Care announced additional supplemental drugs funding which all Local Authorities were eligible to receive through a Section 31 Grant to support the delivery of the December 2021 national drug strategy. In April, Sefton Council received notification of the 3 years funding from 2022/23 to 2024/25 subject to the submission of a OHID approved plan. The Sefton high level plan and 2022/23 detailed plan has now been approved. Detailed plans outlining the interventions for 2023/24 and 2024/25 will be required to be submitted for approval before the start of each of those years.

Sefton Council will receive this enhanced funding for 3yrs starting from 2022/23. See allocation table below:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Supplemental Sub Misuse Treatment & Recovery Grant	£1, 002,318	£1,642,287*	£3,169,979*

* Indicative Figures

Decision Made:

That:

- (1) Council be recommended to approve the acceptance of the Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant as detailed within the report;
- (2) subject to Council approving the acceptance of the Grant, the proposed contract variations to the current contracts with CGL and WAwY for the services to deliver the funded interventions be approved; and
- (3) authority be delegated to the Head of Health and Wellbeing / Director of Public Health to:
 - issue a contract variation to uplift the contract by an additional £772,068 in the first instance and the uplift for years 2 & 3 by the amounts yet to be determined, with CGL for the provision of Substance Use: Assessment, Treatment and Recovery Services; and
 - add via a contract variation an additional £110,250 to the contract with WAwY and uplift any subsequent contracts for years 2 & 3 of the Grant.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant should be used by LAs to directly address the aims of the treatment and recovery section of the drug strategy. The additional funding should deliver:

- New high-quality treatment places, including:
 - New places for opiate and crack users,
 - a treatment place for every offender with an addiction
 - New treatment places for non-opiate users and alcohol users
 - More young people in treatment
- More people in long-term recovery from substance dependence
- More medical, mental health and other professionals within the drug treatment system
- Additional drug and alcohol and criminal justice workers

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- Sufficient commissioning and co-ordinator capacity in every local authority

The expectation is that each local area will deliver against the above aims and meet national reporting and monitoring requirements. In order to achieve these outcomes, it is necessary to transfer funds to the current providers of Substance Use: Assessment, Treatment and Recovery Services and Young People and Families Substance Use Service.

The local intention is to expand the treatment provision within the existing services to improve access by creating more treatment places and improving quality by reducing caseloads; enhance recovery activities and improve the skill mix within the existing workforce.

The allocation is to support a range of Treatment, Assessment and Recovery interventions for the local substance use population via the local services. Many of the potential beneficiaries have an already established relationship with these services.

The service providers have well established Treatment, Assessment and Recovery pathways in place across the system and are best placed to successfully deliver the interventions.

Process

The Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) requires authorisation by the Cabinet to allocate £772,068 to the current provider of Substance Use: Assessment, Treatment and Recovery Services, Change, Grow, Live, (CGL) of the £1,002,318 received in year 1 (2022/23) and £110,250 in year 1 (2022/23) to the current provider of Young People and Family Substance Use Service, We Are with You (WAwY) and also funding for subsequent years (amount yet to be determined), for delivery of the OHID approved plans.

It should be noted that should the amount of funding to be transferred for Yr.2 & Yr.3 not meet with the requirements stated below a subsequent report will be submitted for approval.

There is provision for this allocation via a contract variation using Regulation 72 of the Public Contract Regulations which states:

“Contracts and framework agreements may be modified without a new procurement procedure in accordance with this Part in any of the following cases:

(c) where all of the following conditions are fulfilled: —

(i) the need for modification has been brought about by circumstances which a diligent contracting authority could not have foreseen;

(ii) the modification does not alter the overall nature of the contract;

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(iii) any increase in price does not exceed 50% of the value of the original contract or framework agreement.

The Grant funding could not have been envisaged when the Council originally procured these services that were advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) and the Find a Tender Service (FTS) respectively. The 3-year funding opportunity was only announced in Q4 of 2021/22. Both contracts had been procured and awarded prior to Q4 of 2021/22.

The allocation is to support a range of Treatment, Assessment and Recovery interventions for the local substance use population aligned to the current local services offer.

The additional grant funding does not exceed 50% of the original contract annual value and remains within the original advertised scope of the contract.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The only other option would be to procure other providers to deliver against the additional funding and this has been rejected due to economic and operational reasons. To commission other substance use services to meet the aims of the Grant would be a duplication of existing service provision, duplication of some costs and any economies of scale will be lost.

49. SUMMERHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL - SECTION 106 CONTRIBUTIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR EXPANSION

The Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director of Education indicating that when Sefton's Local Plan was adopted in 2017 it was agreed that contributions would be sought from the housing developers of the site at Land East of Maghull to expand Summerhill Primary School to provide additional school places in the Maghull area to meet the increased demand from families who moved into the area; and the report provided an update on that project and set out the next steps which needed to be put in place for it to proceed.

A copy of the public notice and complete proposal for Summerhill Primary School was appended to the report.

Decision Made:

That:

- (1) Council be recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate in the sum of £3,782,080 to allow Phase 1 of this

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Summerhill Primary School scheme to be included in the capital programme;

- (2) it be noted that in order to complete Phase 1 and commence Phase 2 of the scheme, allocations will need to be made from both current and future Education capital grant allocations; that these will be approved in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules; and that current estimates are that £1,140,420 will be required over a three-year period; and
- (3) the publication of the proposal to expand Summerhill Primary School be approved so that this can be published during the 2022/23 academic year once Council has agreed the funding.

Reasons for the Decision:

The local authority has the power to consider all options including expanding a maintained school following the statutory process detailed in the report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

As part of the development of the Local Plan options were explored and it was determined that Summerhill Primary School be identified for expansion.

50. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2022/23 TO 2024/25 AND FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE 2020 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2022/23 – SEPTEMBER UPDATE

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

- (1) the current position relating to the 2022/23 revenue budget;
- (2) the current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2022/23; and
- (3) the monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of July 2023 in respect of:
 - the forecast expenditure to year end;
 - variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members; and
 - Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects are also presented for approval.

Decision Made:

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That in respect of the Revenue Budget:

- (1) the current position relating to the 2022/23 revenue budget be noted;
- (2) the Remedial Action Plan to offset the budget pressures being faced in 2022/23 be noted;
- (3) Council be recommended to release £1.666m from the Business Rates Income Reserve;
- (4) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2022/23 revenue budget be recognised and it be acknowledged that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed; and that remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved; and
- (5) the current position relating to the High Needs budget be noted and that officers are currently reviewing all options available to the Council to mitigate the additional pressure and to make the overall High Needs budget financially sustainable.

That in respect of the Capital Programme:

- (6) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 7.1) be noted;
- (7) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 July 2022 of £7.535m (paragraph 7.5); and the latest full year forecast is £42.814m (paragraph 7.6) be noted;
- (8) the explanations of variances to project budgets (paragraph 7.1) be noted;
- (9) Council be recommended to approve of a supplementary capital estimate for £2.000m for Core Disabled Facilities Grants (paragraph 7.11);
- (10) Council be recommended to approve a supplementary revenue estimate of £1.064m for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement support grant (paragraph 7.13.1);
- (11) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.759m for the Maritime Corridor and Southport Eastern access schemes (paragraph 7.13.2) be approved;
- (12) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.577m for Section 106 funding for Highways Capital schemes (paragraph 7.13.3) be approved;
- (13) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.468m for projects on the

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Key Route Network (paragraph 7.13.4) be approved;

- (14) Council be recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate of £1.620m for Tranche 3 of the Active travel Fund (paragraph 7.13.5);
- (15) Council be recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate of £4.789m for the Highways Maintenance budget 2022/23 (paragraph 7.13.7);
- (16) Council be recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate of £0.188m for Corporate Essential Maintenance funded from capital receipts (paragraph 7.37); and
- (17) it be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council (paragraph 7.40).

Reasons for the Decision:

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the current position in relation to the 2022/23 revenue budget.

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 2022/23 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.

51. SOUTHPORT PIER

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place that updated on the current condition of Southport Pier decking following completed technical survey work, and the recommended necessary

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remedial actions required including the replacement of the full pier timber decking.

Decision Made:

That:

- (1) the report be noted and that approval be granted for the full pier decking to be replaced;
- (2) the Executive Director (Place), in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills, be authorised to exercise delegated authority to appoint a suitable contractor for the capital works and to appoint a range of consultancy services via a compliant framework to support the successful delivery of the project; and to ensure that the employer's agent retains responsibility for both the contract and the contract specification; and
- (3) Council be recommended to:
 - (A) approve a £3m supplementary capital estimate to enable the scheme to be included within the Council's Capital Programme and that this be financed by prudential borrowing; and
 - (B) note the annual cost of the borrowing of £0.178m and approve that this figure is added as a growth item to the Council's medium term financial plan and as such will be funded as part of the 2023/24 budget plan.

Reasons for the Decision:

Southport Pier is a critical visitor attraction that holds significant importance to Sefton's economy and brand. It is also a Grade-II listed structure. As part of the routine maintenance, it became apparent the pier decking was starting to fail in isolated areas, therefore several detailed inspections from timber experts have taken place. The recommendation is now to replace the entire decking after the 2022 summer season from October 2022 with most works taking place in the Winter. to ensure the Pier is fit for purpose, remains safe, and continues to be a critical historic asset for Sefton.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The following other options have been considered and rejected:

1. Ongoing replacement – This would result in decking boards being replaced as part of the current yearly maintenance programme, as has been the case of the last 5 years. This has been rejected

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following the recent deck survey and the recommended requirement to replace the whole decking.

2. Full replacement over several years – This would result in the pier decking being replaced in phases over 10 to 15 years. This has been rejected due to the costs, the impact on the pier concession and wider economy and following the conclusions of the recent deck survey and the recommended requirement to replace the whole decking.
3. Do nothing – This has been rejected on Health and Safety grounds.

52. APPOINTMENT TO SEFTON NEW DIRECTIONS LIMITED BOARD

Further to Minute No. 29 (2) of the meeting held on 28 July 2022 the Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking the appointment a further elected Member to serve on the Sefton New Directions Limited Board.

Decision Made:

That Cabinet, at its next meeting to be held on 6 October 2022, appoint the second representative to serve on the Sefton New Directions Limited Board and that the term of office expire on 25 May, 2023.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Cabinet has delegated powers set out in Chapter 5, Paragraph 40 of the Constitution to appoint the Council's representatives to serve on Outside Bodies.

To comply with a previous decision of Cabinet that the appointment be made at this meeting of the Cabinet.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

53. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To comply with Regulation 5(2) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, notice has been published regarding the intention to consider the following matters in private for the reasons set out below.

Decision Made:

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That, under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours exclusion of the information from the Press and Public.

54. MARINE LAKE EVENT CENTRE - EXEMPT APPENDICES

Further to Minute No. 41 of the meeting held on 28 July 2022 the Cabinet considered exempt information in relation to the Marine Lake Event Centre (Minute No. 57 below refers).

Decision Made:

That the exempt information be considered as part of the report in relation to the Marine Lake Event Centre (Minute No. 57 below refers).

Reasons for the Decision:

The exempt information is required to be considered with the information in the public domain in order that an informed decision may be made.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

55. PENDLE DRIVE LITHERLAND - EXEMPT APPENDICES

The Cabinet considered exempt information in relation to Pendle Drive Litherland (Minute No. 58 below refers).

Decision Made:

That the exempt information be considered as part of the report in relation to Pendle Drive Litherland (Minute No. 58 below refers).

Reasons for the Decision:

The exempt information is required to be considered with the information in the public domain in order that an informed decision may be made.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

56. PUBLIC SESSION

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Decision Made:

That the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

57. MARINE LAKE EVENT CENTRE

Further to Minute No. 41 of the meeting held on 28 July 2022 the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place that provided an update on the progression of the operator procurement process, along with the ongoing contractor procurement process following previous approval of the procurement routes. In respect of the Marine Lake Event Centre. The report also included an update on current costs and funding position and therefore the required contribution from the Council of up to £19.7m; and indicated that the cost of this, to be funded via borrowing, had been included in this report together with the indicative annual income from the operator, to enable early visibility of potential Medium-Term Financial Plan implications for the Council.

Decision Made:

That:

- (1) the Executive Director – Place be authorised to enter into of an Agreement for Lease for the operation and management of the Southport Marine Lake Events Centre with SMG (UK) Limited trading as ASM Global, based upon the principles agreed within the Heads of Terms, as set out in the report;
- (2) the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be authorised to agree the final terms to the Agreement for Lease;
- (3) the update on the build contractor procurement along with the targeted social value outcomes be noted;
- (4) the key project risks identified within this report, including future financial implications be noted; and
- (5) Council be recommended to:
 - (1) approve a Supplementary Capital Estimate of £69.1m to be funded by: £31.7m from the Town Deal; £17.7m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority; and £19.7m to be funded by the Council;
 - (2) note that, in addition to the £69.1m identified above, £1.6m and £2.3m of pre-development funding, from the Town Deal and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority respectively, has already been included within the Capital

Programme as approved by Council in September 2021. Therefore, the total capital scheme for the MLEC is £73m and this is the total value of the scheme which will be included within the Capital Programme;

- (3) note that the finance arrangements for the Council's contribution of £19.7m to the MLEC will be agreed following consultation with the Council's Treasury Management advisors and reported to Cabinet through the quarterly Treasury Management reports and the final proposal will be included within the Budget report;
- (4) delegate the completion and signing of Grant Funding Agreement of £17.7m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, in consultation with the Executive Director - Place, the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills and the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, should it be formally approved by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority; and
- (5) delegate the Grant Funding Agreement of £33.3m from the Southport Town Deal, following Full Business Case approval, to the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, in consultation with the Executive Director - Place, the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills and the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, should it be formally approved by Government.

Reasons for the Decision:

Cabinet has previously approved to progress with a new Marine Lake Events Centre in Southport as part of the successful Southport Town Deal.

Following the submission of the business case and conclusion of the operator procurement there is a need to ensure there is a long-term commitment from the proposed tenant to provide confidence in the delivery of the scheme.

To progress and finalise the contractor procurement grant funding agreements from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Town Deal will need to be agreed along with the additional Council funding of £19.7m.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The Outline Business Case presented to Cabinet on 24 June 2021 considered several alternative options ranging from do minimum, to refurbishment, to major redevelopment. The preferred option was major

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redevelopment with the other options being rejected as they did not meet the project aims and objectives.

The preferred way forward identified at the Outline Business Case stage was subject to further review in early 2022 focused on the re-examination of the scheme given capital affordability constraints alongside a review of the funding strategy. This review led to the confirmation of the preferred way forward scheme as set out at the Outline Business Case stage.

The Business case presented to Cabinet on 28 July 2022 presented the shortlisted intervention options examined including the Outline Business Case preferred option requiring £73m of funding and a reduced scheme requiring £61.8m capital investment.

These two intervention options were considered against a revised reference case that considers that the STCC did not re-open after COVID-19 and has been mothballed by the Council. Therefore, the Do Minimum option, examined as part of the Outline Business Case, was no longer considered.

The preferred option from the Outline Business Case scored the highest in the Full Business Case also and therefore the circa £73m major redevelopment remains the preferred option.

58. PENDLE DRIVE LITHERLAND

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services advising that in January 2020 Cabinet approved the disposal of the first phase of surplus assets to generate capital receipts in support of the Growth and Strategic Investment and Framework for Change Programmes; that officers were provided with the authority to negotiate terms and conditions for each disposal in line with delegated authority set out in the Council's Asset Disposal Policy; that Brooklea House, Pendle House, and Pendle Drive were three unoccupied buildings located on the site known as Pendle Drive, Litherland ("Pendle Drive"); that this site was in the first phase of the disposal programme; that in 2019, the Council was approached by a retail operator to acquire part of the site; that this represented an opportunistic disposal to provide a new food store, which was permissible under the processes approved within the Asset Disposal Policy; and that the remainder of the site would be redeveloped for housing, most likely via an informal tender exercise marketing it to interested Registered Providers and similar Companies.

The report also advised that the COVID19 pandemic led to discussions between the Council and retail operator stalling for a time; but however, following recent contact the basis of a deal had been resurrected and principal Heads of Terms agreed; and that the purchaser had agreed to demolish the three unoccupied buildings with the cost of demolition to be deducted from the gross land price as set out in Appendix 1.

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The report concluded that the Council would market the balance of the site to Registered Providers, so that a small affordable housing residential development scheme could be brought forward; but that it was not expected to generate a significant capital receipt.

Decision Made:

That:

- (1) the disposal of 2.40 acres of land at Pendle Drive Litherland at a gross purchase price as set out in the Heads of Terms in Appendix 1 to the report be approved; that the disposal to be subject to the purchaser demolishing the three unoccupied buildings and the receipt of satisfactory planning consent for a new food store; and that the final land price be subject to deductions for the cost of the demolition works;
- (2) the deduction of up to 4% of the eventual capital receipt to cover the professional fees and incidental costs of disposal as set out in Capital Accounting Regulations be approved;
- (3) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be authorised to finalise a Licence Agreement to enable the purchaser to progress all technical due diligence and building surveys to support demolition works and to draw up the appropriate legal documentation to document the Transfer; and
- (4) authority be granted for the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services to market and dispose of the remainder of the land in the Council's ownership to Registered Providers for residential development, with terms of the disposal to be delegated to the Cabinet Member - Regulatory Compliance and Corporate Services.

Reasons for the Decision:

- (1) Disposal of the land will provide capital funding in support of the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme. The disposal will maximise the land receipt that the Council can secure for Pendle Drive. Alternative use value (residential) will not generate a capital receipt of a comparable level. The opportunity cost will be the loss of a capital receipt as currently projected in the disposal programme.
- (2) Incidental costs of disposal such as Consultant's fees and valuation reports can be deducted from a capital receipt in accordance with Local Authority Capital accounting Regulations.
- (3) The disposal of land adheres to two criteria: that each capital receipt forecasted represents financial "best consideration" and where the loss of other opportunities is quantifiable and does not

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undermine wider service delivery and economic development/ regeneration priorities.

- (4) The agreed Heads of Terms require that the purchaser demolishes all buildings across the site, including Pendle House which is located on the retained land. This ensures that the Council has no capital expenditure ask to progress demolition work and is left with a de-risked opportunity.
- (5) The agreed disposal price, as set out in Appendix 1, meets best consideration requirements in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 and complies with the approved processes within the Council's Asset Disposal Policy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

- (1) Dispose of site to Registered Provider: The Council can look to market all the Pendle Drive site to Registered Providers. The site has marginal financial viability for residential use and this option is discounted as it secures only a nominal land receipt. The Council would likely have to commit capital up front to progress demolition works to de-risk the site. Redevelopment of part for a retail store is the only way to secure a significant capital receipt to the Council.
- (2) Demolish buildings to reduce management liability and risk of antisocial behaviour on the site and retain land as an area of recreational amenity. This option is not favoured as there would be ongoing management and maintenance costs to the Council. The asset is in the disposals programme – its disposal has previously been approved for the very purpose of generating a land receipt to support the delivery of the Framework of Change programme.
- (3) Dispose of site for residential development: a financial appraisal completed in 2019 estimated that the site would generate a land receipt of no more than £150,000 for redevelopment for this alternative use, given its location in a lower sales value area. The appraisal did not factor in any deductions for demolition or other site abnormal costs, so any land receipt for residential development would in reality only generate a nominal capital receipt, which would not comply with achieving Best Consideration, which is more expressly set out in Section 3 of this report.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 6 th October 2022
Subject:	Cost of Living Crisis		
Report of:	Chief Executive	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report summarises the impact of the escalating Cost of Living Crisis on local businesses and outlines the support available and proposed in Sefton.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to

1. Note the support currently provided as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report; and
- 2 Consider the Equalities Assessment Report at Appendix A.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

For Cabinet to consider the impact of the escalating Cost of Living Crisis on local businesses and note the support available and approve plans proposed in Sefton.

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

NA

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

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Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): Support referenced within this report is delivered via existing resources.	
Legal Implications: None	
Equality Implications: Equalities Assessment Report at Appendix A, recognising that risk remains from an equalities perspective.	
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

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Care Provider sustainability and the ongoing provision of services to critical in supporting and caring for vulnerable people in Sefton.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The Council will actively sign post businesses to where they can access support.
Commission, broker and provide core services: The Cost of Care exercises are a further opportunity for Sefton and local care Providers to work together to arrive at a shared understanding of what it costs to run quality and sustainable care provision in the local area and that is reflective of local circumstances.
Place – leadership and influencer: The Council has submitted a number of Levelling Up funding bids.
Drivers of change and reform: the Council will play a key role in advocating change and reform to improve the position for Sefton businesses.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The Cost of Living Crisis could lead to a reduction in the opportunity to create the conditions where relatively low unemployment and high income prevail.
Greater income for social investment: NA
Cleaner Greener NA

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD692) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5162) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Equalities Assessment Report at Appendix A

Background Papers:

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-report/sbi-q2-2022.html>

[Government outlines plans to help cut energy bills for businesses - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-plans-to-help-cut-energy-bills-for-businesses)

[Cost of Living Crisis on local people: \(sefton.gov.uk\)](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-crisis-on-local-people)

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1. Background

- 1.1 Sefton Council is committed to supporting the development of an economy that connects Sefton to the City Region and beyond, in which businesses, employees, jobseekers and working age adults receive the help they need, and the benefits of growth are maximised for the people and places of the Borough.
- 1.2 Sefton is an attractive borough in which to live, work and visit. Partly because of this there is a significant focus on sectors involved in hospitality, culture, leisure, lifestyle and meeting the needs of residents, and visitors which has left it particularly exposed to the cumulative effects of Brexit, the COVID 19 pandemic, the Cost of Living Crisis and the war in Ukraine.
- 1.3 Compared with other Liverpool City Region Authorities the risks to employment are higher, spatially focussed and immediate. This means that the impacts are felt most profoundly by
- Town centres and other key leisure/retail areas
 - Younger people (as a higher proportion are employed in hospitality & leisure)
 - Lower skilled and lower paid (because of the employment opportunities in the industries affected)
 - Female members of the workforce
- 1.4 Sefton is not unusual in recording the highest levels of employment in retail, health, education and food & beverage service. This is common with most Local Authority areas –but the scale of the employment that these sectors employ is relevant and overlooked in most economic analysis.

Sefton's labour market is also characterised by unemployment, which in common with other LAs, is distributed unevenly in terms of age and location, as the following table illustrates (Nomis – Claimant Count July 2022)

Parliamentary Constituency	No. aged 16-24 years	No. aged 25-49 years	No. aged 50+ years	Total Area Claimant Count	Area Claimant Rate
Bootle	650	2,265	785	3,700	5.9
Sefton Central	165	560	285	1,005	2.2
Southport	280	1,115	450	1,845	3.5
SEFTON	1,095	3,940	1,520	6,550	4.0*

* Sefton Borough Median value

- 1.5 In addition to the differences in unemployment experienced by different areas and age groups, Sefton@Work data has shown further disparity between women versus men seeking help to enter the labour market. Since 2020, the trend for fewer women of all ages coming forward for help into jobs has been persistent and growing. The rates of unemployment, however, have remained largely unchanged between men and women. It would be possible to conclude then that the impact of cost of living rises is being felt more acutely by women than men if there are factors in place which are creating barriers for them to enter well paid work. It is unclear what precise factors have led to this trend but contractions in sectors with typically higher rates of female employment (such as retail, catering etc) continue, and it is possible that older women are providing more unpaid childcare or elder care services for relatives. Sefton@Work, along with many other similar services, are undertaking specific actions to promote employability among women of all ages.
- 1.6 Likewise, businesses across Sefton, like many across the country, are facing further challenges in light of the mounting national Cost of Living Crisis. The combination of soaring energy and fuel prices, rising costs, changes in household spending patterns, supply chain challenges and for some recruitment challenges means that many are struggling. This in turn will affect all people who live, work, visit and study in the borough.
- 1.7 The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) full Small Business Index report for Q2 2022 finds growth expectations are down, and cost pressures are weighing heavily on small firms. In the report they identify that

“The combined proportion of small firms who predict that they will stay the same size (38.7%) or downsize or even close their business (14.7%), at 53.4%, outweighs the 46.6% who predict they will grow in the coming 12 months.

The results differed by sector, with a better outlook for businesses in the information and communication sector, where 62.9% of businesses expected to grow in the next year, compared with only 33.9% of wholesale and retail firms, and 34.9% of hospitality sector businesses.

Small firms’ anaemic growth predictions coincided with the highest-recorded proportion of firms saying their costs are higher than a year ago, at 89.0%, and with the highest level of producer price inflation for four decades in June.”

- 1.8 If these predictions are true, then this will have a profound effect on the businesses of Sefton. Sefton is a borough of small businesses. It has approximately 8,000 businesses of which over 96% are either small (less than 50 employees) or micro (less than 10). Since the outbreak of the pandemic, up until 26 August 2022, InvestSefton has handled 5,581 enquiries. Since April 2021, the team has dealt with over 550 enquiries including businesses expressing concern with rising energy costs. Levels of concern and numbers of enquiries are

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expected to rise in October when energy costs are increased. There have been specific enquiries from some large energy users including a local manufacturing facility operating on four sites in Bootle. The team is supporting them with the Eco Innovatory Centre in Liverpool John Moore's University who are undertaking an energy audit to help identify potential savings on energy use.

- 1.9 The impact of soaring energy prices will impact across the business sector, with analysis from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) stating

“Businesses in the food and beverage sector have been affected by the recent rise in energy prices. In March 2022, 60% reported being affected by the rise in energy prices, compared with 38% across all sectors. “

- 1.10 The food and beverage sector forms part of the wider Sefton Visitor Economy, a crucial sector employing over 4,700 people in Sefton. The sector was hit hard during Covid-19 and has yet to fully recover, now coupled with increased energy costs and a reduction in customers disposable income the next couple of months and beyond will be extremely challenging. Recent surveys show that between 40-50% people plan to cut their spending on eating out. This will have a major impact on an already fragile sector, especially leading into the peak Christmas trading period.

- 1.11 Sefton Council has looked at what businesses can do in response to customers cutting back on their spending patterns. The Cut Back Economy Report by Grant Thornton assesses the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on the retail and consumer industries and finds that ‘the average household is expected to cut back 9.3% of their spending on restaurants, bars and cinemas, wiping out a potential £8.3 billion of business across the UK hospitality and leisure sector this financial year (FY22/23).’ The report recommends that retail and consumer-facing businesses focus upon and invest in 5 key areas to help mitigate the impact of the cut back economy (households reducing their spending). This includes:

- ‘customer-centricity to secure lifetime values (for example loyalty schemes, selling products and services that are both value for money and desirable),
- data-driven decision making (for example advanced data analytics can help retailers gain a competitive advantage by providing actionable and near real-time insights into how customers are responding to cost of living pressures),
- competitive-price positioning (for example for shoppers under intense financial pressure, offering compelling entry level price points across relevant ranges with price matching is likely to be the most effective approach.
- rethinking supply chains (for example regaining control and visibility over supply chains, including diversifying suppliers, implementing

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cutting-edge inventory management, and collaborating with logistics providers to build greater flexibility to secure supply.

- implementing the ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) agenda (for example near-shoring supply chains and sourcing goods locally can help create operations that are more resilient to external factors such as inflation or fluctuating shipping costs, as well as reducing the environmental impact of international logistics).’

Whilst this offers sound advice to businesses it is against a backdrop of businesses who have already been squeezed by the impact of Brexit, the pandemic and now the cost of living crisis as well as the war in Ukraine. Qualitative evidence indicates that a number of small and medium sized businesses have used up any reserves they have had to deal with a succession of crises. In terms of the support that local authorities can offer businesses, this is again limited by the impact of government funding cuts to the public sector over the last 10 years, and the financial difficulties and strains placed upon them.

- 1.12 Across Sefton around 4,000 people are employed in residential care facilities – twice the national average for comparably sized areas. This sector is critical and performs a vital role in providing care for some of Sefton’s most vulnerable adults and children.
- 1.13 The Cost of Living Crisis is impacting on Adult Social Care commissioned Care Providers and their workforce. Engagement with Care Providers has highlighted concerns relating to factors such as current and impending increases to utilities costs (for example heating care homes, which are often older buildings which are less energy efficient) and also associated impacts on the Care workforce, such as increased costs associated with travel and fuel costs when they are delivering care calls to people in their own homes and conduct numerous visits during their work shifts. There is then the wider issue of recruitment and retention.
- 1.14 On 8th September, the Government announced an Energy Price Guarantee for families and businesses, this included

“As businesses have not benefited from an energy price cap and are not always able to fix their energy price through fixed deals, many are reporting projected increases in energy costs of more than 500%.

A new six-month scheme for businesses and other non-domestic energy users (including charities and public sector organisations like schools) will offer equivalent support as is being provided for consumers. This will protect them from soaring energy costs and provide them with the certainty they need to plan their business.

After this initial six-month scheme, the Government will provide ongoing, focused support for vulnerable industries.

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There will be a review in 3 months' time to consider where this should be targeted to make sure those most in need get support."

1.15 On 21st September the government announced

"Through a new government [Energy Bill Relief Scheme](#), the government will provide a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic customers (including all UK businesses, the voluntary sector like charities and the public sector such as schools and hospitals) whose current gas and electricity prices have been significantly inflated in light of global energy prices. This support will be equivalent to the [Energy Price Guarantee](#) put in place for households.

It will apply to fixed contracts agreed on or after 1 April 2022, as well as to deemed, variable and flexible tariffs and contracts. It will apply to energy usage from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, running for an initial 6 month period for all non-domestic energy users. The savings will be first seen in October bills, which are typically received in November.

As with the Energy Price Guarantee for households, customers do not need to take action or apply to the scheme to access the support. Support (in the form of a p/kWh discount) will automatically be applied to bills."

The announcement also stated

"We will publish a review into the operation of the scheme in three months to inform decisions on future support after March 2023. The review will focus in particular on identifying the most vulnerable non-domestic customers and how the government will continue assisting them with energy costs."

2 Currently in Sefton

2.1 Southport secured £37.5m capital funding in 2020 and includes a number of key capital projects aimed at assisting economic recovery and resilience through development of the local visitor economy from a seasonal offer to an all year round offer. In addition the Town Deal seeks to diversify the town centre encouraging business growth, generating employment and developing skills in the hospitality sector. The Town Deal is already having an impact generating footfall, extending dwell times and acting as a catalyst for a further significant investment at scale across the town centre. The Town Deal projects will help offset some of the negative impacts of the Cost of Living Crisis and help build greater resilience and support into the local economy to aid recovery. This has been exemplified at Southport Market, where the venue has enhanced the town's food and drink offer but also delivered regenerative benefits in the adjacent areas of the town centre.

2.2 The Council has submitted new bids to the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) (Round 2) for Bootle and Crosby town centres. These aim to help diversify and strengthen the local town centre economy, aiding their recovery from the Covid pandemic and supporting new uses and functions that will support local business, help generate employment, build confidence and greater economic resilience as well as supporting the communities around them. Bootle Strand is a key priority for Sefton Council and its repurposing of which the LUF bid submission aims to support and assist accelerated delivery, will provide the much needed injection of support for this key centre which plays a critical part supporting the community around it with much needed retail and community services. The ongoing development and support of Bootle town centre will become even more critical given the emerging issues those in the communities around it will face in the coming months. It should be noted that Sefton was placed in Category 3 for Levelling Up funding, the lowest level of priority. Nevertheless, the Council submitted high quality bids in pursuit of this funding regardless of this categorisation. Sefton's economy remains dependent on thriving town centres across all of Sefton.

2.3 Sefton's Economic Strategy 2022 concluded its consultation on 17th August and the final version will be reported to Cabinet later in 2022. Some 189 detailed responses were received and an overwhelming majority agreed to four overarching objectives:

- Employment & Opportunities for work
- Business growth & investment
- Social Inclusion and Access to all
- Regenerated Places

The strategy will include an action plan under each of these objectives and working closely with the LCR Combined Authority, focus will be given to providing support to businesses affected by the crisis for example access to government support, financial advice and support,

2.4 The Council, along with its partners, continue to put communities, local people and businesses at the heart of what it does. The Council provides support to businesses through: –

Invest Sefton – The Council's first point of contact for businesses seeking to start, grow or locate in the borough. Working closely with local, city-region and national support providers, the team provides practical support to Sefton businesses including 1:1 advice and guidance, focussed workshops and events plus signposting to any specific government interventions which are introduced.

Tourism – The Tourism service offers support to many businesses within the visitor economy sector including sign posting to the correct support channels (Invest Sefton) and undertaking business assessments. Also, through a range of activities

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such as destination marketing and major events the team provides opportunities for businesses to increase their exposure to larger markets.

Sefton@Work – provides a range of services to business and communities to promote an effective labour market which places inclusive growth at its heart. The primary programmes being delivered at present are

- the Ways to Work project - (funded by European Social Fund or ESF) and
- the Restart programme funded via Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

These projects offer intensive support to a wide range of residents who are seeking to move from benefit dependency into work and target those with ill health, few or no qualifications (in partnership with Sefton Adult Learning Service), the long term unemployed, those with an offending background, and a range of vulnerable younger people between the ages of 16 and 29.

A large focus for Sefton@Work is the engagement with employers to ensure that the recruitment and retention of local workers is paramount. Assistance is given to smaller and micro employers without inhouse Human Resource support to enable them to undertake more frictionless recruitment. In addition, in order to mitigate barriers to learners gaining access to learning and meaningful employment, support services and signposting to partner services is provided (welfare rights advice, foodbank vouchers, subsidised travel etc).

Active Sefton – The Council operates six modern Leisure Centres under the banner of Active Sefton. These facilities provide residents and visitors with the opportunity to partake in a wide range of sport and physical activities and programmes, which are highly beneficent to individual physical and mental health. To support local businesses the Council also operates an Active Workforce programme, which, if subscribed to by organisations, not only entitles individuals to access the facilities at significantly reduced cost, but also gives to a wide range of additional support services that improve health and wellbeing including:

- Exercise classes, including virtual access,
- Health checks,
- Monthly challenges and tournaments,
- Weight Management courses,
- Delivery of a wide range of staff health seminars, for example, stress, back care, menopause, mindfulness, sleep, health eating, physical activity, low mood.
- Tailored support for staff with health conditions.
- Team building and an annual events programme.
- Virtual walks

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Business Rates - The Council continues to provide support and advice to business owners having problems paying Business Rates to contact the Business Rates team, and actively encourages them to do so. The team will check whether the business may be entitled to any of the business rates reliefs or exemptions that exist. Any entitlement could reduce bills to help make it easier for businesses to meet payments. The team will also discuss payment options and consider if alternate payment arrangements may be appropriate.

The Council also implements any additional reliefs announced by the Government to reduce Business Rates liability. No announcements have currently been made about additional reliefs that may apply from April 2023.

Social Care Providers - As part of national reform of Adult Social Care, a Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care exercise is being conducted across all Councils. This relates to the Government needing to understand the cost to Councils of providing care home and domiciliary care (aged 18+) to its older populations.

Last month Cabinet considered the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care exercises for Adult Social Care in Sefton. Councils are required to submit to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) by 14th October 2022 the outcomes of these exercises together with a provisional market sustainability plan. The future funding related to this work will be contingent on increase to Council budgets.

Sefton has received non- recurrent additional funding from DHSC which can be used to increase fee rates for Providers in scope and work is currently taking place on implementing proposals to increase such rates.

Once finalised, these proposals will be communicated to Care Providers and ongoing engagement with them as well as other Care Providers currently not in scope for the cost of care exercises will take place.

The Council continues to work with Care Providers on initiatives including.

- Further capital funding to make improvements to Care Homes
- Pilot programmes for use of Technology to improve service delivery and realise efficiencies in their services
- Supporting Care Providers with their recruitment and retention issues
- New commissioning arrangements which give Providers more flexibility to deliver services, deal with changes in demand and new contracting models which seek to guarantee income/business for them based on anticipated levels of demand for their services.

2.5 Housing remains a key sector and is linked with both the growth of the economy and providing a choice of housing type, tenure and location across the Borough to meet residents' needs. The Council owned Sandway Homes has developed two sites in Ainsdale and Crossens, both of which are progressing well in terms of delivery and a number of properties on both sites are occupied, sold, and even sold in advance off plan such is the strength of the brand and quality of the product. This in turn has had a positive impact on suppliers, the labour market and apprenticeships.

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- 2.6 Multiple sites up and down the Borough which were allocated within the Local Plan adopted in 2017, have been brought forward by the private sector and Housing Associations, and Sefton's housing market has been described by housebuilders and agents alike as extremely buoyant. Strong adherence to planning policies relating to the provision of affordable housing in particular, have been a feature of many of these developments. This delivery is, of course, facilitated by a range of council services, and partnership working with the Combined Authority and Homes England to elicit funding opportunities to accelerate delivery and to address key areas of viability on specific sites and market failure.

3 Equalities

- 3.1 Members are to consider the Equalities Analysis Report at Appendix A.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Council will continue to proactively engage with local businesses. This was identified as an area of good practice in the recent LGA Peer Challenge, as reported to Cabinet earlier in 2022, but will remain a focus area for the Council to ensure feedback is consistently captured on the challenges and opportunities that Sefton businesses face, and that there visibility of and access to any and all support available to businesses across the borough.
- 4.2 The Council will work hard to maximise Levelling Up opportunities across the borough and proactively pursue all funding opportunities to support regeneration and growth across the borough. This includes continued progression of such projects and programmes as the Southport Town Deal and the repurposing of Bootle's Strand Shopping Centre, both of which are intended to be catalytic in their impacts on town centres and their economies.
- 4.3 The Council will continue to engage proactively with Government at both regional and national level, aiming to influence policies towards supporting businesses at this time of crisis and maximising the availability of funding and other support for Sefton and its economy.

Equality Analysis Report - Cost of Living Crisis - Businesses

Details of proposal: Summary of Support Services available in Sefton to assist businesses with the Cost of Living Crisis.

Ramifications of Proposal: Support services should be available to all eligible businesses in Sefton, with particular focus on those businesses providing services to vulnerable communities.

Are there any protected characteristics that will be disproportionately affected in comparison to others?

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- *Age*
- *Disability*
- *Gender Reassignment*
- *Marriage and Civil Partnership*
- *Race*
- *Religion or Belief*
- *Sex*
- *Sexual Orientation*
- *Pregnancy and Maternity*

Section one of the report gives detail on the situation in Sefton regarding businesses which will be most impacted by increases in the cost of living.

With regard to the protected characteristics, particular concerns have been identified around the following:

Women (para 1.3)

Young People (para 1.3)

Older people and people with disabilities (para 1.12 and 1.13)

Consultation:

No additional consultation has been carried out as part of the preparation of this report or analysis.

Is there evidence that the Public Sector Equality Duties will be met?

The Equality Act 2010 requires that those subject to the Equality Duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- 1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
- 2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*
- 3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.*
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.*
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.*

Section two of the report details the actions that Sefton is taking to support businesses who are experiencing difficulties during the cost of living crisis.

Characteristic	Action	Positive Impact	Negative Impact/Risks	Mitigation
Women	Supporting women into work.	Signposts people to available support and works	Services will be inaccessible to those with limited or no online access or access to social media.	Sefton@Work are undertaking specific actions to promote employability among women of all ages. System communication plan to be developed with partner organisations to ensure that message is available across a

			Accessibility of information.	variety of spectrums
Women	Supporting women into work.	Signposts people to available support	Services will be inaccessible to those with limited or no online access or access to social media. Accessibility of information.	Sefton@Work, provides some financial assistance to clients who need help to overcome specific practical barriers through employability funding.
Young People	The NEET Reduction and Early Intervention service, operated on contract by Career Connect, works pro-actively with all young people in vulnerable groups to help them re-engage in learning and work and prevent longer term exclusion.	Signposts people to available support. Provides direct financial support.	Awareness of scheme and application process. Accessibility of information. Cost of travel to appointments	Outreach engagement, often in the clients' homes is used to overcome some issues related to travel costs and there are frequent bids for financial assistance made where young people face hardship such as with access to traineeships where child benefit may need to be discontinued.
Older people and people with disabilities receiving care	Adult Social Care, as part of wider national Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care work, are currently conducting exercises with Care Providers which encompasses them submitting details of their costs and this work will support the national	Helping care providers maintain services and sustainability	Cost of Care exercises and additional DHSC funding only relates to Domiciliary Care Services 18+ and Older People (65+) care	Additional market management and oversight work to ascertain impact on wider care markets and Service Users. Once finalised, these proposals will be communicated to Care Providers and ongoing engagement with them as well as other Care Providers currently not in scope for the cost of care exercises will take place The Council continues to work with Care

	<p>move towards paying Providers a fair cost of care.</p> <p>Additional funding has been provided by DHSC which can be used to increase fee rates for Providers.</p>		<p>homes.</p> <p>This funding is currently non recurrent</p>	<p>Providers on initiatives including.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further capital funding to make improvements to Care Homes • Pilot programmes for use of Technology to improve service delivery and realise efficiencies in their services • Supporting Care Providers with their recruitment and retention issues • New commissioning arrangements which give Providers more flexibility to deliver services, deal with changes in demand and new contracting models which seek to guarantee income/business for them based on anticipated levels of demand for their services

What actions will follow if proposal accepted by Cabinet?

Section two of the report outlines a number of steps that the Council will be taking, including employment support and support for care providers.

Where possible take up of the schemes will be monitored.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 th October 2022	
	Council		17 th November 2022	
Subject:	Sefton Child Poverty Strategy 2022-2030: Tackling Child Poverty in Sefton			Wards Affected:
Report of:	Director of Public Health	Wards Affected:	All Wards	
Cabinet Portfolio:	Health and wellbeing			Included in Forward Plan:
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes	
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No			

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval of the Sefton Child Poverty Strategy: Tackling Child Poverty in Sefton 2022-2030. The strategy is a major step in ensuring that our residents are offered opportunities, support, advice, and information that will address the causes and challenges of childhood poverty.

Recommendation(s):

1. To approve the Sefton Child Poverty Strategy 2022-2030 for adoption and implementation by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
2. To approve the continued engagement of our community, partners and community and voluntary sector organisations to develop a robust set of action plans, aligned to the objectives set out in the strategy and the performance framework which will underpin the strategy.
3. To continue to commit all available resources to underpin strategy delivery using available funds from Public Health, Communities, Education etc. with a commitment to producing an annual summary detailing key achievements and challenges faced in the preceding year.
4. To agree to a multi-agency, launch of the strategy in November 2022

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Living in poverty has negative impacts in other aspects of people's lives and is not just about money – it impacts educational attainment, access to good paying work, increases the risk of developing poor health conditions and reduces life expectancy. It also means that many people are not able to take part in the normal life of a place as experienced by other residents.

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If we are unable to support the most in need families right now, the biggest challenge will be on the poorest in our society, increasing those who most rely on public services who will be limited even further in trying to support their own families and turn their lives around.

Approval of this strategy and its focus on pockets, places and prospects will lead to a fairer and more inclusive Sefton, where everyone is able to live their best life, prosperous and fulfilling, free from poverty and inequality.

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

The strategy focuses on ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our communities receive the support they need, those most at risk and in need of accessing our services.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are a number of funding sources that are already contributing to the priorities identified in the strategy, including the WRAP support programmes such as Household Support Fund, ELAS programme and direct grants to several community and voluntary organisations which are currently delivering against some of the outcomes identified in the strategy.

There are various commissioned programmes through Public Health and wider Council which will continue to support the delivery of the strategy which focus on initiatives to support improved health and wellbeing in communities. There is also a commitment to identify additional funding and opportunities which would contribute to the delivery of the strategy. This would be subject to approval at a future Cabinet meeting once funding was secured.

(B) Capital Costs

No additional capital costs identified

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications arising from the proposals
Equality Implications: The strategy focuses on ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our communities receive the support they need, those most at risk and in need of accessing our services. The strategy provides a framework to prevent people from falling into poverty as well as

supporting those who are already struggling. The strategy will have an overall positive effect across all equality strands. Delivery of the ambitions of the strategy will make a significant difference to the health and wellbeing of our local communities and tackle health inequalities. Equality and diversity considerations are an integral part of our approach to addressing poverty in Sefton

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed.

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	N

The Child Poverty Strategy will have a clear focus on supporting those who are disadvantaged and most in need including the delivery of specific commissioned services and through ensuring that all of Sefton’s most vulnerable communities are able to access advice / support for young people and families.

There is no specific climate and environmental impact that may arise from implementing the strategy however there is potential for positive impact in developing initiatives to reduce fuel poverty.

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: YES

The strategy is designed to protect the most vulnerable by focussing on families who were already managing challenges caused by inequality and were further impacted by the double shock from the pandemic and high cost of living. The strategy is centred on families who are encountering the severest impact of this current cost of living crisis and who are the poorest in society and rely most on public services.

The strategy is corroborated by extensive research in our most vulnerable communities. Our current investment in long term community programmes has also been developed in partnership with local people and our voluntary sector and is rooted in communities hardest hit by reforms to the welfare system and economic disadvantage. Much of our commissioned work has been developed by listening to residents and brought to life through multi-sector partnerships. We will continue to develop this asset-based approach and will listen and engage with local people as the action plan for the strategy is developed.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities: YES

Poverty presents a major setback for children, young people and families trying to alleviate the causes and consequences of poverty in everyday life. This strategy takes a holistic perspective with a focus on many of the causes of poverty. The main target areas are rooted in pockets, prospects, and places which is an important step towards building confident and resilient communities and realising a fairer and more inclusive Sefton with

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fewer children living in poverty. The focus is to work with communities and reduce the level of poverty and time spent in poverty now, minimise the harmful effects of poverty on educational achievement, health, and wellbeing now and later in life and prevent future poverty for today's children and young people.

Commission, broker and provide core services: YES

The emphasis of the strategy is to work across broad partnerships in the borough to build a collective approach where everyone is able to prosper, explore their potential and feel fulfilled. This multi-agency approach will foster a core philosophy to ensure all partners understand their own role in tackling childhood poverty. This approach will maximise all opportunities for partners to consider how commissioned and core services will tackle major issues and barriers and ensure commissioners work closely with families to develop and redesign services that meet local need.

The holistic approach will be broad across relevant commissioned and core services and include, working with families who have little or no qualifications or skills training, consideration of how to mitigate the impact of fuel poverty on families and how current core services can best support them. It will also include existing work across partnerships to increase affordable housing, work with services and agencies to design appropriate services to meet the needs of unemployed families who are in receipt of out of work benefits and ensure support is available for young people aged 16-17 who are not in education, employment, or training is relevant and appropriate

Place – leadership and influencer: YES

Systems leadership and a whole system approach has been the core philosophy driving the development of this strategy which has been coproduced in consultation and discussion with partners, elected members, service providers, public health, housing, and voluntary and community representatives, including the VCF.

The Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty Group, a multi-agency partnership has provided oversight in developing the strategy and will be instrumental in progressing an outcomes and performance framework which will underpin the action plan. The strategy will be kept under regular review as new evidence and learning emerges from the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis so we can continue to be informed of emerging issues in Sefton.

The close involvement of our communities in shaping our approach will ensure that we are meeting the differing needs in all the communities in Sefton to ensure those who experience poverty first-hand remain at the heart of what we do.

Drivers of change and reform: YES

Research and innovation are central to the strategy delivery as we recognise that the current crisis and challenge, post pandemic as well as the increasing costs of living will demand a different way of working which will require input and action from all relevant partners. Driving change means that acknowledgement and crucially, ownership by the Sefton partners will be required as we move this important agenda forward. To do this, the strategy will be launched at a multi-partner event in autumn 2022 where partners will agree a plan of action aligned to a performance framework which will be developed to measure our success against the delivery of the outcomes.

Ongoing research will ensure that change is dynamic, rooted in community need with all aligned services and support made relevant to local people.

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: YES

The strategy highlights the importance of economic prosperity and acknowledges the benefits of equipping Sefton residents with the education, skills and knowledge to maximise all opportunities to move out of poverty. Local insights tell us that access and availability barriers are both important and the strategy focuses on issues such as roles that pay the National Living Wage, offer contractual security, opportunities for development and progression, and enable flexible working for those with caring responsibilities.

Challenges have been considered in terms of Sefton's economic base being comprised of a large public sector and a private sector largely comprised of small businesses. Historically, this combination has not been able to deliver secure, adequately paid, good quality work to all employees. Our multi- agency approach will aim to tackle this issue as the strategy develops the action plan with our partners.

The strategy also considers access to available opportunities which can also be a limiting factor, for example the cost and availability of childcare and transport and limited capabilities around literacy or online access or from additional health or learning needs - these can all be barriers to maximising income from benefits as well as work.

Maximising incomes is essential to reducing childhood poverty in Sefton. Our drive to do that will be supported by a comprehensive action plan which also seeks to address the persistent inequalities faced by families living in poverty. We aim to prevent people from experiencing poverty in the first place, as well as mitigating the impacts of poverty and supporting people to lift themselves out of it.

Greater income for social investment: YES

Poverty-proofing actions have a big part to play in achieving our child poverty goals and investing in local people. The strategy endorses fully the importance of strengthening people's skills and capacities and how we can support them to participate fully in employment and socially.

Our focus includes education, quality child care, health care, training , job search assistance and support. This includes identifying and reducing or removing cost and other barriers linked to poverty that stop low-income families from benefiting from opportunities and support. By applying concepts of added social value, and Anchor Institutions to the full, our Pockets priorities lowers the risk of continuing childhood poverty today and helps to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty in years to come.

The strategy includes examples of how the Council have invested heavily in boosting Sefton's economy, with a particular focus on improving youth employment rates through our Sefton@Work programme, which has made a real impact. We have refocused InvestSefton to specifically address inequalities. It supports business and inward investment and leads on supporting economic growth in the borough. The objective is simple, to make Sefton an attractive and easy place for businesses to start, operate, grow and thrive. The team has made a significant impact to the local economy and together with the Councils Business Rates team has delivered £97.7 million of business support grants to 23,000 recipients in Sefton.

We also ensure that our families living in poverty have discretionary access to our Leisure offer, in addition to providing positive activities and support to our children and young people that address their physical health and mental wellbeing which all support social

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investment.

Cleaner Greener YES

We will ensure that the poverty emergency workstream complements and strengthens the Climate Emergency Declaration workstream. We will develop a strategy and action plan which takes a people and planet approach.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6936/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5136/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Wide consultation has been undertaken with desk top analysis reviewing the quantitative and epidemiological data and qualitative analysis via stakeholder engagement with Sefton Council officers in Education, Communities, Public Health, Children's Services and the Voluntary Community and Faith sector.

Engagement with the multi- agency partnership, Every Child Matters Forum has provided stakeholder insight as well as externally commissioned research funded by the Cheshire and Mersey Health Equity programme – Marmot (which is still underway) will provide additional insight into the strategy action plan. (Research completion expected Oct/Nov 22)

Continuous close involvement of our communities in shaping our approach will ensure that we are meeting the differing needs in all the communities of Sefton to ensure those who experience poverty remain central to what we do.

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:

The following appendices are attached to this report:
Sefton Child Poverty Strategy 2022-2030: Tackling Child Poverty in Sefton

Background Papers:

There are no background papers

1. Background/Introduction

1.1 Sefton Council declared a poverty emergency in March 2021. The Council was then presented with challenging findings of a review of child poverty in Sefton leading to the

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recommendation that Sefton develop a childhood poverty strategy. Subsequently, the 'Tackling Childhood Poverty Strategy' responds to these challenges and provides the blueprint for our approach to tackling childhood poverty in Sefton.

1.2 The strategy has been developed during a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis presenting the toughest economic times for a generation. Its objective and focus are to provide short, medium and long-term support to our most vulnerable families, as well as poverty proofing in the longer term to work in partnership to secure our children's futures.

1.3 The strategy is designed to tackle poverty and deprivation and is particularly important in the context of the current financial pressures facing households. It will form part of our bold approach to improve social, environmental, and economic sustainability, which will help protect communities for future generations.

1.4 The strategy provides a strategic framework for how we intend to tackle childhood poverty. It has three key priorities:

- Reduce the level of poverty and time spent in poverty now
- Minimise the harmful effects of poverty on educational achievement, health, and wellbeing now and later in life
- Prevent future poverty for today's children and young people

1.5 Our focus will be on delivering.

- Fewer children living in poverty.
- Fewer families with no qualifications or skills training.
- A reduction of the impact of fuel poverty on families
- An increase in affordable housing
- An increase in average household incomes
- A reduction in families who are unemployed and in receipt of out of work benefits.
- Fewer young people aged 16-17 who are not in education, employment, or training

1.6 The strategy has been co-produced through the Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty Group, (WRAP) a Sefton partnership of officers, service providers, public health, communities, and voluntary and community representatives.

1.7 Collaboration is central to the strategy as we must work together to maximise our resources and focus on activities that are likely to have a lasting impact on reducing childhood poverty across Sefton and improve the lives of our local communities.

1.8 The strategy will add value to work already being undertaken. It will be regularly reviewed to ensure continued alignment with other policies and strategies and reflect the voices and involvement of people with a lived experience of poverty.

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- 1.9 Through continued engagement and consultation, a detailed action plan and performance framework will be developed which will underpin the strategy, setting out how we intend to deliver our outcomes. A governance and performance framework including a risk register will be developed which will help to measure our success against the delivery of the outcomes and will be managed within the WRAP framework. This will be accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board
- 1.10 The strategy considers what we can do to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers so that low-income families can get early support. It outlines how we can improve physical and mental health of low-income families and considers how narrowing the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers is an essential driver of change.
- 1.11 The strategy considers how we can work together to ensure the places where we live are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well by creating more connected, accessible, and inclusive spaces, which support social cohesion, diversity, and participation.
- 1.12 The strategy is committed to strong leadership in how we, as a Council tackle poverty, and puts poverty at the heart of our role as a service provider, educator, employer, community leader and landlord. It highlights how charities; community groups and local businesses will work together to support our families and communities to be more resilient.
- 1.13 The strategy is aligned to 'Build Back Fairer'. In February 2020, 'Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 years on' was published which showed life expectancy between the least and most deprived has become steeper and those in the most deprived areas are experiencing shorter life expectancy than more affluent communities. The strategy highlights how partners will continue to work together to tackle inequalities, embed prevention and support better health outcomes for the children, families, and communities of Sefton.

2. Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To approve the Sefton Child Poverty Strategy: Tackling Child Poverty in Sefton 2022-2030 for adoption and implementation by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 2.2 To approve the continued engagement of our community, partners and community and voluntary sector organisations to develop a robust set of action plans, aligned to the objectives set out in the strategy and the performance framework which will underpin the strategy.
- 2.3 To continue to commit all available resources to underpin strategy delivery using available funds from Public Health, Communities, Education etc. with a commitment to producing an annual summary detailing key achievements and challenges faced in the preceding year.
- 2.4 To agree to a multi-agency, launch of the strategy in November 2022



Sefton Child Poverty Strategy 2022

Tackling Child Poverty in Sefton



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Foreword by Councillor Trish Hardy



Councillor Trish Hardy
Cabinet Member for
Communities and Housing

Sefton Council declared a poverty emergency in March 2021. The Council was then presented with challenging findings of a review of child poverty in Sefton leading to the recommendation that Sefton develop a childhood poverty strategy. This Sefton Child Poverty Strategy responds to these challenges and provides the blueprint for our approach to tackling childhood poverty in Sefton.

The facts reported in this strategy are sobering. We know that too many of our children continue to live on the breadline and changes to benefits and the impact of COVID are likely to increase childhood poverty. Many of the fundamental causes of poverty are out of Sefton Council's and partners' direct control, but we are committed to using our influence to affect change wherever we can.

Sefton Council are committed to strong leadership around tackling poverty. We will put tackling poverty at the heart of our role as a service provider, educator, employer, community leader and landlord.

We will ensure that the poverty emergency workstream complements and strengthens the Climate Emergency Declaration workstream. We will develop a strategy which takes a people and planet approach.

We will also take a collaborative and evidence-based approach, working more closely with partners in the voluntary sector, health, trade unions, further education facilities and community groups. We aspire to share our experience with other councils and national bodies as best practice.

Our council priorities are to increase opportunity in employment and education, support the most vulnerable members of our community and put in place the necessary strategic investment that will deliver positive change for Sefton. Tackling childhood poverty is core to achieving all our priorities and should be squarely at the centre of everything we do.

This includes honoring the pledges we have made as corporate parents to those children in our care and those who are leaving care.

Persistent poverty is not inevitable, and we should not underestimate our ability to affect change locally. We already provide services every day that stop people falling into poverty, and which mitigate the impacts of living in hardship.

The challenges, changes and approach in our strategy chime with priorities in other plans, both in the Council and in the wider health and care system and regional economy.

The strategy provides a comprehensive roadmap for the next ten years. We can all do more to reduce poverty and how it affects children today. We must also look to the longer-term to create lasting routes out of poverty for the families of tomorrow. When we work together to tackle child poverty, we all reap the rewards.

I hope that all partners across Sefton will join together to address the issue of child poverty. This will not be an easy task, but we cannot ignore the devastating impact poverty has on the lives of our children.

Cllr Trish Hardy





Executive Summary

Sefton's Tackling Poverty Strategy sets out a blueprint for our approach to tackling child poverty in Sefton.

Few of the child poverty challenges in Sefton are unique to our area, and these are the backdrop to this strategy. For example, the cumulative impact of welfare policy, the rising cost of living, and income inequality – the large gap in pay between many jobs that require higher education qualifications, compared to those that do not.

Specific issues in Sefton include, the make-up of Sefton's employment profile, some areas of persistent disadvantage and very low social mobility, greater social inequality in the impacts of the pandemic on low-income households, and the higher proportion of families with additional caring responsibilities.

Child poverty has multiple causes and consequences in the near- and long-term. Reducing child poverty and its impacts across the life-course means getting to grips with the scale and complexity of this issue in Sefton. The Government's Social Mobility Commission describes the effects of child poverty as casting a 'long shadow'. The unequal impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic are already beginning to darken and lengthen that long shadow.

Data set out in the section Poverty in Sefton, highlight the scale of child poverty in our borough, and how it links to the needs of parents and the make-up of Sefton's local economy and infrastructure. Tackling child poverty today and in years to come requires a huge joint effort to improve opportunities and remove barriers related to household income.

- Almost 1 in 6 (8178) under 16s live in relative poverty. Although most parts of the North West have higher rates of child poverty,

Sefton has seen an 17% rise over the last 5 years from 2015/16

- Sefton local authority area has the seventh lowest gross median weekly earnings in Cheshire and Merseyside at £445.40. Despite a larger than average public sector in Sefton, only 28 out of 152 local authorities in England reported lower figures in 2021
- Just over 1 in 4 primary school age pupils, 1 in 5 secondary schools age pupils, and almost half of pupils attending special educational needs schools were eligible for free school meals in Sefton during 2021/22

Sefton has already started innovative work to tackle poverty. Giving more children more positive experiences and more equitable opportunities does not always mean investing big sums of money. In Sefton, we believe everyone can help to tackle the unacceptable issue of child poverty by investing our time, attention, and creativity.

Strengths we can draw on are:

- gathering different perspectives and ideas to understand the causes of child poverty and inequality in Sefton and what we can do about them
- working closely with our communities and community assets
- working across the full breadth of our other productive partnerships
- recognising and learning from what already works, for example the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) programme

It is clear we must grasp our opportunities. We have taken an 'asset based' approach to much of our work with communities. We recognise the pride people take in their neighbourhoods, and



the resourcefulness and community support that comes from times of adversity and hardship.

Our current investment in long term community programmes has been developed in partnership with local people and our voluntary sector and is rooted in communities hardest hit by reforms to the welfare system and economic disadvantage. Much of our commissioned work has been developed by listening to residents and brought to life through multi-sector partnerships. We will continue to develop this asset-based approach and will listen and engage with local people and continually build on the positives.

The pandemic put a spotlight on poverty and how poverty influences children's education and health. At the same time Health, Care and other organisations are jointly tasked to do more to prevent health inequality and to respond to the problems caused by poverty at a local level. This strategy seizes on this new momentum and greater awareness to establish a long-term focus on reducing child poverty today and for years to come.

The following strategy considers Pockets, Prospects, Places as the core focus of our work.

Our goals

1. Reduce the level of poverty and time spent in poverty now
2. Minimise the harmful effects of poverty on educational achievement, health, and wellbeing now and later in life
3. Prevent future poverty for today's children and young people

Our priorities

POCKETS

1. Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living
2. Do what we can to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers that lower the benefit low income families get from local opportunities and support on offer

PROSPECTS

3. Acting early and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children's learning and development at home
4. Narrow the educational attainment gap between children from low income families and their better off peers.

PLACES

5. Ensure the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well.
6. Create more connected, accessible and inclusive spaces, that support social cohesion, diversity and participation





What is Poverty?

‘When a person’s resources (mainly their material resources) are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs (including social participation).’

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

‘In short, child poverty means parents can’t afford the basics of food, clothing and shelter.’

The Children’s Society

We understand that many people that others might describe as ‘living in poverty’ do not consider themselves to be living in poverty, or don’t associate with words like ‘poverty’ at all.

In our society, poverty comes from too low household income (both from work and benefits), too high living costs, and too few opportunities to get out of this double-bind.

Importantly, the experience of poverty is wider and more complex than just having little money. The insecurity that comes with poverty and the extra time and energy that goes into managing a low income help to explain why the relationship between income and, health, education and employment outcomes are often so strong and so lasting.

Some people might argue that the best things in life are free, that everyone has opportunities to go outside and exercise, to eat a healthy diet, study hard, have fun and pursue their ambitions. Not making the best of those opportunities might seem like a choice rather than a direct effect of poverty. However, poverty narrows down choices and options in many ways besides cost, and these lead to childhood inequalities.

Understanding childhood poverty

Spotting and responding to the hidden costs and barriers thrown up by poverty is central to the concept of ‘poverty-proofing’ our services, policies, engagement, and decision-making.

It is also important to acknowledge the current economic and welfare policy context in the UK, especially in the North of England, and in Sefton. Understanding why some families find getting out of poverty an unreachable goal is essential to highlight where change is needed and strengthens the case for early, preventative support.

This strategy emphasises key risks for enduring poverty that carries on from childhood into adult life - where changes from the very start of life could rebalance risks and protective factors and set more children on a path out of poverty.

Through uncovering the mechanics of poverty and inequality, the preventable loss of potential, in all areas of life is clear. Taking effective, wide-ranging action to protect children and families from the short- and long-term effects of poverty must remain a top priority, where our collective efforts can secure lasting benefits for everyone.





Measuring Child Poverty

There are three main ways of measuring and comparing child poverty using numbers:

- Children living in relative low income households where their family has claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the past year and income before housing costs is less than 60% of the middle-ranking (median) income nationally.
- This tells us how many children are impacted by lack of financial resource to provide for basic needs
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). This score combines seven components of deprivation Income: employment, education, skills and training, health and disability, crime, housing, living environment, plus percentage of 0-15s living in low income households.
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is useful for showing areas where children are more likely to experience wider poverty of experience and opportunity, beyond family income.
- Children Eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Eligibility for FSM is also based on being in receipt of a range of benefits.
- FSM eligibility is a helpful way of understanding changing patterns of childhood inequality both over time and from place to place.
- Of equal importance are methods of capturing the experience of child poverty, including the accounts of those who work with and support children, and the accounts of those with direct experience of living in a low income family



Poverty in Sefton

- Almost 1 in 6 (8178) under 16s live in relative poverty. Although most parts of the North West have higher rates of child poverty, Sefton has seen an 17% rise over the last 5 years from 2015/16
- Sefton local authority area has the seventh lowest gross median weekly earnings in Cheshire and Merseyside at £445.40. Despite a larger than average public sector in Sefton, only 28 local authorities in England reported lower figures in 2021
- Sefton has a higher rate of part time workers (38% vs 32% nationally), and a 26% larger than average gap in employment rates separating adults with long-term health conditions compared to the rest of the working age population. As longer-term economic impacts of the pandemic take shape, Sefton has seen an increase in the proportion of people identified as economically inactive, which could be linked to health issues
- In this context in 2020/21, 1 in 6 nursery and primary school age pupils, 1 in 5 secondary schools age pupils, and almost half of pupils attending special educational needs schools were receiving free school meals
- The Index of Income Deprivation Affecting Children, which covers 189 neighbourhoods in Sefton shows that 31 (16%) are ranked amongst the top 10% most deprived in England, with 5 areas falling into the top 1% most deprived
- Childhood poverty is associated with higher rates of physical and mental health problems amongst children and their parents. Inadequate household income in the face of rising living expenses limits children's access to positive, enriching experiences that aid learning and development
- Inequality, rooted in poverty accumulates across the life-course. National data comparing populations from either end of the deprivation scale show that children from the most disadvantaged areas are twice as likely to:
 - have or be teenage parents
 - be exposed to neuro-developmental risks such as smoking, substance use and obesity in pregnancy
 - die in the first 28 days after birth
 - be obese in primary school and three times more likely to have tooth decay
 - be admitted to hospital for a long-term condition like asthma before age 18
 - undertake 20 or more hours of unpaid caring responsibilities at age 16 to 24
- The impacts of poverty are pervasive. In 2020, The Education Policy Institute estimated that on average in Sefton, children who experience temporary or persistent poverty are at least 5 months behind in their learning compared to peers at age 7, 10 months behind at age 16, and 21 months behind at age 18. Compared to Sefton, around half of local authorities in England have a smaller attainment gap at age 16, and around two thirds have smaller attainment gaps at ages 7 and 18
- In Sefton, this loss of potential feeds into areas of persistent disadvantage – marked out by lower growth, lower productivity and rising demand on Health, Care and Other services
- In 2018, the Government Social Mobility Commission ranked social mobility by parliamentary constituency from 1 (most socially mobile - least impact of socio-economic disadvantage on education and employment outcomes) to 533 (least socially mobile - most impact). Sefton Central ranked





96th, Southport 95th and Bootle 502nd.

The latest Government figures published in June 2021 for 2020-21 show that in Sefton 9501 (16%) of children and young people aged 0-19 were living in relative poverty, equivalent to 5 in a class of 30.

Child poverty, Covid-19 and cost of living

- Pre-pandemic Sefton had a higher than average rate of workless families. Child poverty related to in-work low income families grew significantly because of the pandemic. The number of individuals in employment and in receipt of Universal Credit was twice as high in January 2021 compared to March 2020.
- 16-24 year olds are already encountering higher unemployment, hardship and uncertainty. Higher growth in poverty amongst primary children is likely to continue.
- Children who are experiencing continuing or new in-work poverty may be at higher risk of experiencing the biggest deterioration in health, social and financial wellbeing related to the pandemic. It is important to note that these negative effects are common, serious and ongoing.
- Temporary and permanent changes in the labour market introduce a period of instability and uncertainty for many and a need to support new skills development and re-orientation for low income households who are also more likely to be experiencing a downturn in mental health.
- The expected impact of the pandemic on child poverty is an increase in health, social and income inequality – with a larger number of children at risk from poverty and a wider gap in those outcomes, which are most strongly associated with household income and community level deprivation.
- The impact of Coronavirus on need and inequality will require long-term action to mitigate impacts across the life-course. Equity-centred whole place approaches as set out in Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Children and Young People’s Plan continue to provide the relevant framework to guide the response to changing patterns of need amongst children.
- Existing activities to prevent, mitigate and respond to income deprivation affecting children and families, which are championed through Sefton’s Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Partnership have an essential role to play. Important secondary benefits can accompany delivery of this support to families, e.g., enhancing social inclusion, demonstrating respect and boosting self-worth.
- In 2022, the Institute of Fiscal Studies cautioned that income inequality and material deprivation are set to rise rapidly in the current 2022 economic context. Lone parent families, those with four or more children, and families affected by disability are expected to experience early and serious reductions in living standards.





Our Approach: Sefton's Strengths and Challenges

Sefton's strengths

Sefton has already started innovative work to tackle poverty.

Sefton's strengths are in our commitment to tackling poverty and inequalities, our wide and productive partnerships and our community assets.

What works?

We will continue to deliver and expand programmes which are already having an impact and continue to invest in developing innovative approaches which address the causes of childhood poverty. In Sefton, we believe that everyone has a role to play in tackling this unacceptable issue.

Focus on need and causes of poverty

We are focused on addressing the persistent inequalities faced by families and are committed to working together to create conditions which enable everyone to fulfil their long-term potential. We recognise the need to support vulnerable adults and families and keep them

safe, healthy and as independent as possible and we work in partnership with our communities to enable them to cope effectively with changes, demands and crises.

Making connections

We are committed to investing in, inspiring and supporting the younger generation to get the best outcomes from their education to go on and find adequately paid, sustainable work or supporting young people through community education and beyond, developing lifelong skills and training.

Working Together

We have also taken an 'asset based' approach to much of our work with communities and we recognise that communities are very resilient



because they have had to cope with crises or hardships that others do not. Our current investment in long term community programmes has been developed in partnership with local people and our voluntary sector and is rooted in our most vulnerable communities. Much of our commissioned work has been developed by listening to residents and brought to life by maximising local, robust partnerships. We will continue to develop this asset-based approach and will listen and engage with local people and continually build on the positives.

Networking change

A recent anti childhood poverty event brought senior leaders together who recognised that tackling childhood poverty is a statutory responsibility, an agency responsibility and a wider community responsibility. Everyone in Sefton can help to support the work of this strategy, drawing upon all aspects of the population, from agencies, local businesses, and community groups to inspiring individuals. Our approach will be to build on the existing multi-agency working group who work in partnership to alleviate poverty with a range of these agencies and organisations in the borough.

Maximising incomes is essential to reducing childhood poverty in Sefton. Our drive to do that will be supported by a comprehensive action plan which also seeks to address the persistent inequalities faced by families living in poverty. We aim to prevent people from experiencing poverty in the first place, as well as mitigating the impacts of poverty and supporting people to lift themselves out of it.

In Sefton we will put tackling poverty at the heart of all we do, making sure that we narrow inequalities and that everyone in Sefton benefits. We will protect low-income families from the brunt of the cuts we face, and we will continue to challenge UK welfare reforms which risk more children being pushed into poverty.

Sefton's Challenges

Sefton faces challenges in education and attainment, employment, housing, fuel poverty, maintaining social cohesion, engagement, economic regeneration and growth.

Barriers to achieving a better income from work and benefits

Sefton's Welfare Reform Partnership group recognises that moving forward, it will be important that Sefton residents are equipped with the education, skills and knowledge to maximise all opportunities to move out of poverty and the local authority works closely with our wider partners to support the change we want to see.

Local insights tell us that access and availability barriers are both important to address. Availability refers to the existence of roles that pay the National Living Wage, offer contractual security, opportunities for development and progression, and enable flexible working for those with caring responsibilities. Sefton's economic base is comprised of a large public sector and a private sector largely comprised of small businesses. Historically, this combination has not been able to deliver secure, adequately paid, good quality work to all employees.

Access to available opportunities can also be a limiting factor, for example the cost and availability of childcare and transport and limited capabilities around literacy or online access or from additional health or learning needs -these can all be barriers to maximising income from benefits as well as work.

Life chances of Cared for Children

In June 2022, just over 600 children were



formally cared for in Sefton. The health and wellbeing disadvantages of being in the Children's Care system are well documented. It is striking that the Department for Education Post 16 education and labour market outcomes for looked after children (June 2021) found that

- Post-16 educational achievement is far lower for children and young people in care than for their peers
- Labour market outcomes are also much poorer
- For those in employment, there is a £6000 pay gap 11 years after finishing compulsory schooling (around 27 years old) between all individuals and those who had contact with the care system and this gap has widened from around £4000 8 years after GCSEs.

Housing

Housing costs are also increasing and increased costs in private sector renting mean rents are likely to be higher than for example, in the social housing sector, where conditions in many cases may be poorer. Enough provision of decent, affordable housing will be important therefore, if poverty is to be truly alleviated. Without it, any actions on other areas such as education and employment will be less effective as they will be impacted upon by high housing costs. Having the right type of accommodation in the right place is also an issue. Some parts of the borough face a shortage of family accommodation. These are some of the challenges which this strategy will face in terms of being able to truly succeed in reducing poverty including the fact that right now, Britain faces an acute cost of living crisis.

Parts of the borough also remain characterised by terraced housing, where much of the older stock brings problems around ensuring properties are of a decent standard from both an environmental and fuel poverty perspective. Sefton has areas which are more concentrated in terms of

deprivation, and some of these pockets centre around areas of social housing, particularly in the south of the borough which is perhaps unsurprising given that people in social housing tend to be on lower incomes.

It is important that any economic generation also benefits the borough's residents and builds on both social capital and cohesion and embraces the need to focus on developing local communities as an intrinsic and fundamental part of economic success. This locally driven growth idea sees social success in the form of more jobs, decent wages, and general local rising standards of living, as not just an end of the line outcome, but also an input. To achieve this, we must have a deliberate and conscious set of policies which support business growth and private gain alongside actions to strengthen the local economic infrastructure. This includes repurposing and refreshing the Sefton Economic Strategy (expected summer 2022) to take account of the impact of Covid pandemic.



Meaningful engagement and dialogue

Sefton has a long history of involving children and families in planning, but meaningful participation requires thoughtful planning and adequate resource as well as a clear understanding of what helps families get involved and what might stand in their way. Our challenge will be to ensure we do engage fully with the most vulnerable families to ensure we are confident that we are tackling



the right obstacles and pressures that remain stubbornly in their way.

There are significant challenges ahead, however we recognise in general, people in poverty are not a static group. We know that families move in and out of poverty according to their circumstances and our focus also means work on community cohesion continues to be important. We know that poverty affects children's ability to thrive. We know that children growing up in poverty do less well in school, and poorer children are more likely to have poorer mental and physical health. These children are less likely to see employment as an option and cannot be perceived as a natural progression for many people who simply do not have access to these broader opportunities. We also know that there are many challenges ahead but despite these challenges that we still face in Sefton, we are committed to tackling childhood poverty and will endeavor to ensure this unacceptable issue remains at the forefront of our future planning.

Our strategy will align to Build Back Fairer

The 2010 Marmot Review, 'Fair Society Healthy Lives', was tasked with finding the most effective evidence-based strategies for reducing health inequalities in England and highlighted six common goals as key areas of focus. In February 2020, 'Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 years on' was published. Alarming, the paper showed that since 2010 life expectancy in England has stayed the same. Life expectancy between the least and most deprived has become steeper and those in the most deprived

areas are experiencing shorter life expectancy.

All of this has been made worse by the COVID-19 Pandemic, which has further increased the growing health inequalities in England, the North-West and Sefton. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the report is vowing to 'build back fairer' by tackling the social, economic, and environmental determinants, all of which we have considered and included in our strategy to tackle childhood poverty.

Our commitment is clear to ensure our key partners continue to work together to tackle inequalities, embed prevention and support better health for the children, families and communities of Sefton. The common goals to tackle inequalities to build back fairer are identified below;

- Give every child the best start in life.
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.
- Create fair employment and good work for all.
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention.
- Tackle racism, discrimination, and their outcomes.
- Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together.

This strategy is rooted in extensive research and data which highlights the extent of the health inequalities between people of different socio-economic backgrounds.

The data illustrates health inequalities that are likely to have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and how in-depth local research and insight with Sefton stakeholders and our residents has brought to life the real issues, barriers and challenges our communities face on a daily basis in Sefton.



Pockets

Maximising financial resources of families on low incomes

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic we were seeing a rise in child poverty driven by low pay, unstable working contracts and rises in the cost of living.

In the UK, educational attainment often brings a high return in terms of salary. Pressures in the wider economy in the public, private and voluntary sectors have led to more uncertain, low earning roles. Reform of welfare policy has increased in-work and out of work poverty.

Within this economic context, having few qualifications and being on a low income (whether in or out of work) makes it very challenging for parents to access and benefit from opportunities to increase their income potential. Negative effects of poverty on health and wellbeing add in additional barriers, whilst large family size or family breakdown widen the gap between income and cost of living.

COVID-19 has disrupted employment and reduced family income. Added costs of lockdown such as heating and feeding children at home and missing out on some of the vital support such as free school meals has put further strain on people's pockets.

Recent changes to welfare are taking money out of the pockets of people in Sefton. The £20-a-week cut to Universal Credit came into effect on the 6 October 2021. The £20 increase helped provide £1,040 extra support for the most vulnerable during the pandemic.

Sefton's economy includes several sectors that can be described as low growth and lower paid. The public sector is a larger than average employer and many businesses are small-scale enterprises. Paying the Living Wage is not an ambition that every employer can easily achieve.

This makes it difficult for many parents and young adults to achieve an acceptable standard of living through work alone. And this is especially so for those with few qualifications, additional health needs or disability.

In addition, higher than average rates of part-time working, caring responsibilities and national welfare policy mean that in-work poverty is usual in Sefton. Lone parents are at higher risk of poverty, but the pandemic has significantly increased the number of two parent households seeking benefits support.

"...The problem of child food poverty in the UK today is not down to a lack of food. It is instead that too many families do not have enough income to afford to put food on the table"

Emma Revie CEO, The Trussell Trust

"Central to any strategy for tackling poverty is to maximise incomes, this is true to families both in and out of work"

Poverty Alliance

Our Priorities

Pockets priorities are about raising household income and enabling limited family finances to do more for children and families.

Actions in this area are aimed at putting more money in people's pockets and reducing the impact of living costs as a driver of inequality.

This means creating better opportunities for parents and carers to participate in rewarding work that brings families closer to an acceptable and sustainable standard of living.

Poverty-proofing actions have a big part to play in achieving our child poverty goals. This means Identifying and reducing or removing cost and other barriers linked to poverty that stop low-income families from benefiting from opportunities and support. And applying concepts of added social value, and Anchor Institutions to the full

Working on Pockets priorities lowers risk of continuing childhood poverty today and helps to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty in years to come.

Priority 1

Increase the number of households who can access employment and training opportunities that provides acceptable standard of living.

Priority 2

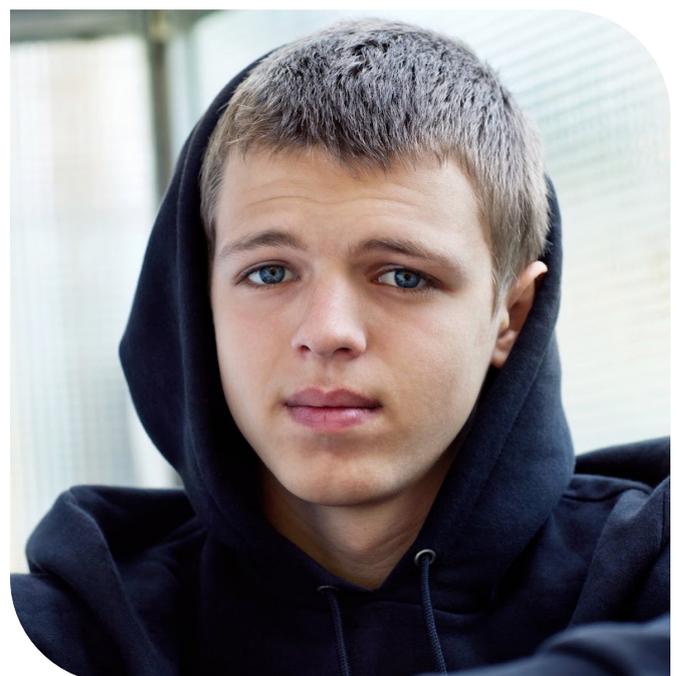
Doing what we can to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers that lower the benefit low-income families get from local opportunities and support on offer

What is already working well?

We've already invested heavily in boosting Sefton's economy, with a particular focus on improving youth employment rates through our Sefton@Work programme, which has made a real impact.

We have refocused InvestSefton to specifically address inequalities. It supports business and inward investment and leads on supporting economic growth in the borough. The objective is simple, to make Sefton an attractive and easy place for businesses to start, operate, grow and thrive. The team has made a significant impact to the local economy and together with the Councils Business Rates team has delivered £97.7 million of business support grants to 23,000 recipients in Sefton.

We also ensure that our families living in poverty have discretionary access to our Leisure offer, in addition to providing positive activities and support to our children and young people that address their physical health and mental wellbeing.





Case Study

Sefton has developed an Affordable Warmth Service (AWS). This involves employing two case workers and a co-ordinator, who help vulnerable residents navigate the changing and limited funding landscapes. Helping to reduce fuel poverty through behavioural change, energy efficiency improvements, increasing income and reducing debt.

The AWS have installed over 402 heating systems (replacement boilers or new central heating systems), a further 128 repairs, insulation and white goods upgrades.

The team have increased the income families through extra benefits, £70,000, £6.300 for Warm Homes Discount applications and £4.500 for better fuel deals.

The team have also dealt with 75 fuel debt cases and 22 water debt clients. The team has successfully cleared £33,000 of fuel debt and £22,000 of water debt.

Case Study

Practical support is being provided for our Looked after children and care leavers, including

- Free Prescriptions available to Sefton Care Experienced young people
- Council Tax Exemption for all Sefton Care Experienced young people to age 25yrs. The Council will provide up to 100% discount of the Council Tax to Sefton care experienced young people aged 18 or over and up to the date of their 25th birthday, who live in Sefton and who were, previously, looked after by the local authority. The Discount will be applied after any other discounts such as Sole Occupier Discount and Council Tax Reduction. If the young person is living outside of Sefton their council tax liability will be paid on a quarterly basis until their 25th birthday.



Priority 1

Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living

- Promote Sefton 'Caring Business Charter' this will help care experienced and other vulnerable young people prepare for access the world of work.
- Strengthen social value added and corporate social responsibility in policies linked to investment and commissioning decisions
- Encourage Sefton partners to sign-up to become an accredited social value award partner: <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/>
- accredited-living-wage-employers
- Link our work with the Carer's strategy to address barriers to employment for those with caring responsibilities
- Sefton partners taking a prominent role in the development of the Cheshire & Merseyside Anchor Institute Charter, which has a strong focus on creating sustainable employment opportunities for local people
- Co-produce guidance for employers with people who experience hidden income-related barriers to poverty
- Establish closer inter-agency working to prevent benefits sanctions

Caring Business charter, Named business will:

Offer at least one targeted opportunity per year for a care experienced or other vulnerable young person in Sefton. This could comprise:

- Apprenticeship
- Part-time or full-time employment
- Structured work experience
- Mentorship and Coaching
- Guarantee interviews for care experienced people, providing the candidate meets the minimum criteria for the vacancy in question.

Sefton Council will:

- Help develop the above opportunities to align to the needs of the employer and its sector.
- Connect the business with suitable candidates.
- Support the ongoing development of the relationship between the employer and the young person.
- Ensure recognition of the contribution the Caring Business is making to its community.



Priority 2

Doing what we can to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers that lower the benefit low-income families get from local opportunities and support on offer including encouraging employers to pay the real living wage.

- Action to protect adequate access to affordable childcare – continue to promote access to/knowledge of funded places
- Research and pilot community wealth redistribution initiatives
- Develop/adopt simple framework to poverty proof design and delivery of services and support
- Address barriers to uptake of free school meal offer and Healthy Start Vouchers
- Providing reduced cost or discretionary access to positive leisure activities and programmes that benefit the physical and mental wellbeing of families living in poverty
- Promote those services already providing access to free resources and activities key to improving life chances such as libraries and arts venues.

Working together

Connecting to other plans, strategies, sources of evidence and inspiration is important will help us deliver our Child Poverty Strategy priorities as successfully as possible. In the Pockets element, key links are to:

- Sefton Council Economic Strategy and Action Plan
- Liverpool City Region Plan for Prosperity
- Build Back Fairer from Covid-19 in Cheshire and Merseyside (Marmot Foundation Plan with Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System and Sefton Integrated Care Partnership)
- Cheshire & Merseyside Social Value Award
- Cheshire & Merseyside Anchor Institute Charter.





Prospects

Improving the life chances of children in poverty

Children from poorer families in Sefton are getting an unfair start in life. The attainment gap in schools means poorer children often do less well at school than their more affluent peers. This 'gap' widens as children go through school, with fewer poorer children heading off to 'positive destinations' and ultimately, to better paid work

Even brief episodes of financial hardship are known to impact children's learning, health, and wellbeing at the time and into the future. This is especially relevant given the recent and ongoing impact of the pandemic on family and working life.

Research suggests that even when young people from affluent and disadvantaged backgrounds in Sefton achieve the same qualifications, they do not achieve the same income as adults. This gap is larger in Sefton than most other local authorities.

About 70% of the difference in adult incomes is explained by differences in educational attainment. The other 30% is attributed to other advantages, usually associated with greater affluence, which can give children and young people from higher income backgrounds an additional edge when it comes to acting on education and employment opportunities. For example, family financial support to relocate for work or study, more influence from parents' social and working networks, more developed social skills.

We know there are specific advantages that come with socio-economic advantage in Sefton. The home learning environment in childhood, for example has a big influence on future adult earnings. Therefore, risk factors such as lower parental qualifications and having a parent with long-term health needs are predictors of

continuing poverty in adulthood.

The home learning environment covers material resources like having a laptop, having private space to study and sleep, as well as experiential resources like opportunities to travel and try new activities which benefit development and learning, as well as the support parents can offer to assist learning at home. Therefore, current childhood poverty is a risk factor for future poverty.

The impact of poverty on the home learning environment negatively influences both educational attainment and children's social capital and social skills. These are strong predictors of adult income in the current economic context in the UK, and especially in the North of England.

Poverty affects school attendance for a variety of reasons. Some children are unable to attend school as their parents cannot afford fuel and travel costs, or they are more likely to be absent with sickness as their families cannot afford heating, hot water, and a healthy diet. For some children, not having the right uniform and missing breakfast, things that we take for granted, were barriers to children setting foot in a school. This may lead to another issue, bullying, which is a huge concern when children are unable to dress like their peers, and have poorer quality clothing, shoes, and school bag

"Poverty destroys life chances. You cannot level up the country with millions of children in poverty so it's vital the Government brings forward a credible plan to reduce poverty."

Imran Hussain, Director of Policy, Action for Children



“It is time to see child poverty as one of the four major political, economic and social challenges facing us, along with decarbonising our economy, providing health and social care to an aging population, and preparing the labour market for automation. We need to treat it with the same seriousness, and even greater urgency.”

Anne Longfield OBE Children’s Commissioner for England

Our priorities

Prospects priorities are about tackling the causes of the education gap and income gap and providing better routes out of poverty for parents and children.

Acting early, and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children’s learning and development at home

Enabling children to broaden their horizons throughout childhood, with experiences that nurture positive expectations of themselves and their futures

Poverty-proofing the way that education, training, and employment opportunities are resourced, designed, and delivered – striving for equity

Priority 3

Acting early and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children’s learning and development at home

Priority 4

Narrow the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers

What is already working well?

There has already been significant investment in supporting children’s early years in Sefton, most notably through our Integrated Early Help Strategy for Children, Young People and Families.

The Early Help Assessment and planning tool facilitates coordinated multi-agency support. It enables professionals to efficiently identify the emerging needs of children and young people at risk of poor outcomes.

We have successfully secured three Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to work in our schools. The MHSTs work in Sefton schools as part of the system-wide local transformation plan for children and young people’s mental health.

We have also commissioned mentors in schools to provide positive activities to improve the health, wellbeing, school attendance and engagement of children and young people through our 121 Programme.

We have also launched the Sefton Young Persons Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit to support schools and colleges to improve their mental health offer. It provides information about local and national services. And our young people can access online support via Kooth mental wellbeing service.



Case Study

Libraries have a key role in improving literacy for children living in poverty. They provide free access to reading material and run activities to encourage reading for pleasure. Story and Rhyme time sessions in every library are free sessions for parents and young children to begin a love of stories and this is encouraged throughout their formative years through storyteller sessions, the summer reading challenge, children's creative writing workshops and graphic novel groups. Libraries loan their books for free so it's an activity inclusive of children living in poverty. The path to improving literacy begins when a new child is born and the library service organizes a Bookstart pack for each new child born in Sefton where the baby is gifted their first book for free at 7-month-old.

Literacy is a key skill in relation to children's educational attainment and personal development. Good that the wider benefits of literacy engagement are recognised. Libraries story & rhymetimes for example, contribute to achieving language development, parental attachment and supporting new parents from social exclusion.

We plan to develop a Start Well early years system with a range of services including the NHS, Local Authority, Schools, private early years settings and wider stakeholders. This will strengthen the offer of services offered to children as they grow and thrive.

We are about to pilot a young person's version of the Living Well Sefton Service. This will empower our young people to make healthy choices whether that relates to food, physical activity, or healthy relationships.

Introduction of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) framework and training means key partners and stakeholders have bought in to the value of trauma-informed practice. The person-centred whole-family approach aligns with the principles in this strategy.

Novel initiatives like Kingsley & Co bookshop reflect many aspects of our approach to child poverty. Kingsley & Co creates an inclusive, universally appealing environment where children and families can participate in fun activities, with support available to maximise learning and development in reading and communications. This type of experience also boosts social skills and parents' self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Initiatives like Parenting 2000 are delivered in a poverty-proofed way, minimising barriers to access and engagement, and offering parents support across a range of poverty and mental health-related issues alongside a focus on parenting.

Partners also recognise the effective cross-sector partnership work focusing on vulnerable children and families, which has been tested and strengthened through the pandemic. Network and information assets can enable effective advocacy for change and funding.



Case Study

Kingsley and Co are a literacy project with the vision to engage as many children as possible with stories, reading and adventure. As well as a bookshop/café in Bootle Strand, they work in schools and run workshops as well as many other events which you can check out on their website <https://www.kingsleyandco.org/about>

Ykids have been working in the community of Bootle for over 17 years running both large scale community events and weekly kids clubs for children ages 4-18. Ykids aims to invest in children and young people, who then gain confidence and self-belief to make the change they want to see in their community.

Our Priorities

Priority 3

Acting early and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children's learning and development at home.

- Conduct a poverty-proof audit to ensure the design and delivery of services and support minimises hidden barriers to participation and maximises benefits
- Create more equitable opportunities for pre-school socialisation for parents and infants to enhance language development, social skills, and social support, e.g., toy libraries – and pre-school socialisation as supported in local libraries
- Promote universal positive parenting, attachment and bonding messages, underlining shared experiences of parenting
- Assess support needs linked to home learning environment as early as possible through more integrated working between employment, housing, welfare, early years, and health services
- Support inclusion by addressing education attainment gap where children have a lower literacy age than their chronological years, particularly in alternative provision

- Support educational attendance and access to the full school offer, for example greater utilisation of Education Welfare Officer or develop a Family Mentor offer

Priority 4

Narrow the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers.

- Work with educators and employers to enhance learning and development using a whole family approach. This should include enabling children and parents to learn about different employment and education routes that are open to them as early as possible and consistently across their time in school
- Ensure all children and families get to share in positive experiences that broaden children's horizons, enrich learning, and positively influence expectations of the future
- Give more attention to supporting children, families and carers to gain confidence in literacy and communication skills and adopt communication policies that lessen the impact of lower literacy skills or additional communication needs.

- Promote digital inclusion so that children and families have access to the IT equipment that can support home learning.
- Adopt a social mobility accreditation framework e.g., the Social Mobility Index from the Social Mobility Foundation <https://www.socialmobility.org.uk/index/>
- Sefton Council’s Children and Young People’s Plan and Education Excellence Strategy
- Early Help Strategy
- Emotional Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Child of the North Report: Building a fairer future after Covid-19
- Build Back Fairer the Covid-19 Marmot Review
- Reports of the Social Mobility Commission, including State of the nation 2021: Social mobility and the pandemic.

Working together

Connecting to other plans, strategies, sources of evidence and inspiration is important will help us deliver our Child Poverty Strategy priorities with greater success. In the Prospects element, key links are to:





Places

Creating connected, inclusive, distinctive environments where everyone can enjoy the good things in life

Places priorities are about ensuring the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well. And doing all we can to limit the impact of poverty on participation.

Some children in Sefton grow up experiencing persistent disadvantage. In these neighbourhoods' low household income and other aspects of deprivation affect all or most areas of life. Poverty often continues for lengthy periods of childhood.

The Social Mobility Commission research has characterised these areas as having very low social mobility, meaning that children are very likely to remain in relative low-income households when they leave home, just as their parents are more likely to have experienced poverty when they grew up.

This situation will tend to maintain the pattern of lower productivity, lower growth sectors that are a significant aspect of Sefton's current employment profile. Young people may be more likely to move away for work and education. Businesses may be more likely to invest in enterprises that can operate on low pay, insecure contracts using low-cost premises.

In other parts of Sefton there are smaller pockets of income deprivation effecting children. Evidence shows that children from low-income families who grow up in predominantly more affluent areas experience relatively worse outcomes, perhaps because their needs are more hidden or overlooked.

Research on the link between childhood income and surroundings and inequalities in health and

life chances continues to emerge. It highlights a broad range of issues – some are obvious, and some are more easily overlooked. For example, living in poor quality housing can affect both physical and mental health and learning through more exposure to air and noise pollution, lack of privacy, cold and discomfort, reduced access to garden space, more limited equipment for cooking, play, and online access.

Living in a neighbourhood with higher levels of deprivation and childhood poverty is often means living with more air pollution, greater dependence on public transport, and more difficulty accessing services and good quality natural environments. The range and cost of retail options is often tailored to lower cost options, which are not always sold at lower prices.

The physical and social environment in which children grow up probably influences future expectations of where life will take them. To say that we need to raise children's aspirations overlooks the experiences that shape children's view of the world, themselves and their place in it.

Our priorities

Place, space, or environmentally focused actions are about offering children and families from low-income backgrounds more day to day experiences that promote health, development, and learning.

Equitable changes can apply to home environments, streetscape and neighbourhoods, school and civic environments, and public spaces. Work under the Places priority is not about undermining the connection and affection many

people feel for the place they grow up. Prioritising connectivity, shared spaces, buildings, and streets built with a child’s eye view on inclusivity and accessibility, does not mean sacrificing distinctiveness, sense of place or belonging.

Research suggests that places that enable more mixing between different parts of the community may promote social mobility by offering children a greater breadth of experience and possibility. Social bridging and bonding can be supporting through various policies e.g., housing and planning, education, transport, and digital inclusion, as well as grass-roots wealth redistribution schemes and poverty-proofing design and delivery including focusing on prevention through diversionary activities to prevent children entering the criminal justice system, where they can learn together with pro social peers



Sefton also has a strong Supported Internship Programme, providing support and opportunities for young people with Special Educational Needs to access employment.

On the place-making side of the Places priority, Sefton Council has already developed strategies on economic development, recovery and regeneration that reflect Marmot principles and recognise the major influence of social and environmental factors on health, wealth, and opportunity.

The Council Housing Programme is an increasingly positive area of work, which is benefiting low-income families through selective licensing for private landlords, prioritisation of affordable housing need, active involvement of social housing providers in many health improvement initiatives, and the well-established work of the affordable warmth team.

Through its partnership working, especially with voluntary community and faith sector, Sefton has a strong asset in its networks and information resources, which make it easier to link people to support on offer in each part of the borough.

Priority 5

- Ensure the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well.

Priority 6

- Create more connected, accessible, and inclusive spaces, that support social cohesion, diversity, and participation

What is already working well?

Sefton is in a strong position to develop the Place Priorities in this strategy. On the employment and labour-market side Sefton has strong track record of establishing school leavers in employment, education, and training. And has an equally strong offer for continuing adult learning and skills development, supported by links with the private sector, public, and voluntary sectors including health and social care services.



Priority 5

Ensure the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well.

- Incorporate evidence planning tools and frameworks into policy and process to support meaningful community engagement and pro-health and pro-equity schemes.
- Continue action to increase active travel amongst car-owners
- Create healthy living spaces by e.g. greening public realm, active travel infrastructure, reducing emissions, reducing out-sourcing in favour of supporting home-grown employers.
- Ensure stronger connectivity between housing, health, and other providers as part of the governance arrangements for the Sefton Partnership

Priority 6

Create more connected, accessible, and inclusive spaces, that support social cohesion, diversity, and participation

- Lobby strategic transport authority to ensure poverty is not a barrier to accessing and freely using the public transport network
- Use active travel networks to connect into areas of higher deprivation and offer children and adults safe routes between different areas of the borough, including community and natural assets
- Explore options to create equal opportunities for low income families to participate socially on an equal footing, for example using social investment or community enterprise models to develop business initiatives that offer skills development, reduce isolation and allow everyone to participate in fun experiences like eating out

- Continue to make best use of culture, arts, leisure and community development initiatives to challenge the way we see different places and neighbourhoods and to bring people together through exciting new experiences
- Utilise our community assets (public, voluntary and private) and their potential to act as community hubs, allowing opportunity for community connection and social inclusion.
- Work with external funders including private sector to bridge the digital divide children from low income homes often experience at home and school
- Provide high quality housing in locations close to local amenities, including family housing close to town centres.

Working together

Connecting to other plans, strategies, sources of evidence and inspiration is important will help us deliver our Child Poverty Strategy priorities with greater success. In the Places element, key links are to:

- Sefton Local Plan
- Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan
- Sefton Council Climate Strategy
- Sefton Digital Strategy
- Sefton Growth Strategy
- Sefton Council Bootle Area Action Plan and other planning and regeneration strategy
- Sefton Partnership Integrated Commissioning Plan
- Cheshire & Merseyside ICS Green Plan



Our principles

Sefton's Welfare Reform and Anti-poverty Groups recognise that change needs to happen both at a national and a local level if childhood poverty is to be addressed. We intend to take forward a strategy that will improve the lives of children and families who are experiencing poverty and deprivation for whatever reasons. We recognise that this can only be done by working together and involving all stakeholders in the process. In seeking to achieve this we will be governed by a number of principles in terms of how tackling childhood poverty in Sefton will be delivered.

Involving People

It's clear that services designed without people who have direct experience of poverty often fail to meet their needs. We will continue the engagement approach throughout the life of the strategy and action plan working with third sector organisations as facilitators for conversations with the community.

Communication, Respect and Removing Stigma

Treating everyone with dignity and valuing every contribution will be central to all we do. We all have a responsibility to challenge the stigma associated with poverty, but we will also challenge how we address stigma within our own organisations. Listening to and involving our residents, understanding their experiences and using their advice will be central to development of our strategy, our action plan and our delivery.

Resilience

Our focus will be on helping individuals and households to manage the challenges described above. Building resilience in people and communities and ensuring families can navigate and easily access support to move them on from

poverty will be a core factor in our action plan.

Person Focused

We recognise that tailoring services and support to the different types and places of poverty and the different needs and characteristics of all our communities and identities is essential and we acknowledge that one solution does not suit all. Innovation, service design, delivery and support will be rooted in relevant and local need.

Removing Barriers

It is important that we remove barriers to accessing our services so that families can get the support they need at the time they need it, as well as removing barriers that prevent some people from taking part in life, socially and economically. Individuals have told us that even some of our free and universally available services have barriers that we weren't aware of. We will be introducing poverty into our impact assessment process to make sure the services we design, and deliver are accessible, appropriate and ready to meet the needs of families living in our borough.

Using evidence

Our decisions will be evidence based and we want to make sure that our strategy and action plan will contain activities and interventions which are proven and robust. We will ensure that our performance is outcome focused and that we are able to monitor and evaluate our action plan whilst making the details of performance and evaluations widely available.



Sustainable

We intend to plan our actions for the long term, in an ongoing discussion with our residents so that we can design and build services, infrastructure and organisations that are affordable and accessible whilst avoiding short term pilots with short term offers without appropriate exit strategies and long-term solutions.

Partnerships

We recognise that tackling childhood poverty is everybody's business so we will ensure there is shared and joint understanding of the issues around poverty in our region which can only be resolved by working together, collectively, productively and in strong partnership.

Use of resources

We are operating in a time of shrinking budgets and increasing demand. It is important; therefore, we make the most of our pooled and combined resources to maximise impact. We will work closely with our partners to better understand our collective spend on tackling childhood poverty across all our service areas and look at every opportunity for joint resourcing to maximise outcomes.

These guiding principles will underpin everything we do to address childhood poverty and in doing so, work in partnership and collectively to mitigate the challenges that we recognise and hope to overcome.



Summary and next steps

Tackling poverty is a long-term aspiration and will not be achieved overnight. An important next step is to take an honest look at how our poverty reduction goals stack up against how services and other types of support are resourced, designed and delivered at the moment.

To give this strategy its best chance of success we also need to consider what else needs to be in place to take our goals and priorities from words on a page to change in the real world.

Our Plan for Change sets out the types of actions we can take to drive change in each of our priority areas and get us closer to our overall goals. It will also incorporate elements of our approach to poverty reduction and set out the underpinning support that will help positive change take root.

We still have a lot to learn. The causes and consequences of childhood poverty are complex and inter-linked. There will be foreseeable and unexpected challenges and opportunities. In this context, we will take a pragmatic approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the strategy. For example,

- Monitoring progress towards delivery of key milestones
- Selecting measurable changes to tell us whether expected improvements in equity of access and outcomes are on track
- Finding out about the experiences of local communities and services





Sefton’s plan for ending child poverty

Pockets	Prospects	Places
Immediately	Immediately	Immediately
We will maximise the financial resources for families on low income	We will focus on the needs of parents and carers to create the best possible support for children’s learning and development at home	We will support social cohesion, diversity and participation in shaping our borough
For all time	For all time	For all time
We will create better opportunities for parents and carers to participate in rewarding work	We will create more equitable opportunities for pre-school socialisation for parents and infants to enhance language development	As employers we will add social value and environmental benefits wherever we can
We will develop and adopt a framework to poverty proof the design and delivery of services and support given to families	Employers and educators will work together to enhance learning and development using a whole family approach	Provide high quality housing in locations close to local amenities, including family housing close to town centres.



Pockets	Prospects	Places
<p>Priority 1</p> <p>Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthen social value added and corporate social responsibility in policies linked to investment and commissioning decisions ■ Encourage Sefton partners to sign-up to become an accredited social value award partner: https://www.livingwage.org.uk/accredited-living-wage-employers ■ Link our work with the Carer’s strategy to address barriers to employment for those with caring responsibilities ■ Sefton partners taking a prominent role in the development of the Cheshire & Merseyside Anchor Institute Charter, which has a strong focus on creating sustainable employment opportunities for local people ■ Co-produce guidance for employers with people who experience hidden income-related barriers to poverty ■ Establish closer inter-agency working to prevent ■ Establish closer inter-agency working to prevent benefits sanctions 	<p>Priority 2</p> <p>Doing what we can to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers that lower the benefit low-income families get from local opportunities and support on offer including encouraging employers to pay the real living wage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Action to protect adequate access to affordable childcare – continue to promote access to/ knowledge of funded places ■ Research and pilot community wealth re-distribution initiatives ■ Develop/adopt simple framework to poverty proof design and delivery of services and support (see model of child poverty) ■ Address barriers to uptake of free school meal offer and Healthy Start Vouchers ■ Providing reduced cost or discretionary access to positive leisure activities and programmes that benefit the physical and mental wellbeing of families living in poverty ■ Promote those services already providing access to free resources and activities key to improving life chances such as libraries and arts venues. 	<p>Priority 3</p> <p>Acting early and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children’s learning and development at home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct a poverty-proof audit to ensure the design and delivery of services and support minimises hidden barriers to participation and maximises benefits ■ Create more equitable opportunities for pre-school socialisation for parents and infants to enhance language development, social skills, and social support, e.g., toy libraries – and pre-school socialisation as supported in local libraries ■ Promote universal positive parenting, attachment and bonding messages, underlining shared experiences of parenting ■ Assess support needs linked to home learning environment as early as possible through more integrated working between employment, housing, welfare, early years, and health services





Pockets	Prospects	Places
<p>Priority 4</p> <p>Narrow the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with educators and employers to enhance learning and development using a whole family approach. This should include enabling children and parents to learn about different employment and education routes that are open to them as early as possible and consistently across their time in school ■ Ensure all children and families get to share in positive experiences that broaden children’s horizons, enrich learning, and positively influence expectations of the future ■ Give more attention to supporting children, families and carers to gain confidence in literacy and communication skills and adopt communication policies that lessen the impact of lower literacy skills or additional communication needs. ■ Promote digital inclusion so that children and families have access to the IT equipment that can support home learning. ■ Adopt a social mobility accreditation framework e.g., the Social Mobility Index from the Social Mobility Foundation https://www.socialmobility.org.uk/index/ 	<p>Priority 5</p> <p>Ensure the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incorporate evidence planning tools and frameworks into policy and process to support meaningful community engagement and pro-health and pro-equity schemes. ■ Continue action to increase active travel amongst car-owners ■ Create healthy living spaces by e.g. greening public realm, active travel infrastructure, reducing emissions, reducing out-sourcing in favour of supporting home-grown employers. ■ Ensure stronger connectivity between housing, health, and other providers as part of the governance arrangements for the Sefton Partnership 	<p>Priority 6</p> <p>Create more connected, accessible, and inclusive spaces, that support social cohesion, diversity, and participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lobby strategic transport authority to ensure poverty is not a barrier to accessing and freely using the public transport network ■ Use active travel networks to connect into areas of higher deprivation and offer children and adults safe routes between different areas of the borough, including community and natural assets ■ Explore options to create equal opportunities for low income families to participate socially on an equal footing, for example using social investment or community enterprise models to develop business initiatives that offer skills development, reduce isolation and allow everyone to participate in fun experiences like eating out ■ Continue to make best use of culture, arts, leisure and community development initiatives to challenge the way we see different places and neighbourhoods and to bring people together through exciting new experiences ■ Utilise our community assets (public, voluntary and private) and their potential to act as community hubs, allowing opportunity for community connection and social inclusion. ■ Work with external funders including private sector to bridge the digital divide children from low income homes often experience at home and school ■ Provide high quality housing in locations close to local amenities, including family housing close to town centres.





Equality Analysis Report – Sefton Child Poverty Strategy

Contact Officer: Margaret Jones

Completed by: Anna Nygaard

Date completed: September 2022

Details of proposal:

The EIA for the new Sefton Child Poverty Strategy is being kept open and will be continually revised to reflect any changes to the development, implementation and review of impact of the strategy.

This EIA has six functions:

1. Identify changes that will impact on those impacted by the objectives of the strategy.
2. Identify potential negative impacts that may or have the potential to be discriminatory
3. Identify potential mitigations
4. Inform design, planning and implementation process on any necessary considerations
5. Highlight any actions that may need to be considered in facilitating change linked to protected characteristics
6. Provide feedback and insight to support ongoing development of the strategy

Sefton Council declared a poverty emergency in March 2021. The Council was then presented with challenging findings of a review of child poverty in Sefton leading to the recommendation that Sefton develop a childhood poverty strategy. Subsequently, the 'Tackling Childhood Poverty Strategy' responds to these challenges and provides the blueprint for our approach to tackling childhood poverty in Sefton.

The strategy has been developed during a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis presenting the toughest economic times for a generation. Its objective and focus are to provide short, medium and long-term support to our most vulnerable families, as well as poverty proofing in the longer term to work in partnership to secure our children's futures.

The strategy is designed to tackle poverty and deprivation and is particularly important in the context of the current financial pressures facing households. It will form part of our bold approach to improve social, environmental, and economic sustainability, which will help protect communities for future generations.

Ramifications of Proposal:

The strategy supports all children in Sefton but focuses on those experiencing poverty

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now or who are at risk of experiencing poverty in the future.

Living in poverty has negative impacts in other aspects of people's lives and is not just about money – it impacts educational attainment, access to good paying work, increases the risk of developing poor health conditions and reduces life expectancy. It also means that many people are not able to take part in the normal life of a place as experienced by other residents.

The double shock from the pandemic and high cost of living creates the severest impact amongst the poorest in society and will increase the number of families who rely most on public services. This poses a major setback children, young people and families trying to alleviate the causes and consequences of poverty in everyday life.

Approval of this strategy and its focus on pockets, prospects, and places is an important step towards realising a fairer and more inclusive Sefton, where everyone is able to prosper, explore their potential and feel fulfilled.

The strategy will focus on delivering the following outcomes.

- Fewer children living in poverty.
- Fewer families with no qualifications or skills training
- A reduction of the impact of fuel poverty on families
- An increase in affordable housing
- An increase in average household incomes
- A reduction in families who are unemployed and in receipt of out of work benefits.
- Fewer young people aged 16-17 who are not in education, employment, or training

Are there any protected characteristics that will be disproportionately affected in comparison to others?

See Appendix 1 below.

The strategy provides a framework to prevent people from falling into poverty as well as supporting those who are already struggling. The strategy will have an overall positive effect across all equality strands. Delivery of the ambitions of the strategy will make a significant difference to the health and wellbeing of our local communities and tackle health inequalities. Equality and diversity considerations are an integral part of our approach to addressing poverty in Sefton.

The strategy focuses on ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our communities receive the support they need, those most at risk and in need of accessing our services.

There is evidence that age, race, disability, pregnancy, and being a lone parent can all factor in poverty. Discrimination based on faith or sexual orientation can also lead to circumstances that risk poverty.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- *Age*
- *Disability*

- *Gender Reassignment*
- *Marriage and Civil Partnership*
- *Race*
- *Religion or Belief*
- *Sex*
- *Sexual Orientation*
- *Pregnancy and Maternity*

Consultation:

Wide consultation has been undertaken with desk top analysis reviewing the quantitative and epidemiological data and qualitative analysis via stakeholder engagement with Sefton Council officers in Education, Communities, Public Health, Children's Services and the Voluntary Community and Faith sector.

Engagement with the multi- agency partnership, Every Child Matters Forum has provided stakeholder insight as well as externally commissioned research funded by the Health Equity programme – Marmot (which is still underway) and will provide additional insight into the strategy action plan. (Research completion expected Oct/Nov 22)

In addition to the data, continuous engagement will remain central to our approach by listening and learning from the lived experiences of people in poverty that we engage with through those with first-hand knowledge. To inform the development of the strategy we have sought evidence from local voluntary and community organisations, along with key front-line services who are directly supporting Sefton's most vulnerable people.

The strategy has been coproduced in consultation and discussion with partners, elected members, service providers, public health, housing and voluntary and community representatives, including the VCF. The Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty Group, a multi-agency partnership has provided oversight in developing the strategy and will be instrumental in progressing an outcomes and performance framework which will underpin the action plan. The strategy will be kept under regular review as new evidence and learning emerges from the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis so we can continue to be informed of emerging issues.

The close involvement of our communities in shaping our approach will ensure that we are meeting the differing needs in all the communities in Sefton to ensure those who experience poverty first-hand remain at the heart of what we do.

Is there evidence that the Public Sector Equality Duties will be met?

The Equality Act 2010 requires that those subject to the Equality Duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. *Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
2. *Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*
3. *Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and*

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those who do not.

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- *Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.*
- *Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.*
- *Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.*

Poverty has wide ranging impacts. Being in poverty can mean that basic material resources are lacking and can lead to people living in poor quality and insecure housing. It can also lead to missed opportunities exclusion and even stigma and discrimination. If people are prevented from accessing resources and experiences, it limits their ability to participate and feel valued and included in society. The places where people live and the circumstances into which they are born have a fundamental effect on life chances. People may be living in poverty if they lack the financial resources to meet their needs, whereas people can be regarded as deprived if they lack any kind of resources, not just income. The strategy provides a strategic framework for how we intend to tackle childhood poverty. It has three key priorities:

- Reduce the level of poverty and time spent in poverty now
- Minimise the harmful effects of poverty on educational achievement, health, and wellbeing now and later in life
- Prevent future poverty for today's children and young people

What actions will follow if proposal accepted by Cabinet & Council?

Include details of any mitigating action and ongoing monitoring to address any of the equality impacts highlighted above

- The strategy will be launched at a multi-partner event in autumn 2022
- Partners will agree a plan of action
- A performance framework will be developed which will help to measure our success against the delivery of the outcomes.
- The partnership will receive the results of the qualitative research with families at the end of 2022
- The EIA will be reviewed in response to significant developments in poverty experienced in Sefton, e.g., Fuel cost rises.
- Maintain a responsive and dynamic communication approach to stakeholders to ensure messaging and communication is appropriate, sensitive and timely.

Appendix 1

Protected Characteristics and the Identification of Potential Issues/Barriers					
Protected Characteristic	Tick which applies		Tick which applies		Reasons for the positive impact or potential negative impact, *although PH will identify negative impacts, it may not be realistic to negate these due to a lack of resources.
	Positive Impact		Potential Negative Impact		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Age	x			x	<p>The objectives of the strategy are likely to have a positive impact for those most at risk of poverty, that is children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although most parts of the North West have higher rates of child poverty, Sefton has seen an 17% rise over the last 5 years from 2015/16 • Almost 1 in 6 (8202) under 16s live in relative poverty • The Index of Income Deprivation Affecting Children, which covers 189 neighbourhoods in Sefton shows that 31 (16%) are ranked amongst the top 10% most deprived in England, with 5 areas falling into the top 1% most deprived <p>The Consultation underpinning the strategy is broad and involves families and young people living in areas of highest deprivation</p> <p>The wider consultation has involved stakeholders and service providers in education across schools and community partners</p> <p>Public Health (PH) have the support of Sefton Young Advisors to consult with YP in informal youth settings, which enables the consultation delivery to involve a wider-YP audience.</p> <p>The Every Child Matters Forum has supported the consultation providing an opportunity for young people and families to</p>

Protected Characteristics and the Identification of Potential Issues/Barriers					
Protected Characteristic	Tick which applies		Tick which applies		Reasons for the positive impact or potential negative impact, *although PH will identify negative impacts, it may not be realistic to negate these due to a lack of resources.
	Positive Impact		Potential Negative Impact		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
					<p>provide important information regarding perceptions and experience of poverty and interaction with existing services and also how to shape future service provision.</p> <p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all needs of families are considered in service design and delivery. We aim to offer different interventions and support for both individual young people and families.
Disability	x			x	<p>The objective of the strategy is likely to have a positive impact on children and families with regard to disability. The strategy aims to increase financial security, improve educational attainment and employment prospects as well as creating a more supportive and inclusive place to live.</p> <p>We know that people who are disabled are more at risk of living in poverty and we also understand the impact of carers who may have limited employment opportunities. There may be barriers in terms of disabled people engaging in the consultation.</p> <p>The strategy consultation exercise is available in a variety of formats and should therefore be inclusive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone Interview • Focus Group

Protected Characteristics and the Identification of Potential Issues/Barriers					
Protected Characteristic	Tick which applies		Tick which applies		Reasons for the positive impact or potential negative impact, *although PH will identify negative impacts, it may not be realistic to negate these due to a lack of resources.
	Positive Impact		Potential Negative Impact		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey <p>Many commissioned services are community based and the service models provide opportunity for individuals and families to receive support in a variety of community settings including their home.</p> <p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure venues used are accessible to all Where appropriate the service will deliver in a community setting suitable to the client's needs. Differentiation of materials such as easy read versions for people with low levels of literacy.
Gender Reassignment/ Transgender	x			x	<p>The objective of the strategy is likely to have a positive impact on children families with regard to gender reassignment/transgender.</p> <p>However further work with transgender community may be needed to ensure specific aspects of poverty outcomes such as education and employment are considered from the perspective of the trans community.</p>
Marriage and Civil Partnership	x			x	<p>The objectives in the strategy will provide positive impacts and are likely to have a positive impact for all members of the community and fully includes individuals within the protected</p>

Protected Characteristics and the Identification of Potential Issues/Barriers					
Protected Characteristic	Tick which applies		Tick which applies		Reasons for the positive impact or potential negative impact, *although PH will identify negative impacts, it may not be realistic to negate these due to a lack of resources.
	Positive Impact		Potential Negative Impact		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
					characteristic of marriage and civil partnership.
Pregnancy and Maternity	x			x	<p>The objectives of the strategy are likely to have a positive impact on women and children with regards to the protected characteristic of Pregnancy and Maternity, with interventions to protect the health and wellbeing of pregnant women and their children</p> <p>Pregnancy and maternity is a potential risk area for women who may face employment challenges as well as issues such as teenage pregnancy where the risks of poverty could be increased.</p> <p>Mitigation:</p> <p>Understanding of any additional health/service needs to be identified for appropriate referral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor responses in relation to complaints and compliments • Ensure the service policies are compliant.
Race	x			x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals from Ethnic Minority groups are more likely to live in high levels of population density, use public transport, high household composition (houses of multiple occupancy) and poor housing conditions.

Protected Characteristics and the Identification of Potential Issues/Barriers					
Protected Characteristic	Tick which applies		Tick which applies		Reasons for the positive impact or potential negative impact, *although PH will identify negative impacts, it may not be realistic to negate these due to a lack of resources.
	Positive Impact		Potential Negative Impact		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language needs of Sefton families and English not first language. • Cultural issues of those needing support are met and understood. • Lack of engagement and effective communications with Ethnic Minorities. • Language and information navigability barriers. There may be concerns around the impact in immigration status that act as barriers to engagement with services • Gypsy and Romany Travellers are largely mobile populations and populations with lower literacy are more likely to miss accurate public messaging re available support. <p>Due to the changing demographics of Sefton in some areas/wards, any data and information can become quickly outdated and may not be relevant to some sections of the community. There may be some sections of the community e.g., asylum seekers who may not have been included in the research</p>

Protected Characteristics and the Identification of Potential Issues/Barriers					
Protected Characteristic	Tick which applies		Tick which applies		Reasons for the positive impact or potential negative impact, *although PH will identify negative impacts, it may not be realistic to negate these due to a lack of resources.
	Positive Impact		Potential Negative Impact		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
					<p>Awareness is needed of any language barriers to accessing the service and lifestyle information to support service planning.</p> <p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure information can be communicated effectively where English is not first language.
Religion or Belief	x			x	<p>Religion or beliefs respected without discrimination in the service.</p> <p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all policies are compliant
Sex	x			x	<p>The objectives in the strategy are likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of sex</p>
Sexual Orientation	X			x	<p>The objectives in the strategy are likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of Sexual Orientation.</p>

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	27 September 2022 6 October 2022
Subject:	Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-2027		
Report of:	Assistant Director Children's Services (Education)	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Education		
Is this a Key Decision:	Y	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This is a dual committee report which seeks to present to Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) and Cabinet the Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-2027. It will set out how it has been developed, and the proposed next steps in terms of programme development.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) That Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) receive the Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-2027 for noting.
- (2) That Cabinet approve the Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-2027.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To ensure that the priorities of the Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-2027 and wider Education initiatives are aligned to the delivery of Sefton's 2030 vision, the Sefton Health & Wellbeing Strategy and the Sefton Children and Young Peoples Plan, and that they are clearly articulated to parents, carers, young people, residents, early years providers, schools, colleges, providers of SEND education, as well as Health providers and other partners across Sefton and its neighbouring boroughs, in addition to the Department for Education.

To ensure that all children and young people receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.

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

Not Applicable

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

There are no direct cost implications due to the delivery of the Strategic Documentation, where costs are to be incurred for specific programmes of work the appropriate decision-making process will be followed to obtain approval for any associated spend.

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no direct revenue implications associated with this Strategic Documentation Report. All programmes of work highlighted will either be fully funded through existing resources or will be reported to Members for additional funding and approval before commencement. It should be noted that the strategy covers areas of activity that are funded by the dedicated schools grant and some that are funded by the council's general fund. When individual proposals and reports come forward this distinction will be made in order to support informed consultation and decision making. This will be particularly important re the High Needs Funding Block that is under considerable financial pressure at the current time and which is the subject of quarterly reporting to both cabinet and council and which could have a significant long term impact on both funding sources.

(B) Capital Costs - None

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
No direct implications due to the delivery of the Strategic Documentation, where these are to be incurred for specific programmes of work the appropriate decision-making process will be followed to obtain approval for any associated resources required.	
Legal Implications:	
There are no legal implications	
Equality Implications:	
Equality Implications will be considered in detail as the programme for the delivery of the Strategy is developed	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	Y
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y

It is envisaged that the strategy will have a positive impact (or at the very least neutral impact) on the current climate emergency by engaging / informing and educating children and young people (and their families) about the effects of climate change and ways to reduce its impact, through curriculum and extra curriculum content.

As well as teaching and training the next generation of researchers, scientists, conservationists, planners, and educators etc who will all help longer term come up with new and innovative ways to reduce emissions, do things differently and help protect the planet.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:

The strategy has a section dedicated and focused on supporting the most disadvantaged to ensure that their life chances are not impacted on, as well as focusing on Children & Young People Not in education, training, or activity unknown in Sefton.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

This strategy aims to further develop a partnership approach to service delivery in conjunction with our communities, ensuring alignment to key principles of inclusion as well as recognising the role of voluntary organisations.

Commission, broker and provide core services:

The strategy sets out a strategic direction and clear priorities for educational services over the next five years

Place – leadership and influencer:

The strategy supports the wider 2030 vision for Sefton

Drivers of change and reform:

This strategy supports the delivery of the Council's ambitious change programme and 2030 vision.

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:

The strategy is designed to support the wider Growth priorities of the Council by ensuring all children receive an education which enables them to reach their potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.

Greater income for social investment:

The potential for added Social Value will be included within the underpinning work programmes where appropriate

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Cleaner Greener

Many of the core themes within the strategy, such as having High Quality Curriculums, will contribute to a wider community understanding of the effects of and ways to reduce carbon emissions within Sefton.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6955/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5155/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Consultation has taken place with

- Children & Young People
- The Parent & Carer Forum
- Parents, Carers, family members and the wider community / partners
- Early Years providers, Schools, Colleges, and other settings
- Head Teachers / Sefton Association of Primary & Secondary Headteachers

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:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Draft Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-2027

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The local authority has a clear statutory duty to promote Education Excellence and the highest standards for all Sefton children; irrespective of what establishment they attend. These duties are outlined in recently Published key documents by the Department for Education.

Schools White Paper, 28 March 2022 - The White Paper covers teaching and leadership in schools, preventing and tackling under-performance, curriculum

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reform, governance & standards, and fair funding for schools, which is the subject of a separate consultation. Every school to become an academy.

SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) green paper: responding to the consultation The green paper has been published alongside a white paper: Opportunities for All: Strong Schools with Great Teachers for Your Child. It sets out the government's vision for new attainment targets in literacy and numeracy, an academy-led education system and a drive to increase attendance).

A combination of the statutory duty and the newly published documents combined with the need to refresh the current strategy, has resulted in the consultation and creation of this draft strategy.

- 1.2 The Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-27 is intended to be an overarching plan which articulates the council's ambitions of helping every young person in Sefton to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities. It is based on key priorities identified within the 2030 Vision for Sefton, Sefton's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2025, Sefton's Children & Young People Plan 2020-2025 and Sefton's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

This high-level strategic document is split into four key priorities

- Excellent teachers supported by excellent staff
- Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills to prepare for adulthood
- All Children and young people achieve their full potential people
- School Systems to Support Children and their Families

- 1.3 Each of the priorities has a series of key actions within them which collectively seek to help deliver a vision of Excellence in Sefton - All children and young people receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.

- 1.4 These actions are contained with a plan from page 13 onwards of the document, which sets out how the Local Authority and its partners will deliver over the coming years. (The plan purposely has blank space available to allow individual schools and the Sefton Schools Improvement Groups to use it as a live document, as well as naming the lead teams from the Local Authority for the areas of work).

2 Strategy Development

- 2.1 Significant engagement activity has been undertaken to ensure alignment of the key priorities within the strategy to core priorities within the outlined publications from the Department of Education and 2030 vision for Sefton along with other key Sefton documents.

- 2.2 Consultation took place over a five-month period to ensure that the views of a wide range of individuals, educational establishments and their senior staff and partners was gathered via an online survey, virtual discussion, face to face meetings and workshops. The culmination of which is the document presented.

- 2.3 Over the next five years the delivery of the Strategy will be reflected in the development of key programmes of work. The progress and impact of the strategy

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will be driven through the current Education Governance structure, as well as other boards or subgroups as required, which will be accountable for the delivery of the priorities outlined in the Strategy. This progress will be reported regularly and where required by exception.

3 Next Steps

- 3.1 Following strategy approval the document will be published and shared widely with schools, colleges, providers, parents, carers, young people and partners.
- 3.2 Each service with Education Excellence will focus on the key priorities in their service plans which will include measurable outcomes to evidence impact and improvement.
- 3.3 The work streams will be monitored and reported regularly to ensure that the children and young people in Sefton are indeed receiving the highest standards possible.
- 3.4 The Strategy is therefore presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) and Cabinet for approval, with immediate adoption following the mandated call-in period

Draft Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton

2022 - 2027

Education and training will enable every young person to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities



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Foreword

Welcome to the 2022-2027 Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton.

On the 28th March 2022 the Government published the **‘Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child’** White Paper. The White Paper sets out proposed reforms to the education system, focussed on providing an excellent teacher for every child, delivering high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance, targeted support for every child that needs it and a stronger and fairer school system. A key focus of the white paper is helping all children meet their potential with the right support at the right time, to ensure every child is supported with their education and broader development and well-being as we come out of the pandemic and beyond. In addition to this a **SEND Green Paper** has also been published outlining details of a reformed Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) education system which sets out to improve provision and inclusivity, to support children with SEND in mainstream and specialist settings to ensure consistently high standards in line with new national standards. The Green paper seeks to address three key challenges for children with SEND which are

- poor outcomes for children and young people with SEN or in alternative provision
- navigating the SEND system and alternative provision is not a positive experience for children, young people, and their families and
- Despite unprecedented investment, the system is not delivering value for money for children, young people and families.

It is with these 2 Government papers as the backdrop that I am pleased to share with you the 2022-2027 Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton, and I welcome the emphasis on helping all children meet their potential .

In Sefton our children and young people are the future and as such should have access to outstanding early years opportunities and receive the best quality education and support to engage positively with others in their community. They have told us we need to instill the right life skills and not judge young people by numbers and grades only. We want our children and young people to enjoy learning, make good progress which will enable them to aspire to achieve the highest outcomes so that every child and young person has a successful transition to adulthood. We will do this by working

in partnership with our early years providers and schools to ensure first class education opportunities.

In developing this strategy, we have considered our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and reflected on many of the plans and previous engagement activity within Sefton including the Children and Young People’s Plan, the Emotional health and Wellbeing Plan as well as our partnership Vision for 2030. In doing so we have linked closely to the four themes in the Children and Young People’s Plan – Heard, Happy, Healthy, Achieving.

Our vision is that, ‘All children and young people should receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential and to engage positively with others in their community’ is echoed throughout all our intended actions and impact.

Over the last two years we have made significant improvements across our Local Area respect of SEND and our work with schools during the pandemic has meant that the approach to partnership working has never been stronger. We intend to build on this partnership approach and ensure that children and young people are at the forefront of our recovery plans.

Our partnership working is key to ensuring the success of the strategy and ensuring that all our children and young people succeed. We will work closely with our partners and link closely to the Children and Young People’s Plan to ensure a joined-up approach that supports all our children and young people’s life chances.

The strategy demonstrates the Council’s role in system leadership, facilitating school leaders to lead school improvement and school to school support and sets out the clear priorities which will address the key themes and measure the progress towards the key actions.



Councillor Diane Roscoe
Cabinet Member, Education Excellence

Background Sefton 2030 Vision

Sefton Council led on the development of an exciting partnership vision for the Borough of Sefton called Sefton 2030. When developing the vision partners worked closely with our communities, including children and young people, to understand what was important to them. This is our single strategic and overarching partnership approach for the borough.

Sefton Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025

Sefton’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy takes an all-age approach (Start Well, Live Well, Age Well) to meaningful health and wellbeing for the people who live in Sefton. The overarching aims for Start Well are:

- Every child will achieve the best start in their first 1001 days
- Education and training will enable every young person to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities
- Every child and young person will have a successful transition to adulthood

In 2025 we will know if we have made a difference by raising the percentage of children achieving a good level of development from 69% to 74%; continue to reduce the proportion of our 16 – 17 Not in Education and Training (NEET) and improve the experience of transitions as measured by our annual survey and having a fully adopted joint transitions pathway.

Sefton Children and Young People’s Plan 2020/2025: My Sefton, Happy, Healthy, Achieving, Heard

This plan sets out how we intend to maximize the health and wellbeing of all our children and young people living in Sefton.

Sefton Council, NHS South Sefton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS Southport and Formby CCG, have agreed a series of priorities for future services and support. These priorities are based on what children, young people and their families have told us of their experiences and what we know about their current care.

We used Sefton’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to inform the plan to seek to ensure that children and young people’s needs are understood and met. It is based around the four themes of:

- Heard
- Happy
- Healthy
- Achieving

The Education Excellence Strategy is based around these four themes and our plan will reflect and complement its priorities and outcomes.



Emotional Health & Wellbeing Strategy

The mental health of children and young people has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, adding to an already worsening national trend of mental health decline. Approximately 200,000 young people are referred to specialist mental health services each year in England which places these services under considerable pressure. Poor emotional health and wellbeing in childhood can have a lasting impact into adulthood. Having a trusted adult that children and young people can confide in is important, especially if the child or young person has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing adverse childhood experiences.

High levels of inequality are also damaging to mental health and emotional well-being. Growing up in deprivation means an increased risk of chronic exposure to stress and adverse conditions. These can have lasting impact on the mental health and wellbeing of someone across their life course and lead to the disproportionate burden of mental ill health being experienced by our most vulnerable residents.

Sefton has made good progress over recent years in improving and expanding its service offer to children and young people – including KOOTH, Mental Health Support Teams, etc - ensuring it meets their needs and is accessible to all. We will continue to work with education to improve their ability to support children and young people to stay in education. Part of this will include ensuring that schools and colleges implement all new guidance/initiatives and best practice in a structured and impactful way. Consistency and equitable coverage is key when considering the education practices in order to benefit children and young people regardless of where they are in Sefton. This work will complement the Sefton Children and Young People’s Emotional Wellbeing Strategy 2021-26 and the Children and Young People’s Plan 2020/25.



Education Excellence in Sefton – Vision

All children and young people receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.



Education - National Context

The Department for Education strategy 2015 to 2020: world-class education and care has yet to be updated. The COVID 19 pandemic impacted significantly on children's school life and this led to education attainment data not being gathered at local area and national level during 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Schools continue to assess and monitor attainment and progress locally. Young people were assessed at GCSE and A Level in 2019 – 2020 through the Centre Assessment Grades (CAG) and awarded grades accordingly. In 2020 – 2021 GCSE and A Level grades were awarded through Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG).

The local authority has clear statutory duties to promote excellence and the highest standards for all Sefton children; irrespective of what establishment they attend and this includes; -

Schools White Paper, 28 March 2022 - The White Paper covers teaching and leadership in schools, preventing and tackling under-performance, curriculum reform, governance & standards and fair funding for schools, which is the subject of a separate consultation. Every school to become an academy.

SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) green paper: responding to the consultation The green paper has been published alongside a white paper: Opportunities for All: Strong Schools with Great Teachers for Your Child . It sets out the government's vision for new attainment targets in literacy and numeracy, an academy-led education system and a drive to increase attendance.

The Education and Adoption Bill - this introduced measures to improve school standards across the country, as part of the Government's commitment to delivering real social justice. These measures are intended to speed up the process by which failing maintained schools become sponsored academies, ensuring there is no delay in giving children the education they deserve.

The Special Education Needs (SEN) Code of Practice January 2015 outlines the statutory duties of head teachers and principals, governing bodies, school and college staff, SEN coordinators and early education providers providing for pupils with SEN through the graduated approach to meeting needs from Quality First Teaching through to the Education, Health and Care Plan, (EHCP) assessment and review process.

There were an estimated 797,000 young people in the UK who were NEET in October to December 2020; this increased by 39,000 compared with July to September 2020 and was up by 34,000 compared with October to December 2019.

The new National Disability Strategy came into force on 28th July 2021. It sets out to improve the lives of all people with disabilities. It is split into four parts including the introduction; part 1 the immediate commitments to improving disabled people's lives; part 2 including people in policy making and service delivery and part 3 which focuses on a summary of the actions each government department will take.

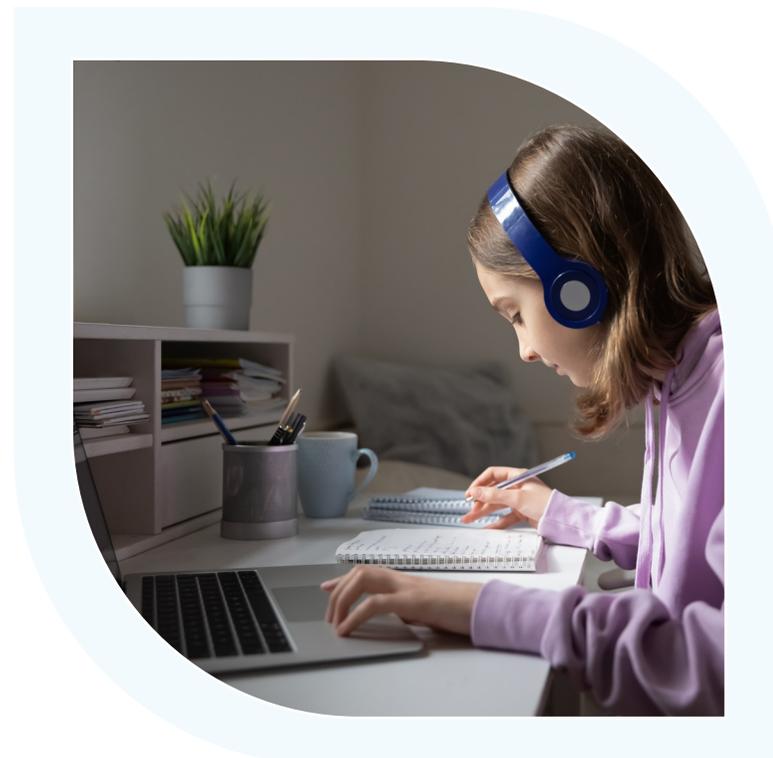
The education section focuses on a review of actions to improve outcomes for children with SEND; increasing funding; extending continuing professional development and investing to strengthen parents and young people's participation; improving supported internships and increasing the number of disabled people undertaking apprenticeships

Education – Local Context

Over recent years the educational landscape has changes, the local authority (LA) exercises a range of roles and responsibilities with local education providers. The LA works positively with maintained faith and community schools, alternative provision, early years settings, special schools, academies, sponsors, independent schools and further and adult education providers who comprise a part of the mixed economy of local education provision. We view the local authority as the system leader and a champion for all the learners in the borough. Our approach to excellence in education and learning is a collaborative one, working in partnership with key groups to improve knowledge and expertise across the borough.

Covid 19 Pandemic

Throughout the pandemic Education Excellence teams worked closely with schools providing both support and challenge. Together they implemented new ways of working, Some of the changes that have taken place include the creation of the Education Collaborative Group, born out of the weekly Covid Schools' and Children's Services Cell Group.



All schools experienced disruption during this period and the majority of children and young people in Sefton have had a period of time when they were not in school but accessing remote learning and as a result their learning was disrupted. The pandemic had a massive impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of many children and young people and through our Emotional Health and Wellbeing offer we are working hard to ensure they can access support early and that our schools are equipped to support them.



40,374
CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE

EARLY YEARS CHILDREN

- Jan 21 census we funded:
720 x 2 yr olds and 3757 x 3/4 yr olds
(on the universal 15 hrs offer)
Total of 4477 children.

(Also to note that the figures for Jan 21 were low, due to slightly reduced funding claims due to the pandemic).

- 38,123 pupils on roll across primary, secondary and special schools

ETHNICITY

- 10% of the school children in Sefton are of Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) heritage compared to 34% Nationally
- 6% have English as an additional language (EAL) (up slightly on the previous year), compared to 19% Nationally and 15% in the Northwest

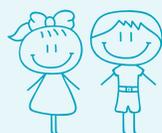
OCTOBER 2021 SCHOOL CENSUS DATA

- Total school population 40,047 Children
- Number of children with an Education, Health & Care Plan 3.6% (1432)
- Number of children with SEN support 12.1% (4,839)
- Number of children receiving no extra support 84.3% (33,776)



102
SCHOOLS

- 3 Nursery Schools
- 3 Infant Schools
- 2 Junior Schools
- 70 Primary Schools
- 19 Secondary Schools
- 5 Special Schools
- 2 pupil referral unit and 1 14 to 16 college
- 1 School Improvement Board
- 6 school improvement groups
- Education Collaboration Group
- SAPH - Sefton Association of Primary Headteachers
- SASH - Sefton Association of Secondary Headteachers



222
EARLY YEARS
PROVIDERS

- 45 nurseries
- 25 pre-schools
- 71 childminders
- 23 standalone holiday playschemes/out of school clubs
- 55 schools with nurseries(maintained/academies)
- 3 independent school nurseries



86%

Early Years settings to be judged by OfSTED to be good or better



73%

Of Schools judged by OfSTED to be good or better (83% Primary Schools and 63% Secondary)



3.5%

SEND NEET for 16-24 year olds has reduced 2.5% year on year

Children and Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or Activity Unknown in Sefton

A young person aged 16 to 24 who is not currently in education, employment or training is considered to be NEET. They are considered to be in education or training if:-

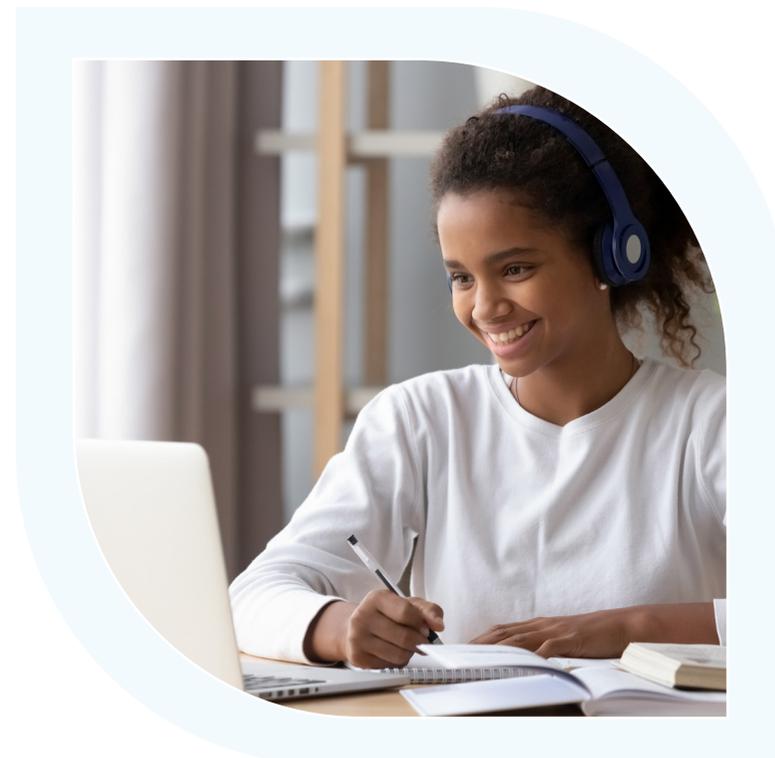
- they are enrolled on an education course and are still attending or waiting for term to (re)start
- they are doing an apprenticeship
- they are on a government supported employment or training programme
- they are working or studying towards a qualification, or
- they have had job-related training or education in the last 4 weeks

“In employment” includes all people in some form of paid work, including those working part-time. People not in employment are classed as either unemployed or economically inactive. Unemployed people are those who have been looking for work in the past 4 weeks and who are available to start work within the next 2 weeks.

Economically inactive people are those who have not been looking for work and/or who are not available to start work. Examples of economically inactive people include those not looking for work because they are students and those who are looking after dependents at home. These definitions are based on those recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Activity Unknown refers to young people with an unknown education, employment or training status.

- As of July 2021 Sefton currently has the lowest percentage of NEET and unknown young people across the Liverpool City Region (3.8%).
- Sefton is performing better than the North West NEET & Not Known combined measure
- Sefton is performing better than the England NEET & Not Known combined measure



A sharper focus on the disadvantaged

The priority across Sefton and the wider partnerships is to sharpen our focus on the most disadvantaged groups of children in our education settings and communities. We know that children and young people with SEND; children and young people eligible for free school meals (FSM); looked after children (LAC); Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and those in need of protection still perform less well than their peers. This has a negative impact on their life chances.

- We will hold high aspirations for these children and work together across all education settings and across the system to improve their life chances.
- We will collectively act as champions for vulnerable children and young people by using achievement, attendance and exclusion data, safeguarding intelligence and learner and parent/carer voice data to support and challenge each other when we recognise that these children and young people are not being well served.
- We will target our resources to improve outcomes and opportunities for these children and young people, using evidence-based approaches to secure improvements.
- We will strive to ensure that as many of our young people in Sefton continue to participate in education, training or employment after the age of 16 through tracking their participation rates and ensuring that rates of NEET are kept as low as possible
- We will continue to ensure that additional support for NEET young people who are vulnerable are supported from the age of 14 to enable them to re-engage in learning We will learn from each other and share what is working well to secure outcomes for all children regardless of their educational or physical needs, their family background, the school they attend or the neighbourhood where they live.
- We will work in partnership with our schools, Children's Social Care and other partners to ensure that all our care leavers are supported in making the right choices for their future education or training enabling them to make a positive transition.

- We will ensure there are pathways for young people whose education outcomes have missed their full potential to re-enter education, training or employment after the age of 19 which build upon their employability and enable them to move into sustainable prosperity



4 PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 1

Excellent teachers supported by excellent staff



PRIORITY 2

Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills to prepare for adulthood



PRIORITY 3

All Children and young people achieve their full potential people



PRIORITY 4

School Systems to Support Children and their Families

Education Excellence – Priorities

Key to achieving our priorities - We have drawn our priorities from the White paper 'Opportunities for All' in collaboration with key stakeholders.

Priority 1. Excellent teachers supported by excellent staff (Excellent teacher)

We know high quality education is the greatest liberator so want all pupils to be taught by excellent teachers and make at least 'good progress' in every year of their education. Teachers will be supported by a fully trained workforce enabling them to provide outstanding teaching and learning.

This can only be achieved through partnership work with key partners including Sefton School Improvement Group, School Improvement Board, School Centred Initial Teacher Training, research schools, hubs and ensuring high quality professional development opportunities for all staff. Giving all teachers and school leaders access to world class evidence based training and professional development at every stage of their career will help recruit and retain high quality teachers.

In Sefton we realise the quality of teaching is the single most important school factor in improving outcomes for children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leadership and classroom teaching influence children's learning.



We will:

- Support school leaders and staff in ensuring a culture to address well-being and take account of teacher workload
- Ensure a robust system of challenge and support where all teachers work in a good or better setting and a high quality workforce is retained across Sefton Children's Social Care
- Collaborate with school leaders and stakeholders to ensure the recruitment and retention of effective practitioners in order that the education system in Sefton provides an inclusive education, good outcomes, meets the needs of all children and raises their aspirations preparing them for the next stage in their education and lives.
- In partnership provide a range of evidence based, effective continuing professional development programmes e.g. Support with Early Career Teacher, quality leadership development programme, National Professional Qualification, research projects, trauma informed practice
- Engage with and support schools to engage with the new Leadership Special Educational Needs Coordinator NPQ proposed by the SEND Green Paper
- Ensure a system wide approach to whole school development in relation to school staff's SEND knowledge and training received.
- Adopt the Family Valued approach which aims to work restoratively and relationally with children and families in a way which respects and values their experience.

Priority 2. Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills to prepare for adulthood. (High quality curriculum and attendance, behaviour)

Every child will be taught a broad and ambitious curriculum in a school with high expectations and strong standards of behaviour. We will work with all partners, parents/ carers and schools so that Sefton's children and young people are educated in the setting or school which is right for them and which best meets their needs. There will be a broad and balanced curriculum equipping them with the life skills they need to be independent and successful as an adult. Pathways will prepare young people for education, employment and training. The focus will be on ensuring our children leave school with the right skills and opportunities to achieve which will also value the contribution of sport, cultural, social and health education, how to deal with bullying and strategies to promote their health and well being. Learning does not stop once a young person leaves school and we want them to have the desire and opportunities to keep on learning and developing.

Key to success is collaboration with school leaders, providers and stakeholders to ensure that the education system in Sefton provides an inclusive education that delivers excellent outcomes, meets the needs of all children, young people, raises their aspirations and prepares them for the next stage in their education and lives. We will support collaborative hubs for training, transition between schools, and sharing best practice through the Virtual School, Inclusion team, and multi-agency forums so that our children benefit from teachers and practitioners who work together to support each other and share knowledge and expertise.

We recognise the impact poor attendance/regular absence has on children's' safety, attainment and behaviour. A key priority in Sefton is to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly. We will work with colleagues in schools and Children's Social Care to ensure families are supported where their circumstances create a barrier to attendance.

We will:

- Collaborate with partners and early years providers to promote school readiness
- Support all early years settings to develop a broad ambitious curriculum underpinned by strong foundations to secure the basics of literacy and numeracy.
- Practitioners will ensure the voice of the child is heard to identify their interests, motivators and characteristics of effective learning and use this to good effect in promoting or accelerating progress
- Monitor the attendance and outcomes of our most vulnerable children in order to plan and implement strategies to address their particular needs and improve outcomes
- Through our robust system of challenge and support ensure that every school has a well designed and sequenced curriculum which builds knowledge in a broad range of subjects.
- Will recognise the importance of schools in the collaborative process to work with key partners e.g. regional hubs to provide guidance and training on the quality of provision of reading and mathematics
- Work with Department for Education and schools to address poor attendance and identify specific areas in need of improvement
- Collaborate with schools and behaviour hubs to strengthen and outline approaches to behaviour, interventions and services, to support early years' settings and schools to ensure the needs of all children and young people are identified early, understood and effectively addressed in order to support good attendance and prevent the use of exclusion wherever possible.
- Develop an Inclusion Strategy that sets out the approaches and support available to, and standards expected of, mainstream settings in supporting their pupils' learning needs.
- A senior mental health leader in every school by 2025
- Support inclusive and innovative practice that promotes the wellbeing and emotional health of our children and young people
- Support young people so they are aware of the variety post-16 pathways which help address local skills needs and prepare them for the next stage in their education and adult life.

Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022 - 2027

- Partner with setting, schools a, colleges and providers to provide effective transitions at all stages
- Further develop our borough-wide partnership approach across all phases of education to provide young people with access to clear pathways that link education to the world of work in a way that is relevant to the local labour market including regeneration and investment programmes
- Develop local processes in line with the proposed national standards for SEN in relation to transition to ensure consistent, timely, high -quality transition preparation for children and young people with SEND.
- Continue to develop the supported internships and traineeships programmes to provide more young people with SEND with the skills they need to secure and sustain paid employment.
- Develop opportunities to consider the impact of sustainability through climate education, green skills and career opportunities
- Collaborate with schools and behaviour hubs to strengthen and outline approaches to behaviour, interventions and services, to support early years' settings and schools to ensure the needs of all children and young people are identified early, understood and effectively addressed in order to support good attendance and prevent the use of exclusion wherever possible.



Priority 3. All Children and young people achieve their full potential people (Targeted support for every child who needs it)

A great start will shape children's lifelong health and wellbeing. In collaboration with key partners including health and social care we will ensure all children have good social and emotional support. Together we will support and sustain improved all round outcomes for every child including the disadvantaged which narrows the gap.

We want all children to have the best life chances, including those with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will enhance joint commissioning of support between education, health and care services for children with SEND to ensure services work together effectively. Attendance and progress of our Children in Need will be monitored so that we can best understand their needs and plan effective measures of support We will ensure all children will have access to an educational setting that is appropriate to their needs.

Every child in Sefton who falls behind in English or maths will get the right support to get back on track.

We will:

- Challenge aspirations and ambitions for all children and young people dispelling misconceptions by supporting children and young people to achieve their goals
- Listen to children's and their families' voices to get the right support and help at the right time
- From the earliest point in a child's life provide families with timely access to support so their experience improves and the needs of their children are identified early and effectively met
- Collectively act as champions for vulnerable children when we recognise that they are not being served
- Incorporate the views of children and young people with SEND, children looked after and children with a social worker in order to minimise barriers to learning and ensure the holistic development of children and young people

- Through training and development, we will maximise the effectiveness of quality first teaching and assessment to promote swift identification of need and target appropriate, evidence based intervention
- Direct schools to the Department for Education recommendations around the effective use of pupil premium funding to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged children
- Collaborate with settings and schools to ensure quality transition for all pupils at each key stage with the opportunities for personalised programmes where needed
- Ensure schools are fully aware of their responsibilities to keep all parents/ carers informed of their child's progress when they are falling behind and what is being done to address this
- In partnership with schools and children's services be aspirational for the outcomes for children looked after
- Implement the National Standards for SEND that the government reforms will introduce to ensure consistency of how needs are identified and met at every stage of a child's journey across education, health and care.
- Implement planned new requirements to create and distribute an alternative provision-specific budget to give alternative provision schools the funding stability to deliver a service focused on early intervention, and work with those provisions to adhere to the performance framework which will be in place.
- Develop a local Inclusion Plan in line with Green Paper recommendations
- Provide children and their families with the right support at the right time

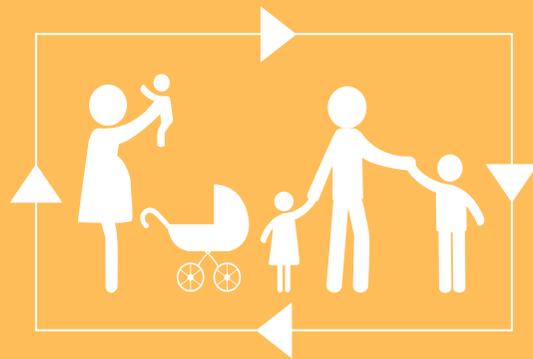


Priority 4. School Systems to Support Children and their Families (A stronger and fairer school system)

We wish to ensure our Sefton family of schools are fully prepared for this transition. We aim to achieve this through the actions laid out in priorities 1, 2 and 3. Sefton wishes to work in partnership creating an optimum environment for schools to realise their potential and succeed in these areas on their journey to become a member of a strong trust.

Sefton will utilise the opportunities given as part of the Opportunity Areas programme. This will support the adoption of the family valued approach enhancing a joined-up approach with all key partners to secure the best outcomes for children..

All children in Sefton will benefit from high quality and inclusive education, school improvement, strategic governance, financial management and workforce.



We will:

- Ensure sufficiency of places for ALL children
- For pupils with EHC Plans, in line with planned SEND Green Paper reforms, where a pupils requires placement in specialist provision, the local Inclusion Plan will set out the provision available within the local area, in order to provide families with a tailored list of schools that are appropriate to meet their needs.
- Continue and further develop a collaborative system of working with MATs
- Design and deliver a revised strategic school improvement system which reflects a collaborative and system led approach
- Continue to support and challenge Schools Causing Concern and grow capacity to deliver effective support and challenge around quality school improvement
- Use data and local intelligence effectively to identify key strengths and areas for development to enable us to address inconsistencies, share best practice and drive up standards
- Further enhance the partnership working with School Improvement Groups building on the successful projects undertaken by them
- Continue to grow and develop the partnership work with the Research School to provide evidence based support
- Work in collaboration with schools and academies to provide places for all children in good or better settings and schools
- Engage with the planned new national and local SEND data dashboards to ensure that the right information is collected in the right way at the right time to enable timely responses to local needs.
- Implement planned changes to the SEND national funding system to ensure the most effective use of high needs funding to support schools.

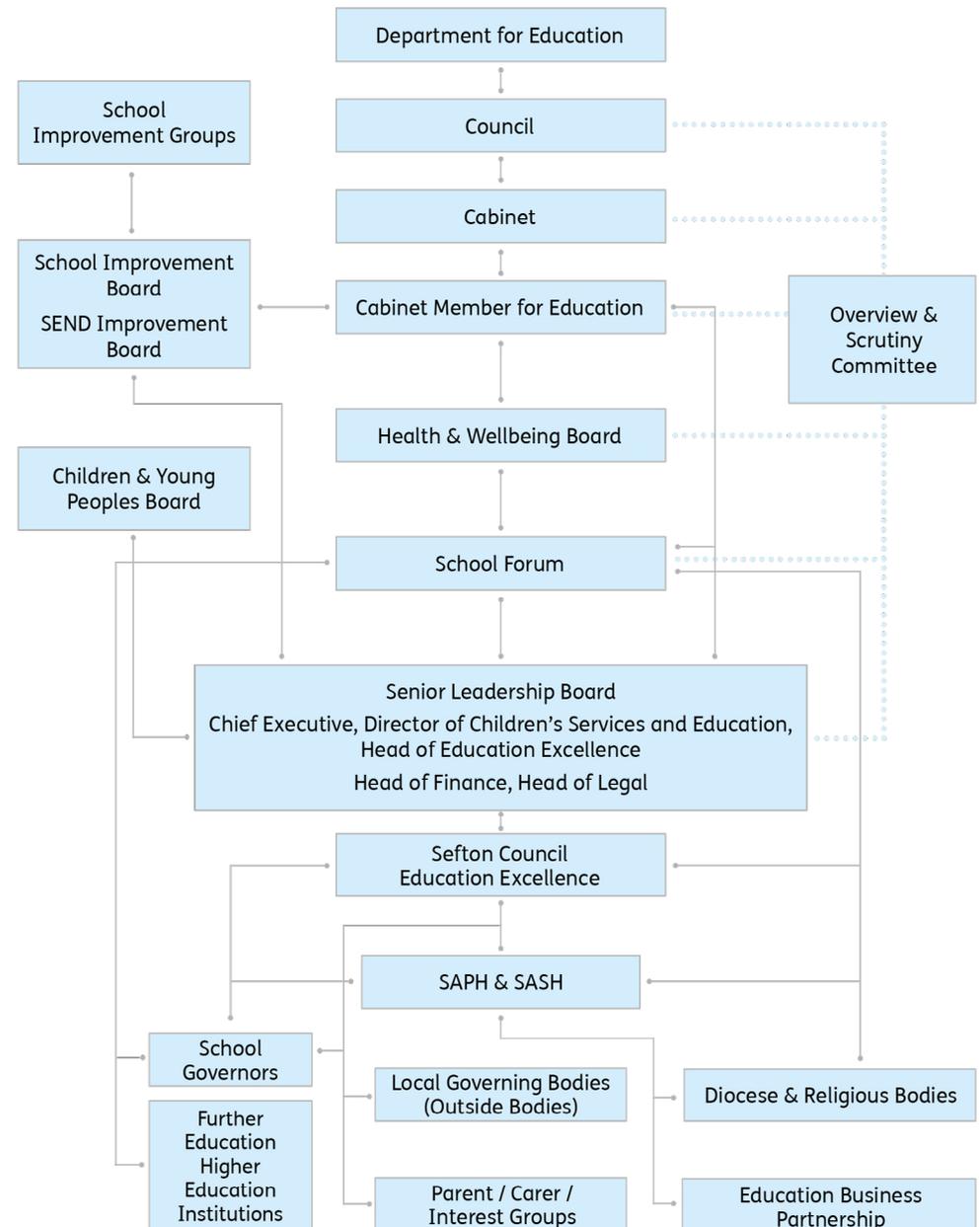
How will we make this happen?

Governance:

Strong governance is essential to success and Education Excellence is answerable to several boards including SEND Continuous Improvement Board; Emotional Health & Wellbeing Board; School Improvement Board as well as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council.

Each of the priorities is underpinned by action plans linked to the four key themes of Heard, Happy, Healthy, Achieving and reviewed each year. Progress against the priorities will be reviewed and monitored regularly to ensure that our approach is responsive to emerging needs, challenges and opportunities.

Good governance and accountability is a two-way relationship and where Sefton has concerns regarding the provision in schools, the process as set out in Sefton's Arrangements for Monitoring and Intervention of School Performance will be invoked.



Partnership:

If we are to succeed in our ambitions, then we need to build on the excellent relationships established over the last year. We will work with all partners, parents/ carers and schools so that Sefton's children and young people are educated in the school which is right for them and which best meets their needs. It is essential for all partners to work together to help Sefton achieve the vision that, **'all children and young people receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.'**

Effective collaboration and partnership with Teaching Hubs, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), standalone academies and all other schools will support raising pupil outcomes.

Partners have a key role in enabling children and young people to be the best they can be. Partnership working with secondary schools, colleges, providers and local businesses will have crucial roles in ensuring that our young people are able to develop the skills and attributes through aspirational courses that enable them to be successful in the workplace.

Alongside our academic ambitions is the need to work with Public Health, the Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of all children and young people particularly as we recover from the Covid pandemic.



Delivering Our Priorities:

If we are to succeed in our ambitions, then we need to build on the excellent relationships established over the last year. We will work with all partners, parents/ carers and schools so that Sefton’s children and young people are educated in the school which is right for them and which best meets their needs. It is essential for all partners to work together to help Sefton achieve the vision that, **‘all children and young people receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.’** Effective collaboration and partnership with Teaching Hubs, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), standalone academies and all other schools will support raising pupil outcomes. Partners have a key role in enabling children

and young people to be the best they can be. Partnership working with secondary schools, colleges, providers and local businesses will have crucial roles in ensuring that our young people are able to develop the skills and attributes through aspirational courses that enable them to be successful in the workplace.

Alongside our academic ambitions is the need to work with Public Health, the Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of all children and young people particularly as we recover from the Covid pandemic.

Priority 1. Excellent teachers supported by excellent staff

How we will make this happen	LA	SIG	School
Implement the New Early Years Foundation Stage Framework in schools and private, voluntary and independent settings	Early Years Service		
Develop partnership between Private, voluntary and independent Nurseries/Schools and Family Wellbeing Centres to support early identification and appropriate support.	Educational Psychology Service Early Years Service		
Embed the Early Years ‘First Response’ function for vulnerable children	Early Years Service		
Joint working with colleagues in Health and Early Help	Educational Psychology Inclusion Service Send Service Service Early Years Service		
Ensure that young children are supported by key adults in order to enjoy good physical, mental and emotional wellbeing	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Early Years Service		
Enhance existing pathways across agencies working with children ensuring their development is promoted consistently, and risks of delay are identified and addressed early.	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
Work with all early years’ providers to support speech and language programmes	Early Years Service		

Priority 2. Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills to prepare for adulthood

How we will make this happen	LA	SIG	School
Provide an Agreed Religious Education Syllabus for all non-maintained Primary and Secondary Schools that allows pupils to share their religious views and consider life values	Sefton SACRE		
All primary schools implement the new statutory Relationships Education policy and all secondary schools implement the Relationship and Sex Education policies			
Continue implementing the rigorous schools causing concern protocol challenging schools to diminish the achievement gap by focusing on the attainment of more able and disadvantaged pupils	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Early Years Service School Improvement		
Embed working in close collaboration across services within Educational Excellence and other partners to support and challenge schools	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service School Improvement		
Work with the new super teaching hubs to facilitate appropriate and identified Continuing Professional Development for staff across all schools	School Improvement		
Work in partnership with the DfE to deliver the programme of support and challenge for Bootle Constituency schools and other identified schools	School Improvement		
Develop the Narrowing the Gap Self Improving Schools Programme Programme across all secondary schools			
Embed the partnership work to ensure that all pupils are able to access the right course post 16 and have access to effective career guidance that matches builds their aspirations	Virtual School School Improvement		
Embed and develop further support for Emotional Health and Wellbeing in all schools	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Early Years Service		
Challenge schools to reduce absence so that pupils are accessing their learning	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
Develop the provision within the Virtual School for Looked After Children and across partnerships for Children in Need and Children on a Child protection Plan to enable them to make progress.			

Priority 3. All Children and young people achieve their full potential people

How we will make this happen	LA	SIG	School
Incorporate the views of children and young people through the Education, Health and Care Plan process and throughout their school life in order to minimise barriers to learning and ensure their holistic development	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
Embed the graduated approach therefore reducing the need for children and young people to attend Resource Bases or Special Schools	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Early Years Service		
Use specialist assessments alongside school data to build a holistic profile of the child's needs and progress.	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
All children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans receive the appropriate support and placement to enable them to thrive and make the appropriate progress they are capable of making.	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
Continue to review the specialist provision across Sefton ensuring that all children and young people identified with SEND have access to quality provision within Sefton	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
In partnership develop a FAQ document to address key queries regularly raised relating to the 4 Planning for Adulthood themes – Community, Health, Independent Living and Education/Employment.	Virtual School Send Service		
Embed the NEET Case Conferencing Group to identify creative and innovative solutions to address the barriers facing individual young people.	Virtual School		
In conjunction with local FE Colleges, we will develop and expand the Supported Internship programme to increase the opportunities for young people with SEN to access paid employment	Send Service		

Priority 4. School Systems to Support Children and their Families

How we will make this happen	LA	SIG	School
Ensure sufficiency of places for ALL children	Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
For pupils with EHC Plans, in line with planned SEND Green Paper reforms, where a pupils requires placement in specialist provision, the local Inclusion Plan will set out the provision available within the local area, in order to provide families with a tailored list of schools that are appropriate to meet their needs.	Inclusion Service Send Service		
Continue and further develop a collaborative system of working with MATs	Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service School Improvement		
Design and deliver a revised strategic school improvement system which reflects a collaborative and system led approach	Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service School Improvement		



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Draft Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton

2022 - 2027

Education and training will enable every young person to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities



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Foreword

Welcome to the 2022-2027 Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton.

On the 28th March 2022 the Government published the ‘**Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child**’ White Paper. The White Paper sets out proposed reforms to the education system, focussed on providing an excellent teacher for every child, delivering high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance, targeted support for every child that needs it and a stronger and fairer school system. A key focus of the white paper is helping all children meet their potential with the right support at the right time, to ensure every child is supported with their education and broader development and well-being as we come out of the pandemic and beyond. In addition to this a **SEND Green Paper** has also been published outlining details of a reformed Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) education system which sets out to improve provision and inclusivity, to support children with SEND in mainstream and specialist settings to ensure consistently high standards in line with new national standards. The Green paper seeks to address three key challenges for children with SEND which are

- poor outcomes for children and young people with SEN or in alternative provision
- navigating the SEND system and alternative provision is not a positive experience for children, young people, and their families and
- Despite unprecedented investment, the system is not delivering value for money for children, young people and families.

It is with these 2 Government papers as the backdrop that I am pleased to share with you the 2022-2027 Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton, and I welcome the emphasis on helping all children meet their potential .

In Sefton our children and young people are the future and as such should have access to outstanding early years opportunities and receive the best quality education and support to engage positively with others in their community. They have told us we need to instill the right life skills and not judge young people by numbers and grades only. We want our children and young people to enjoy learning, make good progress which will enable them to aspire to achieve the highest outcomes so that every child and young person has a successful transition to adulthood. We will do this by working

in partnership with our early years providers and schools to ensure first class education opportunities.

In developing this strategy, we have considered our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and reflected on many of the plans and previous engagement activity within Sefton including the Children and Young People’s Plan, the Emotional health and Wellbeing Plan as well as our partnership Vision for 2030. In doing so we have linked closely to the four themes in the Children and Young People’s Plan – Heard, Happy, Healthy, Achieving.

Our vision is that, ‘All children and young people should receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential and to engage positively with others in their community’ is echoed throughout all our intended actions and impact.

Over the last two years we have made significant improvements across our Local Area respect of SEND and our work with schools during the pandemic has meant that the approach to partnership working has never been stronger. We intend to build on this partnership approach and ensure that children and young people are at the forefront of our recovery plans.

Our partnership working is key to ensuring the success of the strategy and ensuring that all our children and young people succeed. We will work closely with our partners and link closely to the Children and Young People’s Plan to ensure a joined-up approach that supports all our children and young people’s life chances.

The strategy demonstrates the Council’s role in system leadership, facilitating school leaders to lead school improvement and school to school support and sets out the clear priorities which will address the key themes and measure the progress towards the key actions.



Councillor Diane Roscoe
Cabinet Member, Education Excellence

Background Sefton 2030 Vision

Sefton Council led on the development of an exciting partnership vision for the Borough of Sefton called Sefton 2030. When developing the vision partners worked closely with our communities, including children and young people, to understand what was important to them. This is our single strategic and overarching partnership approach for the borough.

Sefton Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025

Sefton’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy takes an all-age approach (Start Well, Live Well, Age Well) to meaningful health and wellbeing for the people who live in Sefton. The overarching aims for Start Well are:

- Every child will achieve the best start in their first 1001 days
- Education and training will enable every young person to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities
- Every child and young person will have a successful transition to adulthood

In 2025 we will know if we have made a difference by raising the percentage of children achieving a good level of development from 69% to 74%; continue to reduce the proportion of our 16 – 17 Not in Education and Training (NEET) and improve the experience of transitions as measured by our annual survey and having a fully adopted joint transitions pathway.

Sefton Children and Young People’s Plan 2020/2025: My Sefton, Happy, Healthy, Achieving, Heard

This plan sets out how we intend to maximize the health and wellbeing of all our children and young people living in Sefton.

Sefton Council, NHS South Sefton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS Southport and Formby CCG, have agreed a series of priorities for future services and support. These priorities are based on what children, young people and their families have told us of their experiences and what we know about their current care.

We used Sefton’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to inform the plan to seek to ensure that children and young people’s needs are understood and met. It is based around the four themes of:

- Heard
- Happy
- Healthy
- Achieving

The Education Excellence Strategy is based around these four themes and our plan will reflect and complement its priorities and outcomes.



Emotional Health & Wellbeing Strategy

The mental health of children and young people has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, adding to an already worsening national trend of mental health decline. Approximately 200,000 young people are referred to specialist mental health services each year in England which places these services under considerable pressure. Poor emotional health and wellbeing in childhood can have a lasting impact into adulthood. Having a trusted adult that children and young people can confide in is important, especially if the child or young person has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing adverse childhood experiences.

High levels of inequality are also damaging to mental health and emotional well-being. Growing up in deprivation means an increased risk of chronic exposure to stress and adverse conditions. These can have lasting impact on the mental health and wellbeing of someone across their life course and lead to the disproportionate burden of mental ill health being experienced by our most vulnerable residents.

Sefton has made good progress over recent years in improving and expanding its service offer to children and young people – including KOOTH, Mental Health Support Teams, etc - ensuring it meets their needs and is accessible to all. We will continue to work with education to improve their ability to support children and young people to stay in education. Part of this will include ensuring that schools and colleges implement all new guidance/initiatives and best practice in a structured and impactful way. Consistency and equitable coverage is key when considering the education practices in order to benefit children and young people regardless of where they are in Sefton. This work will complement the Sefton Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing Strategy 2021-26 and the Children and Young People's Plan 2020/25.



Education Excellence in Sefton – Vision

All children and young people receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.



Education - National Context

The Department for Education strategy 2015 to 2020: world-class education and care has yet to be updated. The COVID 19 pandemic impacted significantly on children's school life and this led to education attainment data not being gathered at local area and national level during 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Schools continue to assess and monitor attainment and progress locally. Young people were assessed at GCSE and A Level in 2019 – 2020 through the Centre Assessment Grades (CAG) and awarded grades accordingly. In 2020 – 2021 GCSE and A Level grades were awarded through Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG).

The local authority has clear statutory duties to promote excellence and the highest standards for all Sefton children; irrespective of what establishment they attend and this includes; -

Schools White Paper, 28 March 2022 - The White Paper covers teaching and leadership in schools, preventing and tackling under-performance, curriculum reform, governance & standards and fair funding for schools, which is the subject of a separate consultation. Every school to become an academy.

SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) green paper: responding to the consultation The green paper has been published alongside a white paper: Opportunities for All: Strong Schools with Great Teachers for Your Child . It sets out the government's vision for new attainment targets in literacy and numeracy, an academy-led education system and a drive to increase attendance.

The Education and Adoption Bill - this introduced measures to improve school standards across the country, as part of the Government's commitment to delivering real social justice. These measures are intended to speed up the process by which failing maintained schools become sponsored academies, ensuring there is no delay in giving children the education they deserve.

The Special Education Needs (SEN) Code of Practice January 2015 outlines the statutory duties of head teachers and principals, governing bodies, school and college staff, SEN coordinators and early education providers providing for pupils with SEN through the graduated approach to meeting needs from Quality First Teaching through to the Education, Health and Care Plan, (EHCP) assessment and review process.

There were an estimated 797,000 young people in the UK who were NEET in October to December 2020; this increased by 39,000 compared with July to September 2020 and was up by 34,000 compared with October to December 2019.

The new National Disability Strategy came into force on 28th July 2021. It sets out to improve the lives of all people with disabilities. It is split into four parts including the introduction; part 1 the immediate commitments to improving disabled people's lives; part 2 including people in policy making and service delivery and part 3 which focuses on a summary of the actions each government department will take.

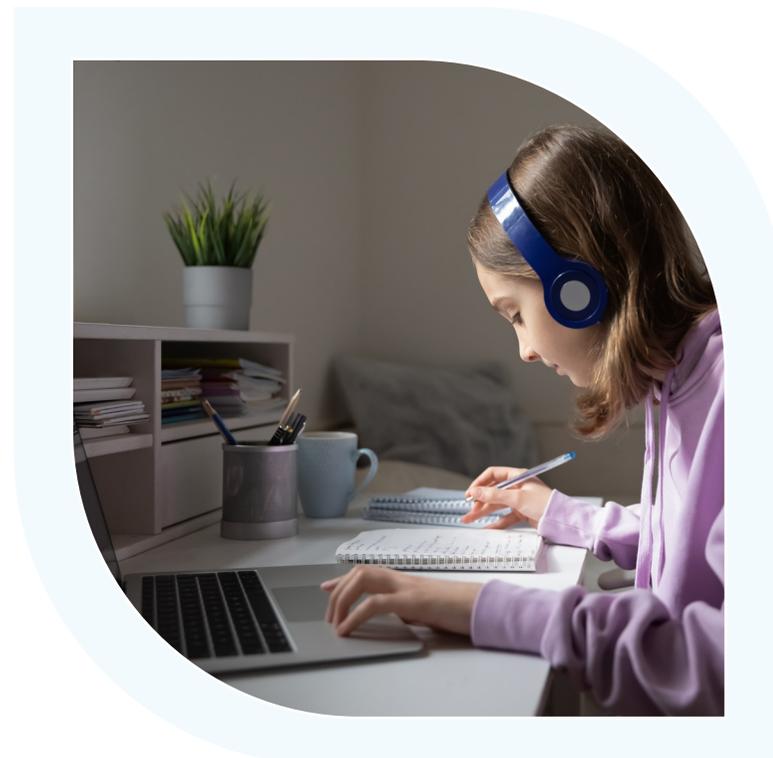
The education section focuses on a review of actions to improve outcomes for children with SEND; increasing funding; extending continuing professional development and investing to strengthen parents and young people's participation; improving supported internships and increasing the number of disabled people undertaking apprenticeships

Education – Local Context

Over recent years the educational landscape has changes, the local authority (LA) exercises a range of roles and responsibilities with local education providers. The LA works positively with maintained faith and community schools, alternative provision, early years settings, special schools, academies, sponsors, independent schools and further and adult education providers who comprise a part of the mixed economy of local education provision. We view the local authority as the system leader and a champion for all the learners in the borough. Our approach to excellence in education and learning is a collaborative one, working in partnership with key groups to improve knowledge and expertise across the borough.

Covid 19 Pandemic

Throughout the pandemic Education Excellence teams worked closely with schools providing both support and challenge. Together they implemented new ways of working, Some of the changes that have taken place include the creation of the Education Collaborative Group, born out of the weekly Covid Schools' and Children's Services Cell Group.



All schools experienced disruption during this period and the majority of children and young people in Sefton have had a period of time when they were not in school but accessing remote learning and as a result their learning was disrupted. The pandemic had a massive impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of many children and young people and through our Emotional Health and Wellbeing offer we are working hard to ensure they can access support early and that our schools are equipped to support them.



40,374
CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE

EARLY YEARS CHILDREN

- Jan 21 census we funded:
720 x 2 yr olds and 3757 x 3/4 yr olds
(on the universal 15 hrs offer)
Total of 4477 children.

(Also to note that the figures for Jan 21 were low, due to slightly reduced funding claims due to the pandemic).

- 38,123 pupils on roll across primary, secondary and special schools

ETHNICITY

- 10% of the school children in Sefton are of Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) heritage compared to 34% Nationally
- 6% have English as an additional language (EAL) (up slightly on the previous year), compared to 19% Nationally and 15% in the Northwest

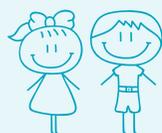
OCTOBER 2021 SCHOOL CENSUS DATA

- Total school population 40,047 Children
- Number of children with an Education, Health & Care Plan 3.6% (1432)
- Number of children with SEN support 12.1% (4,839)
- Number of children receiving no extra support 84.3% (33,776)



102
SCHOOLS

- 3 Nursery Schools
- 3 Infant Schools
- 2 Junior Schools
- 70 Primary Schools
- 19 Secondary Schools
- 5 Special Schools
- 2 pupil referral unit and 1 14 to 16 college
- 1 School Improvement Board
- 6 school improvement groups
- Education Collaboration Group
- SAPH - Sefton Association of Primary Headteachers
- SASH - Sefton Association of Secondary Headteachers



222
EARLY YEARS
PROVIDERS

- 45 nurseries
- 25 pre-schools
- 71 childminders
- 23 standalone holiday playschemes/out of school clubs
- 55 schools with nurseries(maintained/academies)
- 3 independent school nurseries



86%

Early Years settings to be judged by OfSTED to be good or better



73%

Of Schools judged by OfSTED to be good or better (83% Primary Schools and 63% Secondary)



3.5%

SEND NEET for 16-24 year olds has reduced 2.5% year on year

Children and Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or Activity Unknown in Sefton

A young person aged 16 to 24 who is not currently in education, employment or training is considered to be NEET. They are considered to be in education or training if:-

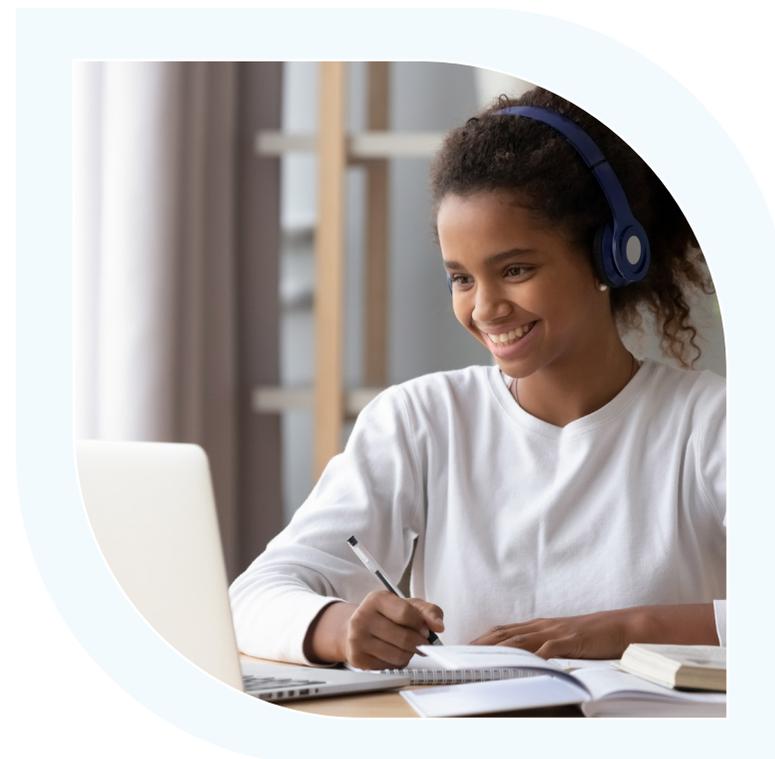
- they are enrolled on an education course and are still attending or waiting for term to (re)start
- they are doing an apprenticeship
- they are on a government supported employment or training programme
- they are working or studying towards a qualification, or
- they have had job-related training or education in the last 4 weeks

“In employment” includes all people in some form of paid work, including those working part-time. People not in employment are classed as either unemployed or economically inactive. Unemployed people are those who have been looking for work in the past 4 weeks and who are available to start work within the next 2 weeks.

Economically inactive people are those who have not been looking for work and/or who are not available to start work. Examples of economically inactive people include those not looking for work because they are students and those who are looking after dependents at home. These definitions are based on those recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Activity Unknown refers to young people with an unknown education, employment or training status.

- As of July 2021 Sefton currently has the lowest percentage of NEET and unknown young people across the Liverpool City Region (3.8%).
- Sefton is performing better than the North West NEET & Not Known combined measure
- Sefton is performing better than the England NEET & Not Known combined measure



A sharper focus on the disadvantaged

The priority across Sefton and the wider partnerships is to sharpen our focus on the most disadvantaged groups of children in our education settings and communities. We know that children and young people with SEND; children and young people eligible for free school meals (FSM); looked after children (LAC); Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and those in need of protection still perform less well than their peers. This has a negative impact on their life chances.

- We will hold high aspirations for these children and work together across all education settings and across the system to improve their life chances.
- We will collectively act as champions for vulnerable children and young people by using achievement, attendance and exclusion data, safeguarding intelligence and learner and parent/carer voice data to support and challenge each other when we recognise that these children and young people are not being well served.
- We will target our resources to improve outcomes and opportunities for these children and young people, using evidence-based approaches to secure improvements.
- We will strive to ensure that as many of our young people in Sefton continue to participate in education, training or employment after the age of 16 through tracking their participation rates and ensuring that rates of NEET are kept as low as possible
- We will continue to ensure that additional support for NEET young people who are vulnerable are supported from the age of 14 to enable them to re-engage in learning We will learn from each other and share what is working well to secure outcomes for all children regardless of their educational or physical needs, their family background, the school they attend or the neighbourhood where they live.
- We will work in partnership with our schools, Children's Social Care and other partners to ensure that all our care leavers are supported in making the right choices for their future education or training enabling them to make a positive transition.

- We will ensure there are pathways for young people whose education outcomes have missed their full potential to re-enter education, training or employment after the age of 19 which build upon their employability and enable them to move into sustainable prosperity



4 PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 1

Excellent teachers supported by excellent staff



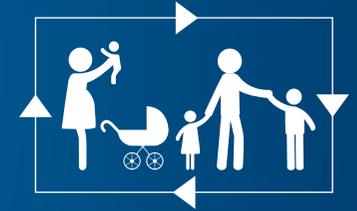
PRIORITY 2

Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills to prepare for adulthood



PRIORITY 3

All Children and young people achieve their full potential people



PRIORITY 4

School Systems to Support Children and their Families

Education Excellence – Priorities

Key to achieving our priorities - We have drawn our priorities from the White paper 'Opportunities for All' in collaboration with key stakeholders.

Priority 1. Excellent teachers supported by excellent staff (Excellent teacher)

We know high quality education is the greatest liberator so want all pupils to be taught by excellent teachers and make at least 'good progress' in every year of their education. Teachers will be supported by a fully trained workforce enabling them to provide outstanding teaching and learning.

This can only be achieved through partnership work with key partners including Sefton School Improvement Group, School Improvement Board, School Centred Initial Teacher Training, research schools, hubs and ensuring high quality professional development opportunities for all staff. Giving all teachers and school leaders access to world class evidence based training and professional development at every stage of their career will help recruit and retain high quality teachers.

In Sefton we realise the quality of teaching is the single most important school factor in improving outcomes for children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leadership and classroom teaching influence children's learning.



We will:

- Support school leaders and staff in ensuring a culture to address well-being and take account of teacher workload
- Ensure a robust system of challenge and support where all teachers work in a good or better setting and a high quality workforce is retained across Sefton Children's Social Care
- Collaborate with school leaders and stakeholders to ensure the recruitment and retention of effective practitioners in order that the education system in Sefton provides an inclusive education, good outcomes, meets the needs of all children and raises their aspirations preparing them for the next stage in their education and lives.
- In partnership provide a range of evidence based, effective continuing professional development programmes e.g. Support with Early Career Teacher, quality leadership development programme, National Professional Qualification, research projects, trauma informed practice
- Engage with and support schools to engage with the new Leadership Special Educational Needs Coordinator NPQ proposed by the SEND Green Paper
- Ensure a system wide approach to whole school development in relation to school staff's SEND knowledge and training received.
- Adopt the Family Valued approach which aims to work restoratively and relationally with children and families in a way which respects and values their experience.

Priority 2. Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills to prepare for adulthood. (High quality curriculum and attendance, behaviour)

Every child will be taught a broad and ambitious curriculum in a school with high expectations and strong standards of behaviour. We will work with all partners, parents/ carers and schools so that Sefton's children and young people are educated in the setting or school which is right for them and which best meets their needs. There will be a broad and balanced curriculum equipping them with the life skills they need to be independent and successful as an adult. Pathways will prepare young people for education, employment and training. The focus will be on ensuring our children leave school with the right skills and opportunities to achieve which will also value the contribution of sport, cultural, social and health education, how to deal with bullying and strategies to promote their health and well being. Learning does not stop once a young person leaves school and we want them to have the desire and opportunities to keep on learning and developing.

Key to success is collaboration with school leaders, providers and stakeholders to ensure that the education system in Sefton provides an inclusive education that delivers excellent outcomes, meets the needs of all children, young people, raises their aspirations and prepares them for the next stage in their education and lives. We will support collaborative hubs for training, transition between schools, and sharing best practice through the Virtual School, Inclusion team, and multi-agency forums so that our children benefit from teachers and practitioners who work together to support each other and share knowledge and expertise.

We recognise the impact poor attendance/regular absence has on children's' safety, attainment and behaviour. A key priority in Sefton is to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly. We will work with colleagues in schools and Children's Social Care to ensure families are supported where their circumstances create a barrier to attendance.

We will:

- Collaborate with partners and early years providers to promote school readiness
- Support all early years settings to develop a broad ambitious curriculum underpinned by strong foundations to secure the basics of literacy and numeracy.
- Practitioners will ensure the voice of the child is heard to identify their interests, motivators and characteristics of effective learning and use this to good effect in promoting or accelerating progress
- Monitor the attendance and outcomes of our most vulnerable children in order to plan and implement strategies to address their particular needs and improve outcomes
- Through our robust system of challenge and support ensure that every school has a well designed and sequenced curriculum which builds knowledge in a broad range of subjects.
- Will recognise the importance of schools in the collaborative process to work with key partners e.g. regional hubs to provide guidance and training on the quality of provision of reading and mathematics
- Work with Department for Education and schools to address poor attendance and identify specific areas in need of improvement
- Collaborate with schools and behaviour hubs to strengthen and outline approaches to behaviour, interventions and services, to support early years' settings and schools to ensure the needs of all children and young people are identified early, understood and effectively addressed in order to support good attendance and prevent the use of exclusion wherever possible.
- Develop an Inclusion Strategy that sets out the approaches and support available to, and standards expected of, mainstream settings in supporting their pupils' learning needs.
- A senior mental health leader in every school by 2025
- Support inclusive and innovative practice that promotes the wellbeing and emotional health of our children and young people
- Support young people so they are aware of the variety post-16 pathways which help address local skills needs and prepare them for the next stage in their education and adult life.

Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022 - 2027

- Partner with setting, schools a, colleges and providers to provide effective transitions at all stages
- Further develop our borough-wide partnership approach across all phases of education to provide young people with access to clear pathways that link education to the world of work in a way that is relevant to the local labour market including regeneration and investment programmes
- Develop local processes in line with the proposed national standards for SEN in relation to transition to ensure consistent, timely, high -quality transition preparation for children and young people with SEND.
- Continue to develop the supported internships and traineeships programmes to provide more young people with SEND with the skills they need to secure and sustain paid employment.
- Develop opportunities to consider the impact of sustainability through climate education, green skills and career opportunities
- Collaborate with schools and behaviour hubs to strengthen and outline approaches to behaviour, interventions and services, to support early years' settings and schools to ensure the needs of all children and young people are identified early, understood and effectively addressed in order to support good attendance and prevent the use of exclusion wherever possible.



Priority 3. All Children and young people achieve their full potential people (Targeted support for every child who needs it)

A great start will shape children's lifelong health and wellbeing. In collaboration with key partners including health and social care we will ensure all children have good social and emotional support. Together we will support and sustain improved all round outcomes for every child including the disadvantaged which narrows the gap.

We want all children to have the best life chances, including those with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will enhance joint commissioning of support between education, health and care services for children with SEND to ensure services work together effectively. Attendance and progress of our Children in Need will be monitored so that we can best understand their needs and plan effective measures of support We will ensure all children will have access to an educational setting that is appropriate to their needs.

Every child in Sefton who falls behind in English or maths will get the right support to get back on track.

We will:

- Challenge aspirations and ambitions for all children and young people dispelling misconceptions by supporting children and young people to achieve their goals
- Listen to children's and their families' voices to get the right support and help at the right time
- From the earliest point in a child's life provide families with timely access to support so their experience improves and the needs of their children are identified early and effectively met
- Collectively act as champions for vulnerable children when we recognise that they are not being served
- Incorporate the views of children and young people with SEND, children looked after and children with a social worker in order to minimise barriers to learning and ensure the holistic development of children and young people

- Through training and development, we will maximise the effectiveness of quality first teaching and assessment to promote swift identification of need and target appropriate, evidence based intervention
- Direct schools to the Department for Education recommendations around the effective use of pupil premium funding to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged children
- Collaborate with settings and schools to ensure quality transition for all pupils at each key stage with the opportunities for personalised programmes where needed
- Ensure schools are fully aware of their responsibilities to keep all parents/ carers informed of their child's progress when they are falling behind and what is being done to address this
- In partnership with schools and children's services be aspirational for the outcomes for children looked after
- Implement the National Standards for SEND that the government reforms will introduce to ensure consistency of how needs are identified and met at every stage of a child's journey across education, health and care.
- Implement planned new requirements to create and distribute an alternative provision-specific budget to give alternative provision schools the funding stability to deliver a service focused on early intervention, and work with those provisions to adhere to the performance framework which will be in place.
- Develop a local Inclusion Plan in line with Green Paper recommendations
- Provide children and their families with the right support at the right time

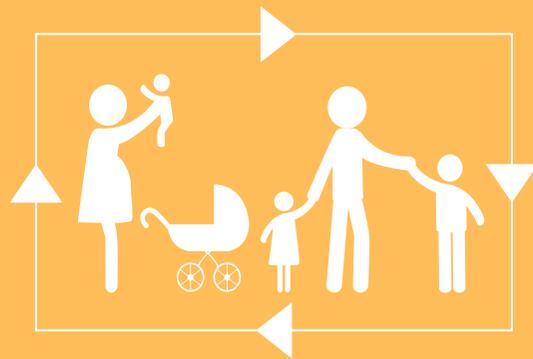


Priority 4. School Systems to Support Children and their Families (A stronger and fairer school system)

We wish to ensure our Sefton family of schools are fully prepared for this transition. We aim to achieve this through the actions laid out in priorities 1, 2 and 3. Sefton wishes to work in partnership creating an optimum environment for schools to realise their potential and succeed in these areas on their journey to become a member of a strong trust.

Sefton will utilise the opportunities given as part of the Opportunity Areas programme. This will support the adoption of the family valued approach enhancing a joined-up approach with all key partners to secure the best outcomes for children..

All children in Sefton will benefit from high quality and inclusive education, school improvement, strategic governance, financial management and workforce.



We will:

- Ensure sufficiency of places for ALL children
- For pupils with EHC Plans, in line with planned SEND Green Paper reforms, where a pupils requires placement in specialist provision, the local Inclusion Plan will set out the provision available within the local area, in order to provide families with a tailored list of schools that are appropriate to meet their needs.
- Continue and further develop a collaborative system of working with MATs
- Design and deliver a revised strategic school improvement system which reflects a collaborative and system led approach
- Continue to support and challenge Schools Causing Concern and grow capacity to deliver effective support and challenge around quality school improvement
- Use data and local intelligence effectively to identify key strengths and areas for development to enable us to address inconsistencies, share best practice and drive up standards
- Further enhance the partnership working with School Improvement Groups building on the successful projects undertaken by them
- Continue to grow and develop the partnership work with the Research School to provide evidence based support
- Work in collaboration with schools and academies to provide places for all children in good or better settings and schools
- Engage with the planned new national and local SEND data dashboards to ensure that the right information is collected in the right way at the right time to enable timely responses to local needs.
- Implement planned changes to the SEND national funding system to ensure the most effective use of high needs funding to support schools.

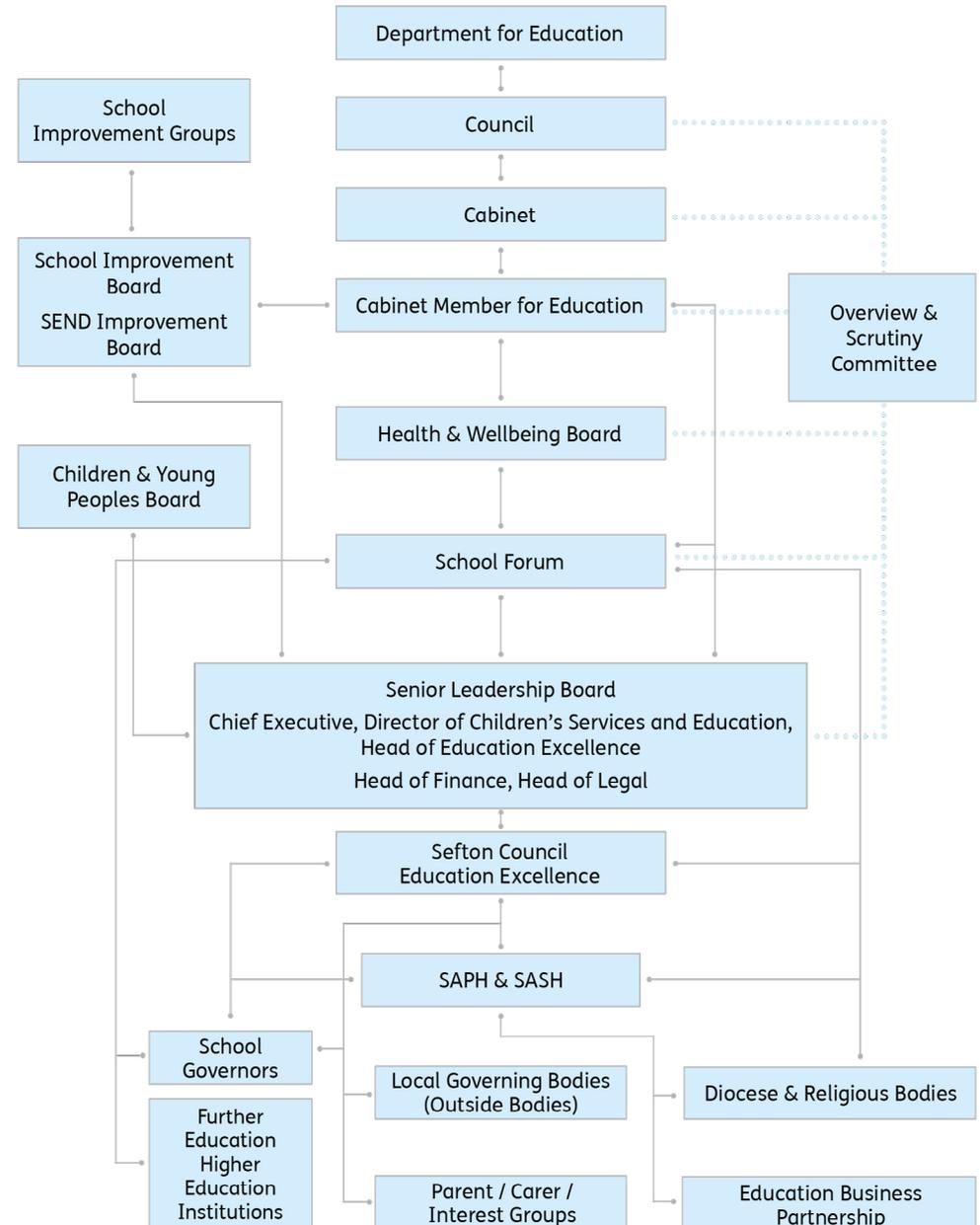
How will we make this happen?

Governance:

Strong governance is essential to success and Education Excellence is answerable to several boards including SEND Continuous Improvement Board; Emotional Health & Wellbeing Board; School Improvement Board as well as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council.

Each of the priorities is underpinned by action plans linked to the four key themes of Heard, Happy, Healthy, Achieving and reviewed each year. Progress against the priorities will be reviewed and monitored regularly to ensure that our approach is responsive to emerging needs, challenges and opportunities.

Good governance and accountability is a two-way relationship and where Sefton has concerns regarding the provision in schools, the process as set out in Sefton's Arrangements for Monitoring and Intervention of School Performance will be invoked.



Partnership:

If we are to succeed in our ambitions, then we need to build on the excellent relationships established over the last year. We will work with all partners, parents/ carers and schools so that Sefton's children and young people are educated in the school which is right for them and which best meets their needs. It is essential for all partners to work together to help Sefton achieve the vision that, **'all children and young people receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.'**

Effective collaboration and partnership with Teaching Hubs, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), standalone academies and all other schools will support raising pupil outcomes.

Partners have a key role in enabling children and young people to be the best they can be. Partnership working with secondary schools, colleges, providers and local businesses will have crucial roles in ensuring that our young people are able to develop the skills and attributes through aspirational courses that enable them to be successful in the workplace.

Alongside our academic ambitions is the need to work with Public Health, the Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of all children and young people particularly as we recover from the Covid pandemic.



Delivering Our Priorities:

If we are to succeed in our ambitions, then we need to build on the excellent relationships established over the last year. We will work with all partners, parents/ carers and schools so that Sefton’s children and young people are educated in the school which is right for them and which best meets their needs. It is essential for all partners to work together to help Sefton achieve the vision that, **‘all children and young people receive an education in Sefton which enables them to reach their individual potential, have a clear pathway to further education, employment and engage positively with others in their community.’** Effective collaboration and partnership with Teaching Hubs, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), standalone academies and all other schools will support raising pupil outcomes. Partners have a key role in enabling children

and young people to be the best they can be. Partnership working with secondary schools, colleges, providers and local businesses will have crucial roles in ensuring that our young people are able to develop the skills and attributes through aspirational courses that enable them to be successful in the workplace.

Alongside our academic ambitions is the need to work with Public Health, the Clinical Commissioning Group and other health partners to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of all children and young people particularly as we recover from the Covid pandemic.

Priority 1. Excellent teachers supported by excellent staff

How we will make this happen	LA	SIG	School
Implement the New Early Years Foundation Stage Framework in schools and private, voluntary and independent settings	Early Years Service		
Develop partnership between Private, voluntary and independent Nurseries/Schools and Family Wellbeing Centres to support early identification and appropriate support.	Educational Psychology Service Early Years Service		
Embed the Early Years ‘First Response’ function for vulnerable children	Early Years Service		
Joint working with colleagues in Health and Early Help	Educational Psychology Inclusion Service Send Service Service Early Years Service		
Ensure that young children are supported by key adults in order to enjoy good physical, mental and emotional wellbeing	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Early Years Service		
Enhance existing pathways across agencies working with children ensuring their development is promoted consistently, and risks of delay are identified and addressed early.	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
Work with all early years’ providers to support speech and language programmes	Early Years Service		

Priority 2. Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills to prepare for adulthood

How we will make this happen	LA	SIG	School
Provide an Agreed Religious Education Syllabus for all non-maintained Primary and Secondary Schools that allows pupils to share their religious views and consider life values	Sefton SACRE		
All primary schools implement the new statutory Relationships Education policy and all secondary schools implement the Relationship and Sex Education policies			
Continue implementing the rigorous schools causing concern protocol challenging schools to diminish the achievement gap by focusing on the attainment of more able and disadvantaged pupils	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Early Years Service School Improvement		
Embed working in close collaboration across services within Educational Excellence and other partners to support and challenge schools	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service School Improvement		
Work with the new super teaching hubs to facilitate appropriate and identified Continuing Professional Development for staff across all schools	School Improvement		
Work in partnership with the DfE to deliver the programme of support and challenge for Bootle Constituency schools and other identified schools	School Improvement		
Develop the Narrowing the Gap Self Improving Schools Programme Programme across all secondary schools			
Embed the partnership work to ensure that all pupils are able to access the right course post 16 and have access to effective career guidance that matches builds their aspirations	Virtual School School Improvement		
Embed and develop further support for Emotional Health and Wellbeing in all schools	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Early Years Service		
Challenge schools to reduce absence so that pupils are accessing their learning	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
Develop the provision within the Virtual School for Looked After Children and across partnerships for Children in Need and Children on a Child protection Plan to enable them to make progress.			

Priority 3. All Children and young people achieve their full potential people

How we will make this happen	LA	SIG	School
Incorporate the views of children and young people through the Education, Health and Care Plan process and throughout their school life in order to minimise barriers to learning and ensure their holistic development	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
Embed the graduated approach therefore reducing the need for children and young people to attend Resource Bases or Special Schools	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Early Years Service		
Use specialist assessments alongside school data to build a holistic profile of the child's needs and progress.	Educational Psychology Service Virtual School Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
All children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans receive the appropriate support and placement to enable them to thrive and make the appropriate progress they are capable of making.	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
Continue to review the specialist provision across Sefton ensuring that all children and young people identified with SEND have access to quality provision within Sefton	Educational Psychology Service Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
In partnership develop a FAQ document to address key queries regularly raised relating to the 4 Planning for Adulthood themes – Community, Health, Independent Living and Education/Employment.	Virtual School Send Service		
Embed the NEET Case Conferencing Group to identify creative and innovative solutions to address the barriers facing individual young people.	Virtual School		
In conjunction with local FE Colleges, we will develop and expand the Supported Internship programme to increase the opportunities for young people with SEN to access paid employment	Send Service		

Priority 4. School Systems to Support Children and their Families

How we will make this happen	LA	SIG	School
Ensure sufficiency of places for ALL children	Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service		
For pupils with EHC Plans, in line with planned SEND Green Paper reforms, where a pupils requires placement in specialist provision, the local Inclusion Plan will set out the provision available within the local area, in order to provide families with a tailored list of schools that are appropriate to meet their needs.	Inclusion Service Send Service		
Continue and further develop a collaborative system of working with MATs	Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service School Improvement		
Design and deliver a revised strategic school improvement system which reflects a collaborative and system led approach	Inclusion Service Send Service Early Years Service School Improvement		



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Agenda Item 7

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 6 October 2022
Subject:	Extension of Parking & Environmental Enforcement Contract		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection)	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Y	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	N		

Summary: To seek a six month extension to the contract for the provision of Parking and Environmental Enforcement, Cash Collection and Car Park Management.

Recommendation(s):

(1) It is recommended that the Assistant Director (Place) - Highways and Public Protection, in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be authorised to agree a six-month extension to the contract for the provision of Parking and Environmental Enforcement, Cash Collection and Car Park Management.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s): To ensure continued provision of a statutory service until the tender exercise can be completed

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: No other options are available

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The cost of the extension to the contract will be met from the existing budget within the service.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital cost implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

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Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): There are no Financial, IT, staffing, or asset resource implications other than the cost of the contract extension which will be met from the existing budget within the service.	
Legal Implications: Procurement Regulatory Framework and Contract Procedure Rules	
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
Extension of the contract will ensure on-going parking enforcement to reduce congestion and consequently reduce emissions	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Continued enforcement will contribute towards how safe and happy residents and visitors feel when living or visiting an area. Parking enforcement helps ensure that designated parking spaces for disabled people are not used by able bodied people and helps ensure safe access along highways is maintained.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Will make people feel safer and more confident to go out or use facilities within the community
Commission, broker and provide core services: Sefton Council has a statutory duty to take steps to maintain traffic movements, prevent road traffic collisions and assist road users
Place – leadership and influencer: Not Applicable
Drivers of change and reform: Not Applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: On going enforcement contributes towards maintaining access for all and improving the local environmental quality of the Borough.
Greater income for social investment: Not Applicable
Cleaner Greener – Continued parking and environmental enforcement will contribute to maintaining a cleaner, greener Sefton.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6953/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5153/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations – With the current service provider

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer:	Dave Marrin
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 4295
Email Address:	dave.marrin@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Agenda Item 7

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Parking and Environmental Enforcement Contract is due to terminate on the 31st March 2023 and officers in Highways & Public Protection have been discussing the process for retendering the contract with the Council's Procurement Service Manager.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, officers have regularly monitored contract performance and are satisfied that the contractor has performed well throughout the period of contract.
- 1.3 The Procurement Service Manager has indicated that there is an opportunity to extend the contract for a period of up to six months, and the current Contractor has indicated a willingness to continue to deliver the contract in line with the current contract terms. This would provide the Council with improved price certainty for the delivery of the current service, at a time of rapidly increasing costs, and thereby assist effective budget management over the next 12 months.
- 1.4 Officers are satisfied that extending the Contract for 6 months would continue to offer best value to the Council over this period, when considering the combination of cost, quality and efficiency that the contract, current contractor, and proposed approach provides.
- 1.5 Over this time period, A Public Contract Regulations compliant procurement process will be carried out in order to secure a replacement contract from the extended termination date.
- 1.6 It therefore proposed to extend the current contract for a period of six months from 1st April 2023.

Agenda Item 8

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 October 2022
Subject:	Digital Inclusion Strategy		
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:

This report seeks to present to Cabinet the Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022 -2025 for Sefton. It will set out how it has been developed, and the proposed next steps in terms of programme development

Recommendation(s):

That the Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 be approved

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To ensure that a clear strategy and programme of work exists to support Digital Inclusion across Sefton to deliver the following vision;

To develop a place where Sefton Residents and organisations understand the benefits of digital, feel safe and confident online and are supported to develop their skills and thrive in an increasingly digital world.

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

Not applicable

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

No direct cost implications due to the delivery of the Strategic Documentation, where costs are to be incurred for specific programmes of work the appropriate decision-making process will be followed to obtain approval for any associated spend.

Implications of the Proposals:

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

Financial:

No direct cost implications due to the delivery of the Strategic Documentation, where costs are to be incurred for the delivery of specific projects the appropriate decision-making process will be followed to obtain approval for any associated spend.

IT:

The strategy complements and supports the overarching Digital Strategy of Sefton Council

Staffing:

Not applicable

Assets:

Not applicable

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications

Equality Implications:

Please refer to the attached equality impact assessment.

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 report predominately focuses on the use of existing digital tools or resources by residents of Sefton and increasing the skills, abilities and access to such resources across Sefton. The focus is therefore upon equality of access to existing digital resources rather than new resources, thereby having a neutral affect upon the climate change agenda.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:

This strategy aims to ensure that the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available and known to everyone.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

<p>This strategy describes a partnership approach to service delivery, ensuring alignment to key principles of inclusion as well as recognising the role of voluntary organisations.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services:</p> <p>The strategy sets out a strategic direction and clear priorities for digital inclusion over the next three years</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer:</p> <p>The strategy supports the wider 2030 vision for Sefton and Sefton’s Digital Strategy</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform:</p> <p>This project supports the delivery of the Council’s ambitious change programme and 2030 vision and Sefton’s Digital Strategy.</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</p> <p>The strategy is aims to support residents of Sefton to obtain Digital skills to support not only general access to services available online but to improve employment opportunities.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment:</p> <p>The potential for added Social Value will be included within the underpinning work programmes where appropriate</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener</p> <p>This strategy will not have a direct deliverables in relation to Climate Change.</p>

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6951/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5151/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Executive leaders Directors across the Council and Cabinet Members have been consulted on the content of this report feedback incorporated where relevant.

(B) External Consultations

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To ensure alignment of the strategy to the wider Liverpool City Region, (LCR) the author has reviewed associated strategies from LCR colleagues as well as local and regional strategic documentation and consulted on the Strategy Document with the LCR lead for Digital Inclusion.

To ensure alignment to the Integrated Care Programmes associated with Digital Inclusion the author has consulted with the ICS Lead for Digital Inclusion

To ensure alignment to Sefton Place priorities consultation has taken place via partnership engagement meetings.

Further consultation has taken place with key partner agencies via email including; One Vision Housing, the Department for Work and Pensions, VOLA, Sefton CVS and the ICS.

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer:	Helen Spreadbury
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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022

Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022 Easy Read Version

Digital Inclusion Strategy Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers:

The following background papers, can be accessed on the Council website:

[The Digital Strategy for Sefton 2021/2023](#)

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Access to services and information digitally is becoming the norm for many, however recent data tells us that over 5% of residents in Sefton have either never used the internet, or not used the internet in the last three months. The Covid-19 Pandemic has exacerbated the marginalisation of those without either the basic skills and/or financial or practical means to access digital connectivity. During the pandemic we have seen a significant digital shift, with large organisations moving to offer online only services, moving away from face-to-face provision. This journey had already begun, but the pandemic provided a significant catalyst in speeding up this transformation.

1.2 The Digital Strategy for Sefton 2021-2023 outlined the following actions in relation to Digital Inclusion within Theme Two, Empowering Residents:

- Form a digital inclusion partnership with relevant partner organisations to develop a joint digital inclusion strategy for the Borough
- Work with faith/voluntary/charity sectors to ensure that Sefton Council's digital offer meets the needs of different groups
- Ensure that participation in digital skills training is monitored to identify and shape the offer too hard to reach groups
- Improve the end user devices and software available for public use in Libraries
- Ensure that Libraries staff are suitably trained to support customers
- Work with partners to improve internet access and access to digital skills training across the borough
- Explore opportunities for public Wi-Fi in town centres

1.3 This Digital Inclusion Strategy outlines the following key principles, which have been endorsed by key partners ;

- Put people at the heart of everything we do
- Design for the outcome and be inclusive to build trust
- Test assumptions, make, learn, and iterate
- Do the hard work to make it simple
- Ensure staff and volunteers understand what basic digital skills are and provide opportunity to learn and improve on their own basic digital skills
- Commit support and resources to a co-ordinated approach to Digital Inclusion and Digital Skills activities across Sefton
- Share best practice to ensure digital inclusion activity impact is maximised and measured.
- Leave no one behind by ensuring there is support for those who cannot or choose not to use online to enable equal opportunity for everyone to use our services
- Provide a framework which enables residents to have access to digital equipment, skills training, and opportunities for them to learn and have support
- Promote the benefits of digital in ways that residents can see how this will help them
- Keep things simple by using common language and create trust with our online services
- Ensure our residents understand how to protect themselves online
- Where possible, use our responsibilities under the Social Value Act to use commissioning as a tool to drive Digital Inclusion
- Maximise and align funding opportunities that could progress Digital Inclusion
- Ensure that our strategy is fit for purpose, supporting the radical changes in technology, demand, and skills by committing to annual reviews

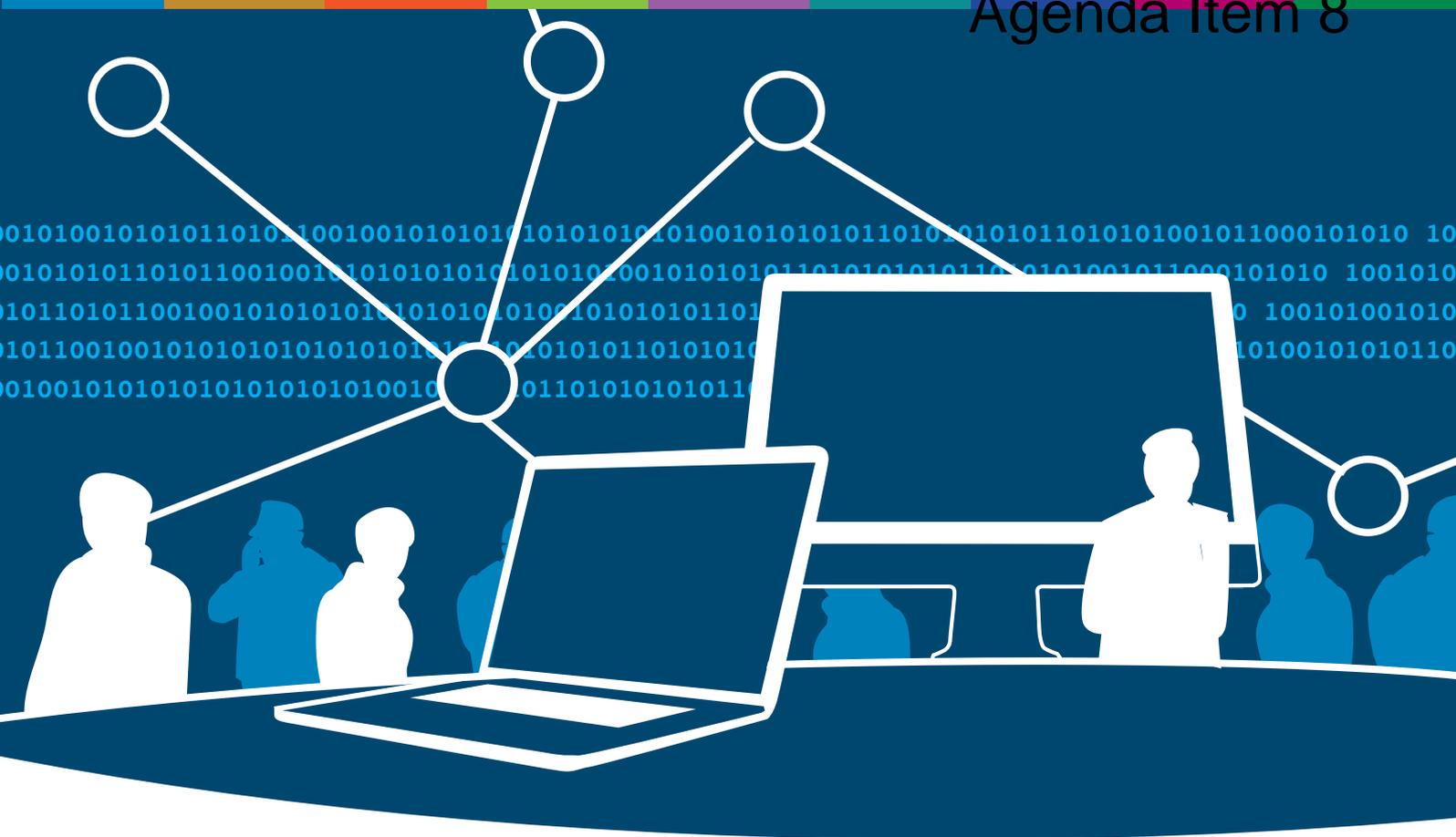
Process of Development

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- 2.1 Significant engagement activity has been undertaken to ensure alignment of the key priorities within the strategy to local and regional priorities. The strategy is deliberately aligned to a three-year document, due to the rapid pace of change in this area.
- 2.2 This Strategy for Sefton has been developed in close partnership with key partners including, Liverpool City Region, the Integrated Care Service, Health, DWP, Housing Organisations and the Voluntary Sector.
- 2.3 Over the next three years the delivery of the Strategy will be reflected in the development of a programme of work linked to the action plan within the strategy, as detailed on pages 14 and 15 of the strategy.
- 2.4 The progress and impact of the strategy will link to the governance in place for the overarching Digital Strategy, which is being driven through Digital Programme boards, each chaired by a member of SLB accountable for the delivery of the key programmes and projects documented with the strategy. Quarterly reports on progress of all programmes, including Digital Inclusion are presented to the Executive Leadership Team, with regular updates provided to Cllr Lappin, Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services and Overview and Scrutiny.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 As highlighted within this paper, digital access and skills are now becoming a universal requirement to access many services, including key services such as Health and Benefits. Therefore, in line with Sefton Digital's Strategy this Digital Inclusion Strategy outlines the work needed to ensure that all residents are enabled to take advantage of the potential digital brings both at home and in work.
- 3.2 Following strategy approval a programme of work will be developed to support the detailed action plan, which will include measurable outcomes to evidence impact and improvement, the development of the programme as a multi-agency place based priority should remove duplication of effort and ensure the efficient deployment of local capacity.



Sefton Residents Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025

Foreword

Access to services and information digitally is becoming the norm for many, however recent data tells us that approximately 6.5% (18,000) of residents in Sefton have either never used the internet, or not used the internet in the last 3 months. Those who are unable to access the internet risk missing out on the benefits that the internet can offer. A lack of digital skills and access can have a huge negative impact on a person’s life, leading to:

- poorer health outcomes and a lower life expectancy,
- increased loneliness and social isolation,
- less access to jobs and education.

This Digital Inclusion Strategy has been developed through a multi-sector approach which is crucial in bringing co-ordination and learning between organisations to embed digital activities for the benefit of our residents and organisations.

Across Sefton, we want to ensure that residents and organisations feel confident and supported to go online and to take full advantage of the benefits that can be offered to them. We want residents and organisations to have access where possible and most of all, for them to feel motivated and to understand how digital resources can make their lives easier.

Digital inclusion is about ensuring the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available and known to everyone, enabling individuals to improve their quality of life, employability, health, and wellbeing. Access to digital services is evolving, with new and emerging technology changing how individuals access digital tools to support independence, without necessarily being aware they are digitally active. Sensor technology, smart speakers (Alexa, Google, Apple) are providing different types of interaction with assistive aids that can help people stay independent at home for longer. It is acknowledged that for the next twenty years or so there will be a cohort of people who can’t or won’t go online and for whom a safety net of provision will be required to ensure that they are not excluded. However, we want to put in place support and opportunities to help those who want and can become digitally active, allowing them to maximise the potential for technology to help them live well.

Our vision is to develop:

‘A place where Sefton residents and organisations understand the benefits of digital, feel safe and confident online and are supported to develop their skills and thrive in an increasingly digital world’.

Executive Summary

Sefton is a vibrant and diverse borough and whilst overall health is improving, significant gaps in health and life expectancy remain between those living in the areas most and least deprived areas. The ageing population is growing much faster than the national average, increasing future demand for health and care services. The number of people with long term conditions, sensory impairment, dementia, cancer, and other health problems is growing, as is the number of children with complex health and care needs.

Sefton has:

- An ageing population and is ranked 18th out of 326 local authorities for the number of residents aged 65 or over.
- areas with high levels of deprivation and average earnings are below the national average.
- high levels of social isolation resulting in loneliness, mainly common amongst the elderly but increasingly evident in younger age groups.
- growing levels of severe frailty in the population, with signs of frailty being identified more frequently in younger residents.

Being digitally included can provide significant benefits for the most vulnerable in society including; saving money, communicating with friends and relatives, accessing public services, benefitting from developments in digital health and securing employment. Digital inclusion within Sefton will look different for different areas. The north of the borough is comprised mainly of elderly residents that fall into the internet user categories of those who rarely use the internet or have no access at all. In the south of the borough there is a high proportion of residents that fall into the 'e-Withdrawn' category; the least engaged with the internet and usually associated with more deprived neighbourhoods of urban areas. These residents have opted out of online engagement due to it being considered unnecessary or for economic reasons.

Together, partners across the borough have a collective vision to create services that are integrated, so they work seamlessly together to improve the lives of Sefton residents so that everyone has a fair chance of a positive and healthier future.

This strategy outlines why digital inclusion is an issue for Sefton residents and how the public, voluntary and private sectors can work together, building on the work undertaken over recent years, to help address the barriers that some of our residents face and need to overcome in order to access and embrace the digital world and the opportunities that it brings.

The scope of this strategy is focused on improving digital inclusion for residents and seeks to set out and adopt key principles and actions to help tackle the recognised digital exclusion barriers:

- Digital skills
- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Motivation
- Trust and confidence.

In parallel, development is underway to ensure our businesses across Sefton are supported and are provided with the opportunity to be digital included with support to develop and grow their businesses and skill their workforce. This business focused strategy will enable businesses to be informed and have access to support to help their growth and increase their opportunity flourish. This aligns with Sefton work with Liverpool City region Enterprise Partnership (LCR LEP) to simplify access to local business support.

Background

Digital inclusion is often defined in terms of:

- Digital Skills - being able to use computers, the internet and mobile technology such as smart phones. This is an obvious barrier, but it's by no means the only or biggest one that people can face.
- Accessibility – Ranging from mobile/broadband connectivity to the design and provision of services to meet all users' needs.
- Affordability - affordable access to the internet and digital devices is still an issue for many people in the region.

There are three other factors which influence whether people are prepared to use digital channels: -

- Motivation - knowing the reasons why using the internet is a good thing.
- Trust – understanding whether my data will be safe; can I really get what I need online without speaking to someone? A fear of cybercrime and invasion of privacy.
- Confidence – will I break something if I click on a button or I think I know how to find out and do what I need, but I really need someone to help me the first couple of times.

Each of these addresses a single specific barrier that some, but not all, individuals, and organisations face. There is seldom just one reason why people are digitally excluded, and there is no single approach to solving it, nor can we expect that absolutely everyone can utilise digital technology. Digital inclusion is about overcoming this range of challenges, not just one. Equally, with so many challenges, no single organisation in Sefton can address digital exclusion alone.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the marginalisation of those without either the basic skills and/or financial or practical means to access digital connectivity and public, financial, health, and retail services, accessing culture and entertainment, socialising and learning. There is evidence both that the removal of non-digital access has driven some previously reluctant people online, and that income reductions and competing cost pressures has made internet access unaffordable for others. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic we have also seen a significant digital shift, with large organisations moving to offering online only services only and moving away from traditionally face to face provision such as medical appointments, education and even fitness classes to a virtual world. This journey had already begun; however, the pandemic provided a significant catalyst in speeding up this transformation.

A study by Lloyd's consumer digital index has highlighted that in the last 12 months, 1.5 million more people have started using the Internet, resulting in 95% of people now being online. In 2020, predictive modelling indicated that it would take to 2025 for 58% of the UK to have high digital capability. In 2021, 60% of the UK now have this level of digital capability; we have made five years' worth of progress in one. More than half (55%) of the online population have increased their Internet usage throughout the pandemic – on average people are spending an extra 13 hours online a week. 93% of office workers are now confident Internet users versus 85% of manual workers. The data also shows increased personal use of the Internet, indicating a halo effect from the working day.

Digital inclusion, or rather, reducing digital exclusion is about ensuring that people and organisations have the right access, ability, motivation, and trust to use the internet and other digital channels to take full advantage of the many benefits that being online can bring.

Digital poverty is a subset of digital exclusion and is defined as affecting those who are digitally excluded because of finding the cost of appropriate equipment and connectivity prohibitive. This sits alongside other forms of digital exclusion, such as a skills gap, or the availability of and access to connectivity, and these barriers may be experienced singly or in any combination.



According to ONS, in 2017, 56% of adult internet non-users were disabled, much more than two and a half times the 22% proportion of disabled adults in the UK population.

LIMITED ONLINE ACCESS

Approximately 3,000 households in Sefton (2%) have limited or no online access



TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Approximately 9,000 households in Sefton (7%) fall into the category of 'technology laggard' households.

Digital skills are increasingly essential in relation to employment. The government estimates that within the next two decades 90% of job roles will require some sort of digital skills to both identify and apply for job opportunities



Pre-Covid, ONS also found that 7% or 700,000 young people aged between 11 and 18 in the UK lacked internet access via a tablet or computer, whilst 60,000 had no access at all. Moreover, 68% of this age group who do have internet access reported that they would struggle to complete schoolwork without it, highlighting the criticality of education and learning across all age groups.

CONSUMER VIEW

Over a quarter of households within Sefton (32,858) are thought to prefer being consulted/engaged with by post or in person



Principles

There are already numerous organisations and initiatives in Sefton focussing positively on addressing aspects of the Digital Inclusion challenge, for which this strategy seeks to set out a strategic approach including principles and framework for our region.

The following principles need to be embedded in the use of Digital services and will be supported by a comprehensive action plan which includes capturing the benefits that this work brings.

- Put people at the heart of everything we do
- Design for the outcome and be inclusive to build trust
- Test assumptions, Make, learn, iterate
- Do the hard work to make it simple
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand what essential basic digital skills are. Provide opportunity to learn and improve on their own essential basic digital skills.
- Commit support and resources to a co-ordinated approach to Digital Inclusion and Digital Skills activities across Sefton
- Share best practice to ensure digital inclusion activity impact is maximised and measured.
- Leave no one behind by ensuring there is support for those who cannot or choose not to use online to enable equal opportunity for everyone to use our services
- Provide a framework which enables residents to have access to digital equipment, skills training, and opportunities for them to learn and have support
- Promote the benefits of digital in ways that residents can see how this will help them
- Keep things simple by using common language and create trust with our online services
- Ensure our residents understand how to protect themselves online
- Where possible, use our responsibilities under the Social Value Act to use commissioning as a tool to drive Digital Inclusion
- Maximise and align funding opportunities that could progress Digital Inclusion
- Ensure that our strategy is fit for purpose, supporting the radical changes in technology, demand, and skills by committing to annual reviews

These principles are supported across Sefton by the following transformation partners:



Wider Population Challenges

Digital skills are no longer binary with residents no longer digitally skilled or not. Digital skills are a spectrum and people move in and out of 'exclusion' depending on how long they've been away from digital in different areas of their life.

The use ability to browsing the internet as a source of information can be invaluable, however the prospect of filling in online forms and applying for jobs online may introduce further challenges for individuals who may have a lower level of literacy or confidence in interacting with digital tools.

The growing use of mainstream Social media (twitter, Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, tiktok, web forums) to connect communities may also be a daunting prospect for many with Digital exclusion and social exclusion being recognised as interrelated. By empowering our residents to get online, we can help tackle wider social issues, support economic growth, and close equality gaps. As we look to focus on helping people maintain their independence, connect with their communities, build their resilience and enjoy better health and wellbeing, it is important that we encourage and support online access, and working with partners to overcome the challenges people may face and support their development of the five digital skills referenced by Centre for Economics and Business Research.

Whilst we often assume digital exclusion is associated to a particular cohort or group of residents, there is growing evidence to show that a wider range of people are digitally excluded. Two examples are outlined below

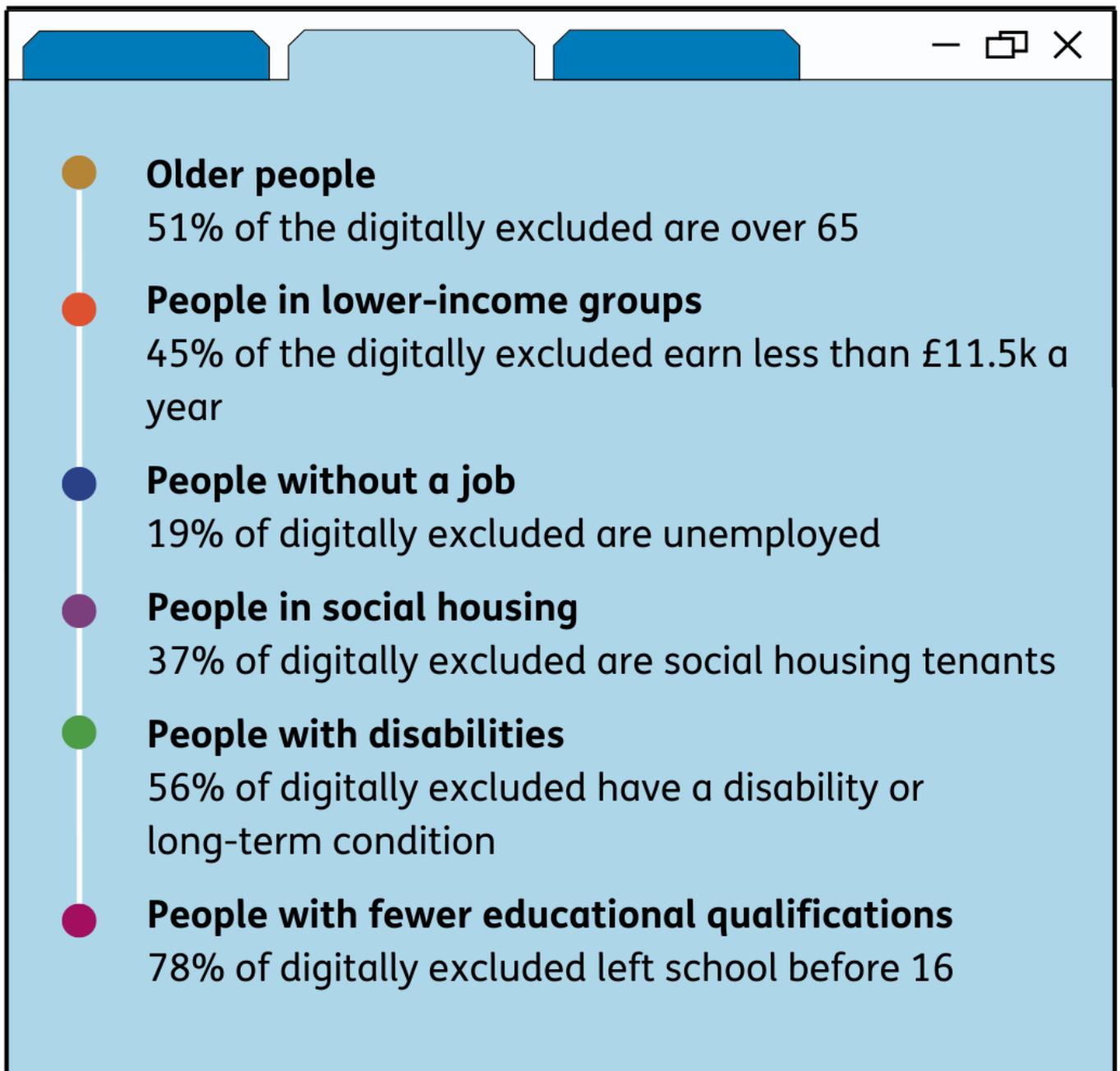
Young, digitally excluded people

- Whilst it is assumed younger people are digitally included as they might spend all day using their smart phones, it is suspected that many young people wouldn't know how to use a laptop to write a CV. These young people are hard to spot. On the face of it, they're hyper-connected digital natives. Ask them if they're connected to the web, they own a smartphone or even how frequently they use it and you'll get positive answers. But volume of use doesn't equate to breadth. So far, only a handful of employers will let you apply for a job via Snapchat and yet 10% of young people not in education, employment don't know how to send a CV online.

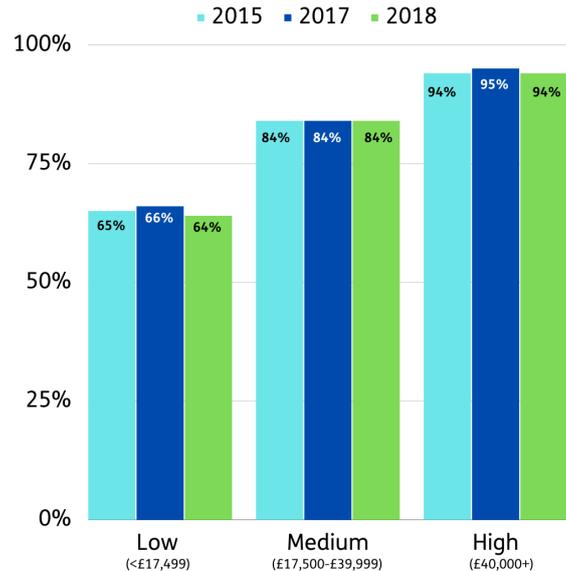
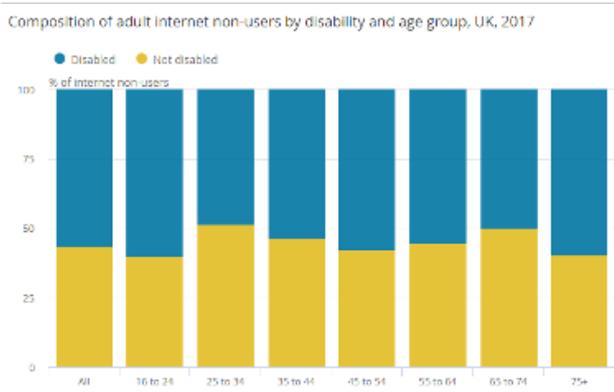
Ex-offenders

- Typically for those who have served a custodial sentence access to digital will have been severely limited at best and illegal at worst. There's an 'internet in prisons' scheme underway but until that happens an offender will leave prison with the same digital skills they went in with. For the 43% of prisoners serving terms of at least 4 years, this can have a dramatic effect on rehabilitation when they're released back into the community. Is it hard to imagine a world without the iPhone? If you've been in prison for more than ten years, that's the world you're expecting to come back to.

We are determined to support all residents to have the opportunity to make the most of digital technology, giving them the access, awareness, skills, and confidence to participate online safely. Considering the importance placed upon digital literacy in most jobs these days, it's arguable digital literacy should be given the same level of importance as numeracy and literacy. We want to ensure that the right provision exists to enable all young people and adults to achieve a basic level of digital literacy. This means more than simply learning the mechanical skills needed to get online: it is about ensuring people can evaluate online information, know how to stay safe and understand how to transfer skills from one activity to another.

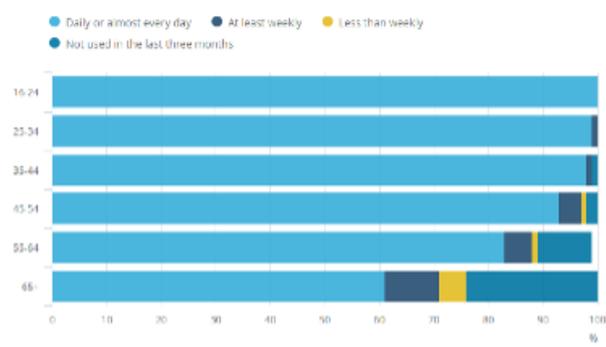


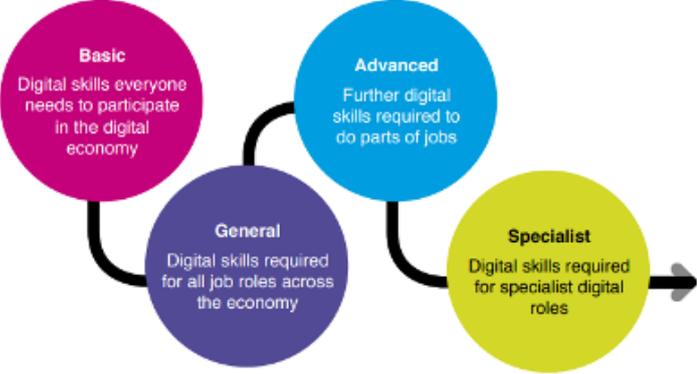
The table below highlights a range of factors and challenges for Sefton

Factor	Background	Challenges for Sefton																											
<p>Poverty</p>	<p>Poverty has an impact on an individual's ability to access broadband, mobile internet connections, and to afford devices. Digital inclusion and poverty are interrelated as some of the benefits of internet usage may help to alleviate some of the effects of poverty. For those that cannot afford access they are unable to feel these benefits. The impact growing up in poverty on children is significant. Poverty affects literacy, numeracy and communication skills.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Internet Access by Income Level</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Income Level</th> <th>2015</th> <th>2017</th> <th>2018</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Low (<£17,499)</td> <td>65%</td> <td>66%</td> <td>64%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium (£17,500-£39,999)</td> <td>84%</td> <td>84%</td> <td>84%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High (£40,000+)</td> <td>94%</td> <td>95%</td> <td>94%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Not having access to the internet at home can seriously hinder a child's ability to learn, research and complete homework assignments. Sefton is in the most deprived quarter of English local authorities and five LSOAs are in the top 1% nationally. The impact of poverty on digital inclusion is likely to be significant in the borough. Looking at ways to provide home broadband/mobile connections to the poorest residents in Sefton may have a notable impact on some of Sefton's most vulnerable people.</p>	Income Level	2015	2017	2018	Low (<£17,499)	65%	66%	64%	Medium (£17,500-£39,999)	84%	84%	84%	High (£40,000+)	94%	95%	94%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can organisations identify individuals whose low income would prevent them from buying a device or paying for Wi-Fi or data? What provision is available to give people access to low-cost, high-quality Wi-Fi or data? What provision is available in public spaces to enable people to access Wi-Fi or data privately? What provision to access IT equipment is available to residents? (For example, Giftd equipment through charitable organisations, or access to low-cost devices) 											
Income Level	2015	2017	2018																										
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<p>Trust in Digital</p>	<p>Trust in digital services is associated to the confidence users have in with sharing information through digital services. Trust is a combination of the ability of people, technology, and processes to create a secure digital world. Concerns around data security are often key barriers preventing people from utilising digital tools. Individuals may often be reluctant to share their information or access websites due to concerns of data leak or reuse of their data for other purposes. Growing publicity of cyber-attacks and data leaks adds to individuals' anxieties</p>  <p>Composition of adult internet non-users by disability and age group, UK, 2017</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Not disabled (%)</th> <th>Disabled (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>All</td> <td>~45</td> <td>~55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16 to 24</td> <td>~40</td> <td>~60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25 to 34</td> <td>~50</td> <td>~50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35 to 44</td> <td>~45</td> <td>~55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45 to 54</td> <td>~40</td> <td>~60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55 to 64</td> <td>~45</td> <td>~55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65 to 74</td> <td>~50</td> <td>~50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>75+</td> <td>~40</td> <td>~60</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Group	Not disabled (%)	Disabled (%)	All	~45	~55	16 to 24	~40	~60	25 to 34	~50	~50	35 to 44	~45	~55	45 to 54	~40	~60	55 to 64	~45	~55	65 to 74	~50	~50	75+	~40	~60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we reassure Sefton residents that their data is secure; it will not be lost or shared inappropriately; and they will not be spied on? What role can the community and voluntary sector play in familiarising people with technology and educating them about safety? How do we provide residents with the information they need about data safety in an easy-to-understand way? How do we help people tell the difference between reliable and false health and care information online?
Age Group	Not disabled (%)	Disabled (%)																											
All	~45	~55																											
16 to 24	~40	~60																											
25 to 34	~50	~50																											
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65 to 74	~50	~50																											
75+	~40	~60																											

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Sefton Residents Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2025

Factor	Background	Challenges for Sefton																																			
<p>Complex lifestyles & Privacy</p>	<p>Residents with complex lifestyles are some of the most vulnerable people living within Sefton. Complex relationship and interdependencies between homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, mental health problems, domestic abuse, violence, offending behaviours provides added challenge to engaging digitally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do organisations identify residents who live in complex circumstances? How do organisations identify people whose home environments wouldn't be sufficiently private for a health or care appointment? How can people living in very complex circumstances be given permanent access to technology without being made responsible for keeping it safe? What provision is in place to enable people to disclose safeguarding issues if they don't have privacy in the home or are reliant on others to get them online? 																																			
<p>Age</p>	<p>There is a generational digital divide when it comes to internet usage. ONS statistics show that since 2011 those over 65 years old have continued to make up the largest proportion of adult internet non-users and over half of all adult internet non-users were over the age of 75 years in 2018. This gap is also prevalent in the digital skills gap. Of the 8% of the population with zero digital skills 76% are retired and over the age of 65.</p> <p>When considering age, several key factors for child poverty are parental low earnings, low parental qualifications, parental ill health, family instability and family size. Poverty affects more than one in four children in the UK today. The emerging Child Poverty Strategy will support parents for every child to have the opportunity to do well in life and share the rewards of having a stronger economy and a healthier, fairer society.</p> <p>Internet use within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Internet use within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Daily or almost every day</th> <th>At least weekly</th> <th>Less than weekly</th> <th>Not used in the last three months</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>16-24</td> <td>~95%</td> <td>~4%</td> <td>~1%</td> <td>~0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-34</td> <td>~90%</td> <td>~8%</td> <td>~2%</td> <td>~0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35-44</td> <td>~85%</td> <td>~10%</td> <td>~3%</td> <td>~2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-54</td> <td>~75%</td> <td>~15%</td> <td>~5%</td> <td>~5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55-64</td> <td>~60%</td> <td>~20%</td> <td>~10%</td> <td>~10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65+</td> <td>~40%</td> <td>~15%</td> <td>~10%</td> <td>~35%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Office for National Statistics - Opinions and Lifestyle Survey</p> <p>Sefton has a higher proportion of elderly residents compared to the UK, 23% over 65 compared to 18% in the UK. Of 326 local authorities Sefton is ranked 18th for number of residents over the age of 65. Therefore, this digital divide could be more pronounced within the borough. Elderly residents can be difficult to engage and changing lifelong habits poses a challenge. However elderly people are a group that stand to significantly benefit from technological developments. Technology has the potential to have a huge impact on the lives of elderly people, the introduction of in-home assistance can reduce social isolation, the need for vulnerable elderly residents to leave their homes and move into care homes, and progress in the health sector is able to overcome some of the problems faced by the elderly when it comes to mobility and age-related illnesses. Lack of interest is a common self-reported reason for not engaging online but this can often mask a complex range of underlying barriers such as low confidence and lack of understanding. For this group of people, it is important to understand what each individual's needs are and what type of support is most effective for that individual. Prescribed solutions will not work for everybody. Co-production, partnership working, and a flexible approach is essential to engaging with this group of people.</p>	Age Group	Daily or almost every day	At least weekly	Less than weekly	Not used in the last three months	16-24	~95%	~4%	~1%	~0%	25-34	~90%	~8%	~2%	~0%	35-44	~85%	~10%	~3%	~2%	45-54	~75%	~15%	~5%	~5%	55-64	~60%	~20%	~10%	~10%	65+	~40%	~15%	~10%	~35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can organisations do to support older people who want to use technology (for example signposting to third sector organisations)? To what extent should organisations consider unfamiliarity with technology to be a valid reason for using face-to-face services only? What provision is available to help people become familiar with IT and increase their skills and confidence? What role could the community and voluntary sector play in normalising technology and embedding it within older people's social communication networks?
Age Group	Daily or almost every day	At least weekly	Less than weekly	Not used in the last three months																																	
16-24	~95%	~4%	~1%	~0%																																	
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Factor	Background	Challenges for Sefton
<p>Disability and Specific conditions</p>	<p>People with a disability are more than twice as likely to be offline as those without a disability. 54% of the total number of people who have never used the internet are registered disabled. According to research carried out by Scope 78% of disabled people say that having access to digital technologies is helpful and 92% also said it helps them to live independently. Digital technologies can assist those living with a disability to be more independent and access to the internet can be particularly important in reducing social isolation and connecting disabled people to their friends, families, and other social groups. Attention must be paid to accessibility and usability for those with disabilities to do more to reduce the digital divide. As with other isolated groups there is a need to design access and services around the needs of individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can we identify at what points in their care people are most likely to need reassurance? ■ Which systems are most accessible to people with different conditions? (For example, compliance with Web Accessibility Guidelines) ■ How do we involve carers and extended families and support them as they assist individuals with technology? ■ How do different organisations work together smoothly when using different systems? ■ What role can the community and voluntary sector play in feeding back information about disabled people’s technology needs and preferences?
<p>Skills & motivation</p>	<p>Digital skills are vital. The Liverpool City Region’s digital sector has grown significantly over the past few years, around 77% in output from 2006 to 2016. The growth in the use of technology across a range of industries has led to a point whereby most employers require their workforce to have at least basic digital competencies. Around 90 per cent of employer’s state that professionals, technicians, clerical workers, and skilled agricultural workers are required to possess at least basic digital skills.</p> <p>The Centre for Economics and Business Research identify five areas of benefit in being digitally skilled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ earnings benefits: increased earnings of between 3% and 10% through acquiring digital skills. ■ employability benefits: improved chances of finding work for someone who is unemployed and an increased likelihood that someone who is inactive will look for work. ■ retail transaction benefits: shopping online has been found to be 13% cheaper on average than shopping in-store. ■ communication benefits: basic digital skills can enable people to connect and communicate with family, friends and the community. ■ time savings: time saved by accessing government services and banking online rather than in person, estimated to be about 30 minutes per transaction. <p>Supporting residents to develop these basic skills is important in ensuring that as many people as possible are able to access and benefit from online services. Without these basic skills individuals are at risk of being left behind and unable to take advantage of technological developments that may lead to healthier and more prosperous lives.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can organisations ensure staff feel confident and motivated to use technology when appropriate? ■ What can organisations do to direct people to the training they need to use technology? ■ How do organisations present the option of using technology to residents in such a way that it feels like a genuine choice rather than an imposition?

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Sefton Residents Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2025

Factor	Background	Challenges for Sefton																																				
Take-up	<p>Low take-up of broadband is an indicator of digital exclusion. Those without a home broadband connection are either not accessing the internet at all, accessing the internet in locations such as local libraries, or reliant on mobile internet connections. The most common reason for not having a household internet connection is a perceived lack of need, followed by a lack of skills. This indicates that for many people they do not understand the benefits that being online can bring. Low take-up of broadband across Sefton is highlighted below. In some areas take-up of broadband internet is as low as 57%. The same issue does impact other parts of the UK with 95% of homes and businesses having access to superfast broadband, or better, but only 45% of homes subscribing to the service.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Premises</th> <th>Coverage</th> <th>Below USO</th> <th>Superfast</th> <th>Ultrafast</th> <th>FTTP</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Sefton</td> <td>126,811</td> <td>0.3%</td> <td>98.5%</td> <td>66.2%</td> <td>21.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Liverpool City Region</td> <td>706,707</td> <td>0.4%</td> <td>97.7%</td> <td>74.2%</td> <td>20.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North West</td> <td>3,284,679</td> <td>0.9%</td> <td>96.9%</td> <td>60.1%</td> <td>12.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>England</td> <td>24,403,277</td> <td>1.3%</td> <td>96.1%</td> <td>58.9%</td> <td>13.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UK</td> <td>29,063,154</td> <td>1.7%</td> <td>95.6%</td> <td>57.1%</td> <td>14.5%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Premises	Coverage	Below USO	Superfast	Ultrafast	FTTP	Sefton	126,811	0.3%	98.5%	66.2%	21.2%	Liverpool City Region	706,707	0.4%	97.7%	74.2%	20.5%	North West	3,284,679	0.9%	96.9%	60.1%	12.3%	England	24,403,277	1.3%	96.1%	58.9%	13.4%	UK	29,063,154	1.7%	95.6%	57.1%	14.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What financial support can be provided to support take-up? What support can be provided within our community to promote the benefits of digital, particularly to those who are not engaged?
Premises	Coverage	Below USO	Superfast	Ultrafast	FTTP																																	
Sefton	126,811	0.3%	98.5%	66.2%	21.2%																																	
Liverpool City Region	706,707	0.4%	97.7%	74.2%	20.5%																																	
North West	3,284,679	0.9%	96.9%	60.1%	12.3%																																	
England	24,403,277	1.3%	96.1%	58.9%	13.4%																																	
UK	29,063,154	1.7%	95.6%	57.1%	14.5%																																	
Connectivity	<p>96% of UK households and businesses can now access superfast broadband (download speed of at least 30 Mbit/s) with an aim to have full fibre (download speed of 1 gigabit/s) across the UK by 2033 and 5G coverage for most of the UK population by 2027. In Sefton coverage for superfast broadband is good with 99.3% of households having access with full fibre coverage at 13%, this compares to 12% in the UK. Superfast broadband is suitable for most household needs but as data intensive services (e.g. online streaming, video calls etc) continue to grow, superfast broadband will not be able to cope. Full fibre (FTTP) is the most reliable broadband technology available, and the infrastructure is important for supporting high-capacity mobile broadband networks, particularly 5G networks.</p> <p>The impact on the environment will also be noticeable with improved connectivity allowing workers greater flexibility in working from home. The knock-on effect of this being that people will be able to work more efficiently from home, reducing the need for travel and leading to a reduced carbon footprint. Connectivity to rural areas will also reduce the need for employees to live in urban areas and the result may well be an increase in people living in non-metro areas.</p> <p>The Liverpool City Region is aiming to build a digital spine across the city region through the backhaul project. This will include a full fibre network from the GTT transatlantic fibre optic cable in Southport to the Hartree Supercomputer in Daresbury.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What impact will full fibre have in Sefton? How can we ensure residents are in a position take advantage of network improvements to address inequality and digital exclusion? How can we develop a commercial approach to technologies such as 5G? How can digital connectivity be linked into local planning and housing applications, so that all new developments are provided digital services infrastructure alongside gas, water and electricity. 																																				
Literacy & communication preferences	<p>Lacking vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. As a child they won't be able to succeed at school, as a young adult they will be locked out of the job market, and as a parent they won't be able to support their own child's learning. This intergenerational cycle makes social mobility and a fairer society more difficult.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can organisations identify where there are low levels of literacy? How can organisations record people's preferences regarding systems? To what extent can organisations adapt to people's preferred systems? What training is available for people whose lack of literacy prevents them from accessing technology? 																																				

Opportunities

As a collective borough, there is a growing requirement to address the digital inclusion challenge we face, which is equalled by the support from its partners to help address these challenges by taking the following opportunities:

Digital Inclusion Transformation Group

The establishment of a dedicated Digital Inclusion Transformation Group will further align the direction of travel across Sefton to ensure we maximise the sum of our parts to make a tangible difference to the lives of our residents. A key focus of this group will be to map the current digital inclusion provision and to manage priorities and resources across Sefton. Working in partnership across Liverpool City Region, this group will support the vision and priorities outlined within LCR Digital strategy 2021-23. The group will ensure there is parity in representation across all categories of inclusion stakeholders.

Digital Skills Development

Leveraging the existing provisions which are in place across Sefton to digitally develop our resources and further promote the roles of Digital champions to support up-skilling and re-skilling our residents to become digitally included and support them live a more inclusive lifestyle. There is opportunity to link to wider regional work programmes to consider the development of a Digital Skills Passport.

Technology partnerships

Sefton has a strong local digital community which could allow us to leverage skills in the region to build and deliver solutions for our residents. Working with our local tech partners to grow and retain talent, add to our social value commitments, and build on the digital community that is growing. Alongside the local focus, opportunities exist which brings together public, private and charity sector organisations to facilitate coordination between digital skills programmes, including the sharing of knowledge and best practice.

Empower our Residents

Empower our residents to utilise digital technologies to manage their own care, take control and work in partnership in relation to their health and wellbeing. The Technology Enabled Care Solutions (TECS) Strategy refers to the use of assistive technologies, telehealth, telecare, telemedicine, tele-coaching, and self-care in providing care for people with long term conditions that is convenient, accessible and cost-effective. TECS range from the simplest information apps to sophisticated monitoring devices. TECS has the potential to transform how we care, especially making it possible for us and those we're looking after to have greater independence and peace of mind. There is the opportunity to extend and improve digital access for residents for obtaining appointments, prescriptions, test results, and maintaining a personal held record.

Network infrastructure

Work has already begun on a 212km full fibre, gigabit-capable network infrastructure. When complete, it will put city region businesses in prime position to lead the way in a host of growing sectors, from health and life sciences to Artificial Intelligence and advanced manufacturing. Half-owned by the city region’s Combined Authority, headed up by Mayor Steve Rotheram, the full fibre infrastructure will be capable of delivering speeds of 1,000mbps and beyond. The LCR Digital Infrastructure Project is a joint venture half-owned by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in partnership with North West-based ITS Technology Group, who will lead the project, working alongside construction partner NGE, who are managing the build and roll out of the network. Digital infrastructure will be installed in carriageways, footpaths, and cycleways across the city region over the next two years, using innovative deployment techniques to minimise the impact on road and public transport users wherever possible. Work is already underway to review opportunities of how maximise this investment to improve digital connectivity across the borough.

Action Plan

The following action plan focuses upon priorities across Sefton in 2022/2023. Year one will also include the development of key performance indicators to measure impact and improvements made.

Action	Activity	Impact
Establish a Digital Inclusion Transformation Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map the current digital inclusion provision and its utilisation Monitor levels of participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a baseline and identify areas of priority for improvement Ensure participation and contributions to shape Digital Inclusion is equitable across all partners within Sefton
Agree a common framework to measure the impact that Digital Inclusion support has on residents, communities, and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain greater insight into digital exclusion in the borough and the initiatives in place to reduce. Establish mechanisms to capture and measure the impact the strategy is having 	Measure the improvement and take up of technology and services following the introduction of this strategy
Test our assumptions regarding the levels of digital skills across Sefton for key demographic groups	We will consult with the different demographic profile we have in Sefton to test out our theories and validate our insight regarding the different level of digital skills	We will validate our assumptions and then target our resources to work with key priority groups
Develop understanding of gaps in region and define funding avenues to solve these issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to review the local authority digital inclusion report in 2018 to understand current gaps around access to skills and training Explore funding opportunities for research Engage with Higher and Further Education for research into understanding the gaps and needs in the region 	Identify opportunities for appropriate investment to support Sefton priorities

Action	Activity	Impact
Align our resources to tailor our offer of support to areas of greatest need	We will align our resources to tailor our offer of support for digital inclusion to target areas of greatest need	We will manage our resources to priorities areas of greatest need to measure and improve levels of Digital Inclusion
Clear branding and communications plan in place for the promotion of the work being undertaken	Development of strategic brand and plan for communicating digital inclusion activity arising from this strategy	Provide a consistent joined up approach and identity to align the promotion of offers across Sefton
Increase the number of public access computers and other devices available to residents and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review current provision /develop marketing strategy to raise awareness of current provision – map out gaps and link to community groups to increase access points ■ Work with partners regarding funding opportunities and/or recycled kit for residents, community groups and other organisations ■ Explore opportunities to create Language labs for refugees to learn English through eLearning tools ■ Expand existing tablet loan schemes ■ Support local Job clubs with the provision of laptops to help those seeking employment ■ Set-up Virtual Meeting Rooms to allow citizens to join online meetings and calls ■ Improve local meeting rooms to allow community groups better access to virtual meeting technology 	Provide Sefton residents with the opportunity to access and utilise digital tools and services through a range of solutions
Increase the number and range of places residents can access free Wi-Fi, including both Council and Partner’s buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish feasibility of delivery of free Wi-Fi ■ Develop and publish current Wi-Fi availability ■ Engage with local community groups, GPs, NHS, Schools/colleges, and partners on whether free public Wi-Fi could be made available on their sites 	Maximise opportunity for residents to access free Wi-Fi in public sites
Accessibility Review	Review the accessibility to person facing digital services, including website, apps, video conferencing solutions	Identify and improve levels of website accessibility and compliance with WAG2.0
Device Recycling	Review current kit refurbishment plans to enable safe distribution across Sefton to those with greatest need	Maximise the opportunity for locally procured IT equipment can be recycled and offered back into Sefton
Funding Opportunities	Identify opportunity to apply for regional funding to support Sefton improve digital offers to address inclusion	Support the delivery of the digital inclusion action plan by identifying funding to support adoption and implementation
Service Design	Minimize levels of digital exclusion by focusing upon services design	Review existing and newly commissioned service to ensure non-digital offers are available to residence
Tech innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review development of coding clubs in partnership with Girls Who Code ■ Facilitate Digi-bot, Oz bot and raspberry pie events ■ Support access to 3D printer events 	Ensure opportunities to develop the next generation of digital skills and use of technology is available to Sefton residents

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Sefton Residents Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2025

Action	Activity	Impact
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collaboration with LCR regarding digital poverty work ■ Identify and understand the demographic who are not connected ■ Understand opportunities afforded by LCR backhaul network in terms of social value ■ Explore options and the potential benefits of deploying new digital connectivity solutions to address inequality and digital exclusion. ■ Identify pilot areas and test beds to support both digital inclusion and the development of technology to enable people to live at home for longer ■ Work with the Liverpool City Region, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and its local Barrier Busting Task Force to develop a commercial approach to technologies such as 5G. ■ Explore the opportunities around linking digital connectivity into local planning and housing applications, so that all new developments are provided digital services infrastructure alongside gas, water and electricity. 	Increase the take-up across Sefton residents to access internet and digital services through a range of initiatives
Digital Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider the development of a Digital Skills Passport Scheme (incorporating numeracy, literacy and communication skills) to help Sefton residents to gain future employment ■ Working with local partners such as Sefton Community Learning Service to develop and deliver bespoke training programmes to target residents in the areas identified in the Poverty Modelling and Digital Inclusion ■ Review opportunities to access The Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award (IDEA) that helps you develop digital, enterprise and employability skills for free. ■ Engage with VOLA regarding support across the VCSE sector in relation to learning, skills, employment support and criminal justice services in Liverpool City Region ■ Identify events to support older people to use tablets and mobiles ■ Monitor access to Digital Skills training to identify and shape the offer ■ Develop the Digital Champions framework to deliver training to residents ■ We will provide focus and support to ensure we are supporting our workforce to upskill levels of digital skills and promote awareness of technology 	Provide access to a consistent provision to increase individuals level of digital skill through learning and support

DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION	
Document title	Digital Inclusion Strategy
Version	1.0
Author	Helen Spreadbury
Job title	ICT Partnership Manager
Publication date	July 2022
Approved by	Cabinet Members
Next review date	January 2025
Changes	N/A

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**Equality Impact Assessment :
Sefton Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2025**

Introduction

The Sefton Residents Digital Inclusion Strategy has been developed as a multi- sector approach to coordinate activity and learning between organisations to embed digital inclusion activities for the benefit of our residents. This strategy outlines why digital inclusion is an issue for Sefton residents and how the public, voluntary and private sectors can work together to help address the barriers that some of our residents face and need to overcome in order to access and embrace the digital world and the opportunities that it brings.

The strategy is focused on improving digital inclusion for residents and seeks to set out and adopt key principles and actions to help tackle the recognised digital exclusion barriers including:

- Digital Skills
- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Motivation
- Trust and Confidence

Each of these address a single specific barrier that some , but not all, individuals may face, There is seldom just one reason why people are digitally excluded, and there is no single approach to solving it, nor can we expect that absolutely everyone can utilise digital technology . Digital inclusion is about overcoming a range of challenges and it is recognised that no single organisation in Sefton can address digital exclusion alone, so the aims within this strategy will be achieved by working collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders with the intention of creating positive outcomes for our communities.

Objectives of the Strategy

- 1 To align resources to tailor our offer of support to areas of greatest need
- 2 To develop clear branding and develop a communications plan to promote the work being undertaken
- 3 To increase the number of publicly accessible computers and other devices available to residents
- 4 Increase the number and range of places residents can access free Wi-Fi
- 5 To review the accessibility of person facing digital services, including websites, apps and video conferencing solutions
- 6 To explore opportunities around device recycling
- 7 Identify funding opportunities to improve digital offers to address inclusion
- 8 To minimise levels of digital exclusion by focusing on service design
- 9 To ensure opportunities are available to develop the next generation of digital skills
- 10 To increase access to internet and digital services through a range of initiatives
- 11 Provide access to consistent provision to increase levels of digital skill, through learning and support

Are there any protected characteristics that will be disproportionately affected in comparison to others?

Age	There is a generational divide when it comes to digital usage. The Office of National Statistics data shows that
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since 2011 those over 65 years old have continued to make up the largest proportion of adult internet non users and over half of all adult internet non-users were over the age of 75 years in 2018. This gap is also prevalent in the digital skills gap. Of the 8% of the population with zero digital skills 76% are retired and over the age of 65. (source Office of National Statistics Opinions and Lifestyle Survey)

Sefton has a higher proportion of elderly residents compared to the UK, 23% over 65 compared to 18% in the UK. Of 326 local authorities Sefton is ranked 18th for number of residents over the age of 65. Therefore, this digital divide could be more pronounced within the borough.

Elderly residents can be difficult to engage and changing lifelong habits poses a challenge. However elderly people are a group that stand to significantly benefit from technological developments. Technology has the potential to have a huge impact on the lives of elderly people, the introduction of in-home assistance can reduce social isolation, the need for vulnerable elderly residents to leave their homes and move into care homes, and progress in the health sector is able to overcome some of the problems faced by the elderly when it comes to mobility and age-related illnesses. Lack of interest is a common self-reported reason for not engaging online but this can often mask a complex range of underlying barriers such as low confidence and lack of understanding. For this group of people, it is important to understand what each individual's needs are and what type of support is most effective for that individual. Prescribed solutions will not work for everybody. Co-production, partnership working, and a flexible approach is essential to engaging with this group of people

Positive impact

The Digital Inclusion Strategy sets out key questions in relation to engagement with this demographic, and seeks to ensure the collation of data and intelligence across Sefton to baseline current activity , and measure improvements. The Sefton Older People's forum is also engaged with the Digital Inclusion working group and will be linked into consultation and engagement activity.

	<p>The strategy also supports and linked to the work of the Technology Enabled Care team to ensure alignment and the provision of services to support discrete groups.</p>
<p>Disability (physical, visual, hearing, learning disabilities and mental health)</p>	<p>People with a disability are more than twice as likely to be offline as those without a disability. According to the Office of National Statistics 54% of the total number of people who have never used the internet are registered disabled. According to research carried out by Scope 78% of disabled people say that having access to digital technologies is helpful and 92% also said it helps them to live independently. Digital technologies can assist those living with a disability to be more independent and access to the internet can be particularly important in reducing social isolation and connecting disabled people to their friends, families, and other social groups.</p> <p>Attention must be paid to accessibility and usability for those with disabilities to do more to reduce the digital divide. As with other isolated groups there is a need to design access and services around the needs of individuals.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Positive impact</p> <p>The Digital Inclusion Strategy sets out key questions in relation to engagement with this demographic, and seeks to ensure the collation of data and intelligence across Sefton to baseline current activity.</p> <p>The strategy specifically mentioned the need to ensure compliance with guidance such as the Web Accessibility Guidelines. Having information in accessible formats will help to ensure people with disabilities have the equality of accessing the opportunities</p> <p>The strategy also supports and linked to the work of the Technology Enabled Care team to ensure alignment and the provision of services to support discrete groups.</p>

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<p>Carers</p>	<p>During COVID and the lockdown the Carers Centre reported that it was extremely difficult for some carers to leave the people they care for. This may continue as we recover, as the people who they care for may require more care and support, in turn this may increase the reliance on digital services, with the strategy is a key question around the role of carers and also extended families and their role in digital not only for themselves but also as support for the individuals they care for.</p>
<p>Gender Reassignment</p>	<p>The objectives of the Digital Inclusion Strategy will provide positive impacts for all members of the community and fully includes individuals within the protected characteristic of Gender Reassignment.</p>
<p>Marriage and Civil Partnership</p>	<p>The objectives of the Digital Inclusion Strategy will provide positive impacts for all members of the community and fully includes individuals within the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership.</p>
<p>Race Migrant workers Asylum Seekers Gypsy & Romany Travelers</p>	<p>A potential negative impact may occur for individuals/communities where English is not their first or second language and therefore inadvertently lack engagement with the digital inclusion opportunities and may need support to understand and access local opportunities. Therefore, additional monitoring of this protected characteristic will be required during the development of key performance indicators to evaluate impact.</p> <p>The library team in Sefton have successfully bided for funding from the Good Things Foundation to provide free data for refugees to support access to Digital resources.</p> <p>Largely mobile population and population with lower literacy levels who are more likely to miss information about digital skills and opportunities around digital inclusion.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Positive impact</i></p>

	Where appropriate information in appropriate languages and in accessible formats can be available to mitigate and barriers. Working closely with trusted organisations and individuals, in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way to ensure opportunities are promoted will help to ensure that Digital access, skills and training are accessible to all.
Religion and Belief (includes no belief)	The objectives of the Digital Inclusion Strategy will provide positive impacts for all members of the community and fully includes individuals within the protected characteristic of religion and belief.
Sex	The objectives of the Digital Inclusion Strategy will provide positive impacts for all members of the community and fully includes individuals within the protected characteristic of sex.
Sexual Orientation	The objectives of the Digital Inclusion Strategy will provide positive impacts for all members of the community and fully includes individuals within the protected characteristic of sexual orientation.
Pregnancy and Maternity	The objectives of the Digital Inclusion Strategy will provide positive impacts for all members of the community and fully includes individuals within the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity.

Consultation:

To ensure alignment of the strategy to the wider Liverpool City Region, (LCR) the author has reviewed associated strategies from LCR colleagues as well as local and regional strategic documentation and consulted on the Strategy Document with the LCR lead for Digital Inclusion.

To ensure alignment to the Integrated Care Programmes associated with Digital Inclusion the author has consulted with the ICS Lead for Digital Inclusion

To ensure alignment to Sefton Place priorities consultation has taken place via the Multi Agency Partnership Meeting.

The Senior Manager for ICT and Digital also met with the Sefton Older People's forum to listen to their challenges and views on this topic.

Further consultation has taken place with key partner agencies via email including; One Vision Housing, the Department for Work and Pensions, VOLA, Sefton CVS and the CCG.

Feedback from all parties has been welcomed and incorporated into the final version of the

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Digital Inclusion Strategy.

Further consultation and engagement around deliverables within the strategy is planned to ensure that the actions implemented are inclusive and meets the requirements of all sectors of the community.

Is there evidence that the Public Sector Equality Duties will be met?

The Equality Act 2010 requires that those subject to the Equality Duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- 1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
- 2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*
- 3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.*
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.*
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.*

The objectives of Sefton's Residents Digital Inclusion Strategy will help provide positive impacts for individuals, through the delivery of a cohesive programme of work across partners to provide support for residents who are currently digital excluded.

The implementation of the Strategy aims to develop a place where all Sefton Residents understand the benefits of digital, feel safe and confident online and are supported to develop their skills and thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Partnership working is essential to develop strong, well-established partner relationships in Sefton and to further develop local initiatives for wider social good. These strong partnerships will help Sefton to develop digital services and a focused action plan, which includes developing the benefits that this work brings. Key partners have committed to the following principles as outlined in the strategy

- Put people at the heart of everything we do
- Design for the outcome and be inclusive to build trust
- Test assumptions, make, learn and iterate
- Do the hard work to make it simple

- Ensure staff and volunteers understand what basic digital skills are and provide opportunity to learn and improve on their own basic digital skills
- Commit support and resources to a co-ordinated approach to Digital Inclusion and Digital Skills activities across Sefton
- Share best practice to ensure digital inclusion activity impact is maximised and measured.
- Leave no one behind by ensuring there is support for those who cannot or choose not to use online to enable equal opportunity for everyone to use our services
- Provide a framework which enables residents to have access to digital equipment, skills training, and opportunities for them to learn and have support
- Promote the benefits of digital in ways that residents can see how this will help them
- Keep things simple by using common language and create trust with our online services
- Ensure our residents understand how to protect themselves online
- Where possible, use our responsibilities under the Social Value Act to use commissioning as a tool to drive Digital Inclusion
- Maximise and align funding opportunities that could progress Digital Inclusion
- Ensure that our strategy is fit for purpose, supporting the radical changes in technology, demand, and skills by committing to annual reviews

What actions would follow if this proposal accepted by Cabinet & Council?

Following strategy approval a programme of work will developed to support the detailed action plan, which will include measurable outcomes to evidence impact and improvement, the development of the programme as a multi-agency place based priority should remove duplication of effort and ensure the efficient deployment of local capacity.

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Sefton Residents Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 Easy Read Summary



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Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion covers:

Digital skills



Being able to use digital devices such as computers or smart phones and the internet. This is important, but a lack of digital skills is not necessarily the only, or the biggest, barrier people face.

Connectivity



Access to the internet through broadband, wi-fi and mobile. People need the right infrastructure but that is only the start.

Services need, technology



Accessibility

need to be designed to meet all users' including those dependent on assistive to access digital services.

Digital services are technology such as the internet. This is used through computers, phones and tablets.

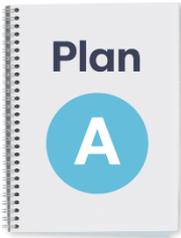


It also includes other technology such as Alexa, Google and Apple. In Sefton we want people to want to use digital services and understand how these services can help make their lives easier.

This means that everyone in Sefton should have the same chances to access digital services to keep them independent and involved. Some people may need extra help to access these services.



This strategy sets plans to get extra help for people who live in Sefton.

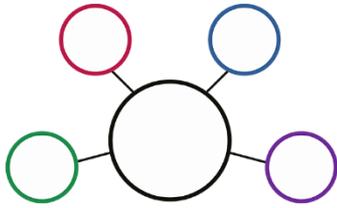


What is included in the Strategy?

The strategy covers six key things.

A photograph of two people sitting at a desk with a computer. One person is in a wheelchair, and they appear to be engaged in a conversation or training session.	<p>Skills to use digital services.</p>
A photograph of a man wearing a blue cap and sunglasses, holding a document with a Wi-Fi logo. In the background, there is a Wi-Fi router and a server tower.	<p>Cost of going online.</p>
A photograph of a woman standing next to an Amazon Echo smart speaker. A speech bubble next to her says "Alexa...".	<p>Confidence in how digital services can support them.</p>
A photograph of a laptop screen showing a "Welcome" message with a group of diverse people's faces.	<p>Having access to go online.</p>
A photograph of a man with glasses and a dark shirt, holding his hand up in a "stop" gesture.	<p>People not wanting to use digital services.</p>
A photograph of a laptop screen displaying a password prompt: "Your Password Pa*****".	<p>Trust that digital services are safe.</p>

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How we will make the strategy happen.

The strategy has been developed by key partners across Sefton including:

- Businesses that support people to be digitally included.
- Libraries.
- Community Centres.
- Schools and colleges.
- Public sector organisations.
- Health organisations.
- Voluntary organisations.
 - Regional and national organisations.



What we want to do

The action plan has some priorities in 2022 and 2023. The action plan also has other actions up to 2025.



- Work together to gather information about what is already happening across Sefton and identify areas for improvement.



- Agree how to measure improvement and show how the work we are doing has helped people.

- Have further conversations and work with key groups to develop what digital support we can offer.

- Find out about funding we can get.

- Develop clear messages about using digital services.

- Provide places for people to use equipment and services to help them get online.



- Support people to develop the digital skills they need.

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- Ensure that all information and services are accessible.
- Find out about new digital technology and how we can use it.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 6 October 2022
Subject:	Financial Management 2022/23 to 2024/25 and Framework for Change 2020 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2022/23 – October Update		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Leader of the Council		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To inform **Cabinet** of:

- 1 The current position relating to the 2022/23 revenue budget.
- 2 The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2022/23.
- 3 The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of August 2023:
 - The forecast expenditure to year end.
 - Variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members.
 - Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects are also presented for approval.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is recommended to:

Revenue Budget

- 1) Note the current position relating to the 2022/23 revenue budget.
- 2) Note the actions being taken to offset the budget pressures being faced in 2022/23.
- 3) Recognise the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2022/23 revenue budget and acknowledge that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed, and remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved.
- 4) Note the current position relating to the High Needs budget and that officers are currently reviewing all options available to the Council to mitigate the additional pressure and to make the overall High Needs budget financially sustainable.

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- 5) Approve that decisions on the use of the Household Support Fund are delegated to the Executive Director - People in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, and note that any discretionary element that will not be passported to vulnerable families and individuals in line with the grant conditions will be approved in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules.

Capital Programme

- 6) Note the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 7.1).
- 7) Note the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 August 2022 of £10.191m (paragraph 7.5); the latest full year forecast is £56.651m (paragraph 7.6).
- 8) Note explanations of variances to project budgets (paragraph 7.9).
- 9) Note that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council (paragraphs 7.10-7.12).

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the current position in relation to the 2022/23 revenue budget.

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 2022/23 and agreed allocations for future years.

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

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

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

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The report indicates that for 2022/23 an overspend position of £2.644m is currently forecast and that further mitigating actions will be required to ensure the Council returns to a balanced forecast outturn position.

(B) Capital Costs

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The Council's capital budget in 2022/23 is £56.763m. As at the end of August 2022 expenditure of £10.191m has been incurred and a full year outturn of £56.651m is currently forecast.

Implications of the Proposals:

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

Currently an overspend position of £2.644m is forecast for 2022/23. Therefore, further mitigating actions will be required to ensure the Council returns to a balanced forecast outturn position. However, it should be noted that significant pressure and risk remains, particularly relating to Children's Social Care and energy costs. If these budgets experience further demand and inflationary pressure during the remainder of the year further corresponding savings will need to be identified.

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	N

The allocations of capital funding outlined in section 7 may be spent on projects that will have a high climate change impact as they could relate to new build, rebuild, refurbishment, retrofit and demolition proposals. Environmental consideration will be taken into account when specific projects are designed and tendered – which will help to mitigate negative impacts.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

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

Protect the most vulnerable:

See comment above

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

See comment above

Commission, broker and provide core services:

See comment above

Place – leadership and influencer:

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See comment above
<u>Drivers of change and reform:</u> See comment above
<u>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</u> See comment above
<u>Greater income for social investment:</u> See comment above
<u>Cleaner Greener:</u> See comment above

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Services is the author of the report (FD 6961/22)

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer has been consulted and has no comments on the report (LD 5161/22).

(B) External Consultations

None

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:

The following appendix is attached to this report:

APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2024/25

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 On 3 March 2022, Members approved the Budget for the financial year 2022/23. This budget was developed throughout the preceding nine months and took account of all known issues. Within that report, and as with previous years, the inherent financial risk within the budget, especially with respect to Children's Services, was identified. This was further reflected within the reserves' strategy for the Council.
- 1.2 A report to June's Cabinet and Council on 14 July, provided an update for Members of the financial position with the Council for events that had materialised since the budget was approved in March, including the increased cost of providing Children's Services and the increase in energy costs affecting the Council from global price increases. A remedial action plan was presented in the report and approved by Council.
- 1.3 The report to July's Cabinet outlined that those pressures continued across a number of service areas, that an overspend in the region of £2.2m was forecast. The report to September's Cabinet outlined that pressures had increased further, primarily as a result of the impact of the initial offer for the local government pay award and further pressure within Children's Social Care. A further remedial action plan was presented in the report and approved by Council. This took the total value of pressure that had been met in year to in excess of £20m.
- 1.4 This report is the fourth of the Council's monthly budget monitoring reports and updates the revenue forecast outturn position for all services, including the pressures previously identified in the previous reports.
- 1.5 The report also outlines the current position regarding key income streams for the Authority, namely Council Tax and Business Rates. Variations against expected receipts in these two areas will also affect the Council's financial position in future years.
- 1.6 The capital section of the report informs Members of the latest estimate of capital expenditure for 2022/23 and forecast expenditure for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The capital budget to date is presented in paragraph 7.1. Paragraphs 7.2 to 7.8 review progress of the capital programme. Finally, paragraphs 7.10 to 7.12 confirm that there are adequate levels of resources available to finance the capital programme.

2. **Revenue Budget 2022/23 – Forecast Outturn Position as at the end of August 2022**

- 2.1 Members are provided with updates of the Council's forecast financial revenue position each month during the financial year from July.
- 2.2 The report to Cabinet in June 2022 highlighted the significant financial pressures being faced by the Council relating to Children's Social Care and energy costs. A remedial action plan was approved to meet these estimated costs during 2022/23. These are included in the forecast outturn position below.

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- 2.3 The report to Cabinet in July 2022 outlined that pressures had continued in several service areas and a net overspend of £2.197m was forecast. The report to September's Cabinet outlined that pressures had increased further, primarily as a result of the impact of the initial offer for the local government pay award and Children's Social Care. A forecast overspend of £7.743m was reported. A further remedial action plan was approved to meet these estimated costs during 2022/23. At this point the total value of these remedial plans is in excess of £20m for the year. However, it was acknowledged that pressures might increase further, particularly relating to assumptions around high-cost accommodation charges within Children's Social Care which required further financial modelling in order that a further accurate figure could be provided. It was also outlined that if these pressures materialised additional remedial actions would need to be implemented to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position, potentially including the adoption of financial principles used in previous years.
- 2.4 Since July's monitoring, there has been a significant worsening of the position relating to Children's Social Care accommodation costs as well as additional Home to School Transport costs. As at the end of August 2022, the forecast outturn shows a net overspend of **£2.644m**. As with all organisations at this time, the Council is operating in a very challenging financial environment. However, it is vital that the Council achieves a balanced forecast outturn position to ensure its financial sustainability. Proposed actions to meet this forecast overspend are outlined in paragraphs 2.8 to 2.11.
- 2.5 The table below highlights the variations across services that make up the £2.644m forecast overspend:

	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Variance to July
	£m	£m	£m	
<u>Services</u>				
Strategic Management	4.024	4.036	0.012	0.000
Adult Social Care	102.090	102.090	0.000	0.000
Children's Social Care	52.069	65.792	13.723	2.828
Communities	17.591	17.011	-0.580	-0.477
Corporate Resources	5.559	5.291	-0.268	-0.065
Economic Growth & Housing	6.583	6.620	0.037	0.075
Education Excellence	11.299	12.769	1.470	0.509
Health & Wellbeing	19.349	19.013	-0.336	-0.110
Highways & Public Protection	11.214	11.097	-0.117	-0.014
Operational In-House Services	15.013	15.736	0.723	-0.098
Energy Costs	0.000	4.300	4.300	0.000
Additional Pay Award Provision	0.000	4.100	4.100	0.000
Total Service Net Expenditure	244.791	267.855	23.064	2.648

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Council Wide Budgets	0.076	-0.144	-0.220	-0.047
Levies	35.222	35.222	0.000	0.000
General Government Grants	(72.356)	(72.356)	0.000	0.000
Remedial Action Plan - June	0.000	-12.500	-12.500	0.000
Remedial Action Plan – September	0.000	-7.700	-7.700	0.000
Total Net Expenditure	207.733	209.930		
<u>Forecast Year-End Deficit</u>			<u>2.644</u>	<u>2.601</u>

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

- **Adult Social Care** – The current forecast assumes that the Adult Social Care budget will break-even during 2022/23. However, there are a number of significant assumptions and uncertainties that could impact on this position before the year-end. This budget has historically underspent each financial year therefore, officers are continuing to review the forecasts and assumptions to ensure that any potential flexibility or otherwise is raised as early as possible in the financial year given the issues facing the Council. From this early work it is doubtful that underspends of the size experienced in previous years will materialise therefore at this stage the forecast is remaining as it is. This will be refined in advance of the next reporting cycle and as part of the remedial plan and some underspend is likely to materialise.
- **Children’s Social Care** – The current forecast shows a potential overspend of £13.723m, a significant increase in the figure of £10.895m reported to Cabinet in September.

As has been regularly reported over the last three years, the cost of accommodation is the largest risk to the Council’s budget position. Since the July report a number of additional high-cost placements have had to be entered into which have contributed to the increase in the forecast. Since the budget was set in March there has been an increase in Independent Residential Placements from 69 to 73. In addition, there are now more cases requiring high-cost accommodation and support than previously, and the costs of these have also risen significantly. Some new cases are now initially costing £24,000 per week. There are currently 613 cared for children and a further 419 children on child protection plans.

The forecast in the September report assumed that these costs would continue for a number of months. It is now assumed that these cases will mostly continue until the end of the year, adding a significant additional pressure to the Children’s Social Care budget both in the current year and for future budget planning.

The Council is currently working on developing a range of options to address the inherent demand and costs of Looked After Children whilst supporting the most vulnerable residents, but this budget remains under pressure and purely from a financial point of view this is likely to continue during this year and into the next financial year.

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- **Education Excellence** – The current forecast shows a potential overspend of £1.421m relating to Home to School Transport. There has been an increase in the number of children being transported, especially relating to out of borough placements. In addition, there has been an increase in the cost of providing the transport.
- **Operational In-House Services** The current forecast shows a potential overspend of £0.723m. This relates to a number of areas across the Service, including forecast shortfalls in income on Burials and Cremations, Catering, Green Sefton activities (mainly golf courses) and vehicle maintenance.
- **Energy Costs** – As reported in June, the global increase in energy prices is having a significant impact on the Council's energy and fuel costs. This is currently estimated at £4.300m and is being closely monitored as more information becomes available from the Council's framework providers on the fees being paid. It should be noted that this is a national issue affecting all local authorities. However, the Government have advised that no additional funding will be made available for local government, despite representations made both nationally and locally.
- **Additional Pay Award Provision** – The approved Base Budget included a provision for the 202/23 pay award of 3%. This was in line with most other local authorities who had budgeted for between 2.5% and 3% (and when the Spending Review 2021 was published, the Office for Budget Responsibility was forecasting inflation to be 4% in 2022). On 25 July 2022, the National Employers for local government services body made an offer to trade unions of a fixed increase of £1,925 (plus an additional day's annual leave from April 2023). For Sefton, this equates to an increase in the pay bill of about 6.5% or an additional £4.100m above the amount included in the 2022/23 budget. It should be noted that this is the latest offer and has yet to be accepted by Trade Unions – any increase in the offer will therefore require additional resources to be identified. As previously mentioned for energy costs, this is a national issue for local government however Government have made it clear that no additional funding will be made available.

From the above it can be seen that additional pressures of about £22.8m are being experienced and this mainly reflects the pressure in Children's Social Care and that experienced from energy costs and the additional pay award. Whilst the pressure on Children's Social Care can be deemed to be Sefton specific (although many of the causes are being seen nationally, e.g., increases in numbers of Looked After Children and increases in accommodation costs), the energy and pay award pressures of £8.4m are impacting on all local authorities. These costs were not reflected in the funding provided as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022/2023 and the Government has made it clear that no additional funding will be made available, meaning the Council needs to make remedial plans to meet these pressures.

Proposed Remedial Actions

- 2.7 Given there is still a forecast deficit it is proposed to undertake a number of remedial actions, including the adoption of financial principles used in previous years, to enable a balanced forecast outturn position to ensure its financial sustainability. The proposed actions are:

Recruitment Freeze

- 2.8 The Council will introduce a recruitment freeze until the end of the financial year. . This will apply to all services across the Council with the exception of Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Cleansing, Early Help and Special Educational Needs and Disability. It is forecast that this will generate savings of between £1.000m and £1.500m.

No Further Overspend in any Service

- 2.9 All services must manage their budgets to ensure that their forecast outturn position does not worsen from that currently reported.

No Further Growth Items or Additionality

- 2.10 All services to pause any requests for growth or additionality, even if it could be funded from current forecast underspends or further underspends compared to the current forecast position. This will ensure that any further underspends can be used to contribute to mitigating the Council's overall financial position. This doesn't apply to expenditure that can be fully met from external funding received by the Council.

Non-Essential Expenditure

- 2.11 A full review is currently being undertaken of all budgets across the Council to identify any areas of non-essential spend that could be stopped. This will include reviewing progress on spending in all areas, including growth items approved in the last couple of years, to identify options for where additional expenditure commitments could be paused. This will identify further underspends that can be used to contribute to mitigating the Council's overall financial position. These options / areas of non-essential expenditure will be reported to Cabinet in November.

Summary 2022/23

- 2.12 After the implementation of the previously agreed remedial actions, an overspend of £2.644m is currently forecast. The proposed actions in paragraphs 2.8 to 2.11 will be fully evaluated and their financial impact will be reported to Cabinet in November – at this stage it is anticipated that the actions proposed will meet the current forecast overspend. However, this represents the current position that has been forecast to the year end- in the event that further pressure is experienced, further remedial action will be required. As a result of using the options previously approved in June and September, there is no flexibility left for the use of existing reserves and general balances- as a result this pressure, and any further pressure, will need to be met from within the existing Council budget and delivery monitored carefully and reported to Cabinet.

Household Support Fund

- 2.13 The Government has continued to provide funding in 2022/23 (the Household Support Fund) to local authorities to provide support to households who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, poverty, and where alternative sources of assistance may be unavailable. Sefton have been allocated **£2.435m** for the period between the 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. This is in addition to the £2.435mm previously received for the period between 1 April 2022 and 30 September 2022.

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- 2.14 The funding will be spent in line with the grant conditions which include a requirement that:
- 33% of the grant to be spent on households with children
 - Up to 33% of the grant spent on households without children
 - 33% of the grant to be spent on households containing pensioners.
- 2.15 The funding will be used to support vulnerable families who are in receipt of Free School Meals, pensioners who are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction Scheme support as well as families and individuals who require emergency assistance. The focus remains on food, affordable warmth in homes, help with utility bills and other essential household items. In addition, resources will be allocated to develop projects designed to identify sustainable sources of food to reduce residents' reliance on food banks.
- 2.16 It is proposed that decisions on the use of the grant are delegated to the Executive Director - People in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing. Any discretionary element that will not be passported to vulnerable families and individuals in line with the grant conditions will be approved in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules.

3. **Medium Term Financial Planning**

- 3.1 The report to Cabinet in June / Council in July highlighted that the pressures in Children's Social Care, as well as increased Energy costs, would have a significant ongoing impact on the Council's budget in 2023/24 and 2024/25. Whilst some of this pressure was considered to be temporary, much would be permanent.
- 3.2 The report also highlighted that there would be additional pressures from 2023/24 as a result of potential increases in the National Living Wage and the impact that this would have on both the Council pay structure as well as external providers, particularly in Adult Social Care. In addition, the current high levels of inflation would lead to significant pressure on many areas of the Council.
- 3.3 The ongoing impact of the current 2022/2023 pay award offer will now also need to be met in 2023/24 given it has been funded from one-off resources in 2022/23. In addition, the Council will need to assess the ongoing impact of the additional pressures reported this month in Children's Social Care as well as other service areas.
- 3.4 Based on all of these issues, the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will start to be refined and updated with the potential scale of the funding gap, in the absence of any further central government funding being clear based on the information in this report. As a result, it is clear that based on this update, budget proposals will need to be developed for implementation from April 2023 (pending further Central Government advice on future funding levels) in order that the Council maintains financial sustainability. This will not be easy with extremely tight financial constraints being in existence and demand for Council services increasing continually (and councils being asked to carry out more functions); however, it is essential that this planning commences from this point. The annual comprehensive Medium-Term Financial Plan will be presented to Cabinet in November 2022.

4. **Council Tax Income – Update**

- 4.1 Council Tax income is shared between the billing authority (Sefton Council) and the three major precepting authorities (the Fire and Rescue Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Combined Authority – Mayoral Precept) pro-rata to their demand on the Collection Fund. The Council's Budget included a Council Tax Requirement of £150.008m for 2022/23 (including Parish Precepts), which represents 84% of the net Council Tax income of £178.590m.
- 4.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of August 2022 is a surplus of -£1.985m. This variation is primarily due to: -
- The surplus on the fund at the end of 2021/22 being higher than estimated (-£0.517m).
 - Gross Council Tax Charges in 2022/23 being higher than estimated (-£0.325m).
 - Exemptions and Discounts (including a forecasting adjustment) being lower than estimated (-£1.143m).
- 4.3 Due to Collection Fund regulations, the Council Tax surplus will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2022/23 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.
- 4.4 A forecast surplus of £2.022m was declared on the 15 January 2022 of which Sefton's share is £1.699m (84.1%). This is the amount that will be recovered from the Collection Fund in 2022/23. Any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in 2023/24 and future years.

5. **Business Rates Income – Update**

- 5.1 Since 1 April 2017, Business Rates income has been shared between the Council (99%) and the Fire and Rescue Authority (1%). The Council's Budget included retained Business Rates income of £56.664m for 2022/23, which represents 99% of the net Business Rates income of £57.236m. Business Rates income has historically been very volatile making it difficult to forecast accurately.
- 5.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of August 2022 is a surplus of -£6.705m on Business Rates income. This is due to:
- The deficit on the fund at the end of 2022/23 being lower than estimated (-£0.091m).
 - Increase in the gross charge on rateable properties (-£0.890m).
 - A number of reliefs announced for 2022/23 were assumed in the NNDR1 return with the loss of income as a result of these reliefs covered by Section 31 grant payments. It is now forecast that the value of these reliefs will be less than anticipated (-£5.432m).
 - Adjustments to the Appeals Provision relating to prior years (-£0.292m)

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- 5.3 When taking into account the lower Section 31 grants due on the additional reliefs, a net surplus of £1.168m is forecast.
- 5.4 Due to Collection Fund regulations, a Business Rates deficit will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2022/23 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.
- 5.5 A forecast deficit of £18.702m was declared in January 2022. Sefton's share of this is £18.515m. This is the amount that will be distributed from the Collection Fund in 2022/23. Any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in 2023/24 and future years.

6. **High Needs Budget**

- 6.1 A report was presented to Cabinet in July with regard to the High Needs budget and the changes that are proposed, details of sufficiency planning, the Council's engagement on the Delivering Better Value Programme and the current high needs deficit and the risk around future central government decision making in respect of this deficit.
- 6.2 In light of these factors, the SEND green paper, the commencement of the Delivering Better Value Programme and the potential changes to accounting treatment of these high needs deficits that exist in a substantial number of councils in England, it was proposed that a monthly financial forecast be presented to Cabinet each month that reflects financial performance against budget and remedial planning - this would be considered alongside the wider quarterly performance report that will be presented to Cabinet and Council.
- 6.3 The High Needs Quarterly Update report presented to Cabinet in July outlined that the overspend on the High Needs budget in 2021/2022 was £4.2m resulting in an accumulated deficit of £12.5m at the end of 2021/22. The report also highlighted that a deficit for 2022/23 was forecast to be between £2.3m - £4.0m.
- 6.4 Given the increase in placements in September 2022, the current forecast overspend will be at least £2.9m, despite the provision of additional places at Sefton specialist provision schools from September. Between April and September, there has been an increase of 52 children placed at our specialist schools / SEND resource units, 172 additional EHCPs (total now 2,437 with 150 in progress) and a further 18 out of borough placements. The position is exacerbated by the additional pressures from currently proposed pay awards for 2022/23, particularly at the non-specialist provision schools where any additional cost has to be met from the High Needs budget as schools are only required to make a fixed contribution per qualifying pupil.
- 6.5 In light of the current position officers are reviewing all options available to the Council to mitigate this additional pressure during the current year and to reduce the impact on the High Needs deficit. This will include accelerating the proposals reported to members in the July Cabinet paper and determining new proposals to improve sufficiency.
- 6.6 In August the Council responded to central government's call for evidence on how High Needs deficits should be considered going forward, especially in respect of

the potential for the ringfence of this deficit to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to come to an end from April 2023. Such a decision obviously presents significant financial risk to all councils if this moves from being a DSG issue to one that could impact on a council's General Fund. The response was shared with relevant Cabinet Members and the next comprehensive report on High Needs to November's Cabinet and Council meetings will provide an update on this if available.

7. **Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2024/25**

Capital Budget

7.1 The Capital Budget and profile of expenditure for the three years 2022/23 to 2024/25 is as follows:

2022/23	£56.763m
2023/24	£38.506m
2024/25	£32.149m

7.2 The updates listed below have been made to the Capital Programme budget since the previous budget reported to Cabinet in September. A number of additional estimates will be presented to Council on 29 September 2022, and these estimates have been included in the budget on the assumption that approval is granted. It should be noted however, that at the time of writing this meeting has not taken place.

- **Adult Social Care:**

- The budget for core Disabled Facilities Grants has been set at £2m following approval by Council in September.
- the following schemes have been partially rephased for completion in 2023/24: ICT Development & Transformation £0.060m and New Directions Programme £0.195m.

- **Corporate Resources** – £0.188m has been added for Corporate Essential Maintenance funded from capital receipts following approval by Council in September.

- **Economic Growth and Housing:**

- £0.171m has been added to the Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment project funded from the Economic Recovery Earmarked Reserves following approval by Council in September
- £0.680m has been added for the Strand Repurposing project funded from the Economic Recovery Earmarked Reserves following approval by Council in September.
- £3.000m has been added for Southport Pier Decking Project following approval by Council in September.
- £69.1m has been added for the Marine Lake Events Centre (MLEC) following approval by Council in September. £31.7m will be funded from the Town Deal; £17.7m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority; and £19.7m to be funded by the Council. This budget will be

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spread over 2022/23 to 2025/26 financial years. The total cost of the project, which commenced in 2021/22, will be £73m including amounts previously approved by Council.

- **Education Excellence:**
 - Linaker Primary Cold Water Storage (£0.081m) has been rescheduled for delivery in 2023/24.
 - £3.782m has been added for stage one of a scheme to expand Summerhill Primary funded from S106 contributions following approval by Council in September.
- **Highways and Public Protection** – the Cabinet Member for Locality Services has, under delegated authority, approved budgets for the Transportation Capital Programme 2022/23 funded from the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. The total amount approved was £9.680m. Council in September has approved an additional amount of £4.789m for the Carriageway Maintenance budget. A full list of Highways Capital schemes can be found at Appendix A.
- **Operational In House Services:**
 - Crosby Flood and Coastal Defence Scheme – £0.050m has been phased to 2023/24.
 - Gold Driving Range Developments – the Southport scheme (£0.280m) has been rescheduled to 2023/24 whilst further external investment in the course is sought by way of a soil importation scheme that will create the space to build the range in a suitable location.

7.3 In addition to the above capital budgets the following capital grant allocations have been approved by Cabinet and Council for inclusion in the Capital Programme 2022/23 and 2023/24:

Capital Grant	2022/23 £	2023/24 £
Education Excellence		
Schools Condition Allocation	2,426,403	-
High Needs Provision Capital Allocation	2,062,067	2,908,641
Basic Needs Funding	-	878,823
TOTAL	4,488,470	3,787,464

7.4 Authority has been delegated to Cabinet Member – Education to assign funding to individual capital schemes for the school's block allocations reported above. The list of schemes for 2022/23 is being fully developed and will be presented to Cabinet Member for approval. A full list of the approved capital schemes will be presented in future reports to Cabinet.

Budget Monitoring Position to August 2022

7.5 The current position of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of June 2022 is shown in the table below. It should be noted that budgets are profiled

dependent upon the timing of when works are to be carried out and the anticipated spend over the financial year. For example, Education Excellence will typically carry out most of its capital works during key school's holiday periods such as the summer recess, whilst Highways and Public Protection will complete most of its programmed works during quarters two and four of the financial year. The budget to date in the table below reflects the profiles of each individual scheme.

Service Area	Budget to Aug-22	Actual Expenditure to Aug-22	Variance to Aug-22
	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care	1.288	1.230	-0.058
Children's Social Care	0.083	0.082	-0.001
Communities	0.335	0.337	0.002
Corporate Resources	0.340	0.329	-0.011
Economic Growth & Housing	3.469	3.517	0.047
Education Excellence	1.108	1.179	0.071
Highways & Public Protection	2.817	2.846	0.029
In House Operational Services	0.698	0.671	-0.027
Total Programme	10.139	10.191	0.052

Capital Programme Forecast Outturn 2022/23

7.6 The current forecast of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of 2022/23 and the profile of budgets for future years is shown in the table below:

Service Area	Full Year Budget 2022/23	Forecast Out-turn	Variance to Budget	Full Year Budget 2023/24	Full Year Budget 2024/25
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care	7.830	7.768	-0.062	2.029	1.610
Children's Social Care	0.450	0.450	-	0.100	-
Communities	2.208	2.208	-	0.290	-
Corporate Resources	6.145	6.073	-0.072	1.007	-
Economic Growth & Housing	13.005	13.165	0.160	20.616	25.543
Education Excellence	4.191	4.053	-0.138	7.320	0.007
Highways & Public Protection	18.356	18.356	-	4.874	3.663
In House Operational Services	4.579	4.579	-	2.269	1.326
Total Programme	56.763	56.651	-0.112	38.506	32.149

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

7.7 The current 2022/23 budgeted spend is £56.763m with a budgeted spend to August of £10.139m. The full year budget includes exceptional items such as £2.033m for vehicle replacement, £4.439m for Green Homes and Sustainable Warmth schemes, £1.199m for a sports hub, £12.047m for Growth and Strategic Investment

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projects, previously approved amounts for essential repairs and maintenance (£1.916m) and a significant scheme to upgrade to LED Street Lighting (£3.887m).

7.8 Typically, on an annual basis the capital programme spends in the region of £25m. Given this typical annual level of spend it is likely that reprofiling of spend into 2023/24 will occur as the year progresses.

7.9 A budget variance of £0.160m has been experienced on the Economic Growth and Housing budget and £0.138m on the Education Excellence budget to the end of August. The following explanations are provided for the key elements of the variance:

- **Cambridge Road Centre Redevelopment £0.123m** – further resources are required to complete the project, and these have been identified from within the Council's current budget and an application to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for further grant funding. A supplementary capital estimate will be presented for approval once confirmation of the grant offer has been received.
- **Schools Programme £0.138m** – the variance is the result of several minor underspends across a number of schemes. Individual scheme savings stem from changes in the scope of work and any unexpended contingency sums. The unused resources will be reprioritised and allocated to other school's schemes.

Programme Funding

7.10 The table below shows how the capital programme will be funding in 2022/23:

Source	£m
Grants	43.519
Prudential Borrowing	7.660
Capital Receipts	2.300
Contributions (incl. Section 106)	3.284
Total Programme Funding	56.763

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

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

APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2022/22 to 2024/25

Capital Project	Budget		
	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Adult Social Care			
Digitising Social Care	455,000	-	-
Core DFG Programme	2,000,000	-	-
Occupational Therapy Support for DFGs	603,774	-	-
ICT Development & Transformation	868,556	60,000	-
Care Home Improvements	987,559	-	-
Changing Places	92,507	-	-
Retail Model within Health and Wellbeing Hubs	450,000	-	-
Extra Care Housing	-	750,000	750,000
Short Term Assessment Unit	860,000	860,000	860,000
New Directions Programme	195,000	195,000	-
Technology Enabled Care	420,806	13,750	-
Sefton Carers Centre	30,000	-	-
Community Equipment Provision	300,000	-	-
Double to Single Handed Care Equipment	150,000	-	-
Community Equipment Stores	250,000	100,000	-
Programme Support	166,625	50,000	-
Children's Social Care			
Support for Fostering Placements	100,000	100,000	-
Community Equipment – Children's	250,000	-	-
Springbrook Refurbishment	100,000	-	-
Communities			
Dunes Splashworld – Essential Repairs	463,133	101,874	-
Dunes Splashworld – Health and Safety Works	270,000	-	-
Orrell Mount Sports Hub	1,198,667	-	-
Libraries - Centres of Excellence	90,000	188,019	-
Section 106 Funded Projects	185,990	-	-
Corporate Resources			
Council Wide Essential Maintenance	1,051,028	1,007,707	-
STCC Essential Maintenance	54,650	-	-
Victoria Baths Essential Works	76,960	-	-
Bootle & Southport Town Hall Retrofit Energy Saving	29,950	-	-
Green Homes Grant Sustainable Warmth Schemes	4,438,882	-	-
ICT Transformation	493,281	-	-
Economic Growth & Housing			
Strategic Acquisitions - Bootle	17,620	-	-
Cambridge Road Centre Development	53,930	-	-
Crosby Lakeside Development	1,715,913	-	-
Town Centre Commission Bootle Canal Side	240,263	-	-
Bootle Canal Side Business Plan	556,862	-	-
Southport Market Redevelopment	47,335	-	-
Strategic Acquisitions - Ainsdale	90,600	836,423	-

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	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Marine Lake Events Centre	6,624,542	14,390,773	25,468,340
Enterprise Arcade	660,000	834,000	-
Transformations De Southport	2,000,000	500,000	-
Strand Business Plan	40,000	375,000	75,000
Strand Repurposing Project	-	680,000	-
Housing Investment	33,960	-	-
Brownfield Fund for Housing Development	537,790	-	-
Social Housing Allocations Scheme	65,000	-	-
Southport Pier	321,822	3,000,000	-
Education Excellence			
Schools Programme	3,457,830	7,320,178	7,055
Planned Maintenance	197,617	-	-
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities	535,143	-	-
Highways and Public Protection			
Accessibility	989,402	-	-
Healthy Lifestyles	790,000	-	-
Road Safety	120,000	-	-
A565 Route Management Strategy	2,349,041	-	-
A59 Route Management Strategy	839,000	-	-
Strategic Planning	1,510,634	-	-
Traffic Management & Parking	55,000	-	-
Highway Maintenance	5,600,454	-	-
Bridges & Structures	517,921	-	-
Drainage	337,340	-	-
Street Lighting Maintenance	327,400	-	-
LED Street Lighting Upgrade	3,886,920	3,605,580	3,662,630
Urban Traffic Control	902,830	-	-
Transport Growth Schemes	-	1,268,620	-
Completing Schemes / Retentions	130,000	-	-
In House Operational Services			
Burials & Cremation Service – Vehicles & Equipment	47,713	-	-
Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management	1,408,473	1,752,701	1,306,000
Parks Schemes	110,426	102,989	-
Tree Planting Programme	134,505	19,769	19,769
Golf Driving Range Developments	9,988	280,280	-
Ainsdale Coastal Gateway	327,712	-	-
Crosby Marine Lake Improvements – Phase 1	30,339	-	-
Green Sefton – Plant & Machinery	131,152	-	-
Vehicle Replacement Programme	2,033,329	113,000	-
Wheeled Bins	345,000	-	-
TOTAL PROGRAMME	56,763,174	38,505,663	32,148,794

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 October 2022
Subject:	Appointment to Sefton New Directions Limited Board		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Adult Social Care		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The report seeks to appoint a further elected Member to serve on the Sefton New Directions Limited Board.

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet appoint a final representative to serve on the Sefton New Directions Limited Board and that the term of office expire on 25 May, 2023.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet has delegated powers set out in Chapter 5, Paragraph 40 of the Constitution to appoint the Council's representatives to serve on Outside Bodies.

To comply with a decision of Cabinet that the appointment be made at this meeting of the Cabinet.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

None arising from this report. Remuneration for the Sefton New Directions Limited Board members is funded by the Board.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

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Implications:

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

Financial	
Legal Paragraph 40 of Chapter 5 in the Constitution gives the Cabinet delegated powers to make appointments to Outside Bodies, appropriate.	
Human Resources	
Equality	
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N/A
Have a neutral impact	N/A
Have a negative impact	N/A
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The appointment of Council representatives will ensure that the interests of residents of Sefton are taken into account.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: As above
Commission, broker and provide core services: As above
Place – leadership and influencer: As above
Drivers of change and reform: As above
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: As above
Greater income for social investment: As above
Cleaner Greener: As above

Impact of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

The appointment of Council representatives will ensure that the interests of residents of Sefton are taken into account

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD:6941/22) has been consulted and notes the report indicates no new direct financial implications for the Council.

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (FD5141:/22) has been consulted and comments have been incorporated into the report

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

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

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 The Cabinet has delegated powers set out in Chapter 5, Paragraph 40 of the Constitution to appoint the Council’s representatives to serve on Outside Bodies.

2. Sefton New Directions Limited Board

2.1 The Council is entitled to appoint 5 representatives to serve on the Sefton New Directions Limited Board.

2.2 At its meeting held on 26 May 2022 the Cabinet appointed Councillor Cummins, Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care as the Shareholder representative, Councillor John Joseph Kelly and an officer nominee to serve on the Board. The terms of office will expire on 25 May 2023.

2.3 It was noted by Cabinet that there were 2 Labour vacancies to be nominated at a later date.

2.4 At its meeting held on 28 July 2022 the Cabinet appointed (Minute No. 29) Councillor Liz Dowd as a representative to fill one of the two vacancies on the Board.

2.5 The Cabinet also agreed that the final vacancy be filled at the next meeting of the Cabinet to be held on 1 September 2022. The Cabinet at its meeting held on 1 September 2022 again agreed (Minute No. 52) to defer the appointment to the meeting on 6 October 2022.

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- 2.6 The Cabinet is therefore requested to appoint a final representative to serve on the Sefton New Directions Limited Board and that the term of office expire on 25 May, 2023.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 th October 2022
Subject:	Selective & Additional (HMO) Licensing Schemes Re-designation 2023 - 2028		
Report of:	Assistant Director Place (Head of Economic Growth and Housing)	Wards Affected:	Blundellsands; Cambridge; Church; Derby; Dukes; Kew; Linacre; Litherland; Victoria;
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To consider the results of the formal public consultation on the proposal to re-designate the Selective and Additional (HMO) housing Licensing schemes, as previously approved by Cabinet in December 2021.

To seek approval to re-designate both a Selective Licensing scheme and two Additional (Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)) Licensing schemes in designated areas of the borough, together with associated matters.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to:

(1) approve the re-designation of a selective licensing scheme in the defined area of Bootle and two additional HMO licensing schemes in the defined areas of central Southport and areas of Waterloo/Seaforth/Brighton Le-Sands.

(2) approve a commencement date for the schemes of 1st March 2023.

(3) approve the licence conditions, as set out in Background Papers 2 & 4

(4) approve the fee structure (along with the recommended fee reductions & exemptions)

(5) authorise the preparation and publication of a Public Notice of designation under sections 80 and 83 of the Housing Act 2004. This Notice shall allow for the designation of the chosen areas for the introduction of a Selective Licensing and two Additional (HMO) licensing schemes.

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(6) authorise the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth & Housing), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing to agree any minor/technical changes to the schemes (non-fundamental changes).

(7) note that the Assistant Director Place (Economic Growth & Housing) will be asked to approve a supplementary revenue estimate of £40k for the first month of operation in 2022/23, in line with the requirements of the Financial Procedure Rules, which will be fully funded by income from the scheme. The budget allocations for future years will be included within the next Budget Report.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To improve the private rented sector and to ensure safe homes for our residents and landlords as set out in our housing strategy.

Cabinet authority is required for the introduction of a selective housing licensing scheme across the designated area, and two additional (HMO) licensing schemes within the Borough.

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

1. Do nothing

Sefton could choose not to re-designate the current housing licensing schemes and revert back to a solely reactive service, responding to complaints, linked with more aggressive promotion of the Landlord Accreditation scheme. This option is unlikely to have significant impact due to Landlord Accreditation being a voluntary scheme, with only the better landlords obtaining accreditation status.

2. Expand the Enforcement Regime

The Council also has a continued reactive enforcement approach in relation to privately rented properties, dealing with cases as they present themselves, generally from complaints from tenants. A more proactive approach could be taken to target the worst landlords. This would develop an outward facing image of enforcement in relation to rogue landlords.

To practically do this would involve the need to increase the resourcing allocated to the Housing Standards Team by a minimum of 4 additional posts. This cost could be up to £210,161 per annum.

This is a more traditional enforcement approach and less of an enabling one than licensing has brought.

3. Introduce a borough wide Selective Licensing Scheme

Officers also considered introducing a borough wide scheme, but this was not taken forward because the evidence is not yet sufficient to introduce the whole borough and therefore such an application is unlikely to be supported

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Staff resources will be required to operate the schemes. The resources that operate the current licensing schemes will be the same as those proposed to operate the new schemes. The schemes have been costed and the licence fees set to make the schemes self-financing.

The gross expenditure will be £2.4m over the 5 year period (£0.48m per annum) and this will be fully funded through licensing income.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
The schemes will be fully funded from proposed license fee income and existing revenue budget.	
Legal Implications:	
Part 2 & 3 of the Housing Act 2004 sets out the legislative framework for Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing. Section 80 of the Housing Act 2004 allows the local authority to designate the area of their district or an area in their district as subject to selective licensing. Section 56 of the Housing Act 2004 allows the local authority to designate the area of their district or an area in their district as subject to additional licensing. The procurement of an IT system will need to comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.	
Equality Implications:	
An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken through development of the Business Case and no negative impacts have been identified. The Equality Impact Assessment is available as a background document.	
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
As part of the licensing process, the application requires the submission of an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), so the team are able to monitor the energy performance of the private rented sector and instruct landlords to carry out energy performing improvements when required. Licensing helps the Council identify those properties that should not be used as private rented accommodation. The Licence Holder must provide the tenant of the licenced dwelling with an Energy Performance Certificate, so the tenant is able to make an informed choice. The Licence	

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holder must provide a copy of the EPC to the Council on demand. A property cannot be privately rented if the property has an EPC rating of F or G unless it is exempt.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:

During 2016 Sefton Council led on developing a new and exciting vision for the future of the borough. One pledge from the vision was to work together to ensure housing choice across all types and tenures across the Borough which will ensure Sefton people have housing choice.

Many vulnerable residents live in the private rented sector. Licensing ensures that the properties are well managed and of a good standard.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

Tenants residing in the private rented sector should gain increased confidence in their landlords. The licence conditions will provide them with the knowledge of what is expected of the landlord and tenant, in order to maintain standards within their homes.

Commission, broker and provide core services:

As Local Housing Authority Sefton has an obligation to ensure that housing quality in the borough is maintained. Licensing is a crucial to allowing the Council to discharge this duty.

Place – leadership and influencer:

Licensing is an example of the Council providing leadership and influence on owners of properties in our communities to work towards a common goal of high quality housing.

Drivers of change and reform:

The proposals in this paper will mean that the Council continues to play a key role in leading change and reform to improve outcomes for Sefton residents and continuously improve the borough.

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:

Having a good place to live is essential for the future success and prosperity of our residents.

Greater income for social investment:

Income from the Licensing scheme is reinvested back into the service to further ensure that good quality is available for our residents.

Cleaner Greener:

Housing Licensing helps to improve the housing standards of the private rented sector. The properties have to be well managed which includes complying with minimum energy efficiency standards.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD6945/22.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5145/22.) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Contact Officer:	Clare Taylor
Telephone Number:	07812030362
Email Address:	clare.taylor@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix 1 Consultation document on improving private rented housing in Sefton, MEL Research Ltd (including appendices)

Background Papers:

The following background papers, which are not available elsewhere on the Internet can be accessed on the Council website:

Background paper 1 Streets subject to selective licensing
https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/5231/appendix-1_sl-designation.pdf

Background paper 2 Selective licensing conditions
https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/5612/background-2_selective-licensing-conditions.docx

Background paper 3 Streets subject to additional licensing
<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/5243/appendix-3-al-designation.pdf>

Background paper 4 Additional licensing conditions
https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/5613/background-4_additional-licensing-conditions.docx

Background paper 5 Equality Impact Assessment
https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/5614/background-5_eia-selective-additional-hmo-licensing-schemes-2023-28.docx

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Section 80 of the Housing Act 2004 allows local authorities to apply for selective licensing of privately rented properties in the whole of their district or in an area of their district. The main provisions in respect of selective licensing came into force in April 2006.
- 1.2 The Act provides a discretionary power, subject to carrying out consultation and to the approval of the appropriate national authority (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government), for Local Housing Authorities to licence all private landlords in a designated area with the intention of ensuring that a minimum standard of management is met.
- 1.3 Additional Licensing under section 56 of the Housing Act 2004 allows the local authority to designate either the whole of their district or an area within their district as subject to an additional (HMO) licensing scheme. A local authority must

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consider that a significant proportion of the HMOs of a defined description, in either a designated area or across the whole of the borough are being managed insufficiently enough to give rise to one or more particular problems either for those occupying the property or for members of the public.

- 1.4 The Business Case to re-designate the Selective Licensing Scheme and 2 Additional (HMO) Licensing Schemes in Sefton is available on the Councils website.

2. Selective Licensing

- 2.1 Selective Licensing will be compulsory and applies to all private rented properties in a designated selective licensing area with the exception of those already subject to Mandatory HMO Licensing or those exempt from licensing. In the areas where selective licensing would be applied, all landlords will be required to hold a licence in order to rent out a property. The licence lasts for the duration of the 5-year scheme.
- 2.2 To qualify for a licence a landlord must be able to demonstrate that they are acting within the law and taking adequate steps to manage their properties and keep them safe. During the 5-year licence period a compliance inspection will be carried out on the majority of properties to ensure they meet the required standards for residential accommodation. In addition, a 'fit and proper' person test will be applied to test the landlord's suitability to manage a tenancy.
- 2.3 The council is satisfied that the area proposed for a selective licensing designation meets three of the six legal tests set out in the Housing Act 2004. The designation is proposed on the basis of anti-social behaviour, housing conditions and deprivation. A designation based on migration, low demand or crime is not proposed. Only one test needs to be proved to make a designation lawful.

3. Additional (HMO) Licensing

- 3.1 Additional (HMO) Licensing will operate in the same way and alongside the existing Mandatory HMO Licensing scheme that operates across the Borough. Mandatory licensing requires that a certain type of HMO must have a licence. These are those that house 5 or more people who form 2 or more households and do not have all facilities within a self-contained unit, i.e. bathroom or kitchen. The same process will be followed, with the same legal obligations and penalties for failing to comply with the requirements.
- 3.2 Additional Licensing will require **all** privately rented HMOs of any description, which are located within designated areas, to be licensed. Sefton proposes to implement Additional licensing in parts of Southport and Waterloo/Seaforth/Brighton Le Sands.
- 3.3 Before making an Additional (HMO) licensing designation for a particular area, a local authority must consider that a significant proportion of the HMOs of that description in the area is being managed sufficiently ineffectively as to give rise, or

to be likely to give rise, to one or more particular problems either for those occupying the HMOs or for members of the public.

- 3.4 The Council is satisfied that the 2 proposed areas for an Additional (HMO) licensing designation do meet the criteria.

4. Justification for the re-designation of the licensing schemes

- 4.1 The business case evaluates and highlights the successes relating to the implementation of the current private sector licensing schemes in March 2018. However, it also outlines the requirements for the continuation of these schemes; to further improve the housing conditions and management for our residents in the private rented sector and to fully achieve Sefton's strategic housing vision. Already, improvements are showing across property conditions and ASB. There is though clearly more to do, particularly around the management of privately rented properties and to improve the living conditions of its residents, and if the schemes are not extended it is likely that issues would re-emerge in these areas over time. Therefore, the Council feels that by re-designating both the Selective and the Additional (HMO) licensing schemes for another 5 years, further improvements will continue to be made.
- 4.2 The positive impact of the current schemes is clear and since the commencement of the licencing schemes in March 2018, 298 licensable properties have had serious Category 1 hazards removed. The total number of hazards removed from all licensable properties is 1176, 380 of which have been the most serious Category 1 hazards. The main hazards that have been removed from the properties are hazards relating to fire safety, electrical hazards, damp & mould, excess cold and falls between levels.
- 4.3 Since the commencement of the current licensing schemes 1138 compliance visits took place. 75% were non-compliant on first inspection. However, following informal intervention by the Housing Standards Team, 99% of these properties became compliant. The main reasons for non-compliance were the failure to have a Gas Safe report for the property, failure to have an Electrical Installation Condition Report where required, and failure to have smoke alarms fitted.
- 4.4 To summarise, there is evidence to indicate that the licensing schemes are leading to improvements in housing conditions. Selective and Additional (HMO) licensing and the need to obtain a licence has helped Sefton Council identify high risk properties requiring intervention, often where tenants would not have risked complaining to their landlord. The application process has highlighted just how many properties do not have the minimum requirements such as a Gas Safe Certificate. Without licensing, it is fair to conclude that most of these properties would remain without one, leaving tenants at serious risk.
- 4.5 Since the introduction of the Selective licensing within Bootle, there has been a significant overall reduction in the rate of anti-social behaviour in every single one of the individual Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA), that comprise the licensing boundary. Although the overall ASB rate and specifically the environmental ASB rates are falling in the Bootle Selective Licensing area, the ASB data still highlights that this area still has some way to go in terms of reducing the impacts

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of all ASB to a rate that is similar or equal to the overall Borough rates. Therefore, there is a strong argument presented, regarding the continuation of a selective licensing scheme in Bootle.

- 4.6 All of the LSOAs in the Bootle Selective Licensing area are ranked within the most deprived quintile (20%) nationally. Within this Selective Licensing boundary there are areas suffering from severe deprivation, seven are ranked within the most deprived 1% nationally and seven are ranked within the most deprived 5%. Therefore, this Selective Licensing area can still be considered as suffering from extremely high levels of deprivation.
- 4.7 In relation to the proposed Additional (HMO) Licensing schemes re-designation, evidence of poor management practices are demonstrated through poor conditions or within the local community including ASB and crime. During the term of the current Additional Licensing schemes (end Aug 2022), 219 service requests were received from HMO properties. 167 of those were from HMOs within the licensing areas equating to 76%. This provides evidence of poor property management across this sector and specifically within the proposed re-designated areas. Parts of Waterloo/Seaforth and central Southport have high levels of deprivation, being within the worst 10% most deprived areas nationally. Both areas also have above the national average of flats/maisonettes within the PRS and have a significant stock of larger style properties that in recent years have been prone to conversion, to either bedsits or self-contained flats.
- 4.8 Re-designating the Additional (HMO) Licensing areas will continue to build upon improvements to the management standards in this sector, improve living conditions and ultimately lead to a better quality of life for residents. It will help the areas to be more conducive to good landlords but provide an environment that is less opportunistic and attractive for poor and rogue landlords.
- 4.9 In December 2021 Cabinet agreed the business case to justify its licensing proposals and agreed to consult the public on proposals to introduce Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing. The consultation was undertaken by an independent research company, MEL Research Ltd and commenced 9th May 2022, closing 12 weeks later on 31st July 2022, an approach approved by the Council's Consultation & Engagement Panel in March 2022.

5. Licence Fees

- 5.1 The proposed Selective licence fees are shown in the table below.

	£	Annual Equiv.	Weekly Equiv.
Full Fee	695	139	2.67
Accreditation	545	109	2.10
Accredited Managing Agent (licence holder)	495	99	1.90

- 5.2 In addition to the above fee:

For each additional unit (under the same ownership, within the same building) a charge of £30 per additional unit will apply.

5.3 The proposed Additional (HMO) licence fees are shown in the table below.

	£	Annual Equiv.	Weekly Equiv.
Full Fee	950	190	3.65
Accreditation	800	160	3.08
Accredited Managing Agent (licence holder)	750	150	2.88

5.4 **In addition to the above fee:**

For each additional unit (under the control of the same proposed licence holder, within the same building) a charge of £30 per additional unit will apply.

5.5 A review of fees will be undertaken annually and will be adjusted to reflect changes in costs – with any changes approved by Cabinet Member in line with the Financial Procedure Rules. The fees are in line with the findings of the decision of Hemming v Westminster City Council, which ruled that fees should be paid in 2 stages : on application a fee is charged that amounts purely to the costs of the authorisation procedures and once the application is successful, a further fee to cover the costs of enforcement of the scheme is paid.

6 Licence Conditions

6.1 A Licence holder will be required to comply with conditions on their licence. Some of these conditions are mandatory and have to be applied to each licence, as defined in the Housing Act 2004. Each licence will also have a further set of conditions that are specific to Sefton. The draft Selective licensing conditions are in Background document 2. The draft Additional (HMO) Licensing conditions are attached in Background document 4.

7 Areas

7.1 Selective licensing is proposed to be introduced in an area of Bootle. See Background document 1.

7.2 Additional (HMO) Licensing is proposed in 2 areas of the Borough. One in central Southport and one in the Waterloo/Seaforth/Brighton Le-Sands area. See Background document 3.

8 Consultation

Consultation Methodology

8.1 The consultation was promoted via a number of methods. Respondents

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could participate by phone, email, post or via an on-line survey. Easy read/accessible versions of the survey and associated documents were also available. Full details of all activities undertaken to promote the consultation and encouraged landlords, agents, tenants, residents, and other interested parties to participate can be found at Appendix 1. The consultation was regularly promoted across its duration in the local press and through social media with a direct link to the survey on the council's webpage.

- 8.2 64,000 leaflets were distributed via Royal Mail to the majority of properties within the 3 proposed licensing areas and immediately surrounding areas. The leaflets explained the proposals and encouraged residents/businesses to complete the on-line survey.
- 8.3 Researchers undertook doorstep interviews selecting a random sample of 545 households across the Borough, which was representative by ward, tenure, age, gender, and ethnicity.
- 8.4 In addition, a researcher interviewed relevant stakeholder organisations including a neighbouring authority and a third sector organisation. 3 on-line focus groups were held for landlords, tenants and residents.

9. Response to Consultation

Online survey

- 9.1 The online consultation was widely promoted by the council. In total, 787 responses were received to the online consultation.
- 9.2 As part of each of the above survey's respondents were asked whether they were a resident, and/or a landlord, and/or a managing agent and/or they classified themselves in some other way. The split of the respondent profiles are shown below (multiple answers possible).

	Number	% of responses
Sefton Resident	650	82.59%
Private tenant in Sefton	89	11.31%
Private landlord / agent	192	24.40%
or other (multiple answers possible)	137	17.41%

Stakeholder Consultation

- 9.3 A number of stakeholder details was provided by the Council to MEL Research although contact was made by MEL there was a low take-up with 3 stakeholders providing responses.

Focus Groups

- 9.4 3 on-line focus groups introducing the proposal were held by M·E·L Research. In total, 17 people attended these meetings.

Summary of key consultation findings

- 9.5 The attached report at Appendix 1 sets out the detailed findings which were analysed and produced by MEL Research Ltd on our behalf. The consultation feedback report along with responses to specific questions will also be published on the Council's website as part of the re-designation process.
- 9.6 Results evidence that more respondents support than oppose the introduction of the licensing of the privately rented sector across parts of Sefton. With 77% in total in favour of the selective licensing re-designation and 80% in favour of the two additional licensing re-designations. Comments indicate that they further believe the schemes will have a positive impact on them.
- 9.7 Views were sought from landlords, residents, tenants, charities, local businesses, third sector organisations and neighbouring boroughs on the implementation of the schemes with particular focus on the proposed designated areas, licence conditions and fees.
- 9.8 The majority of respondents also supported the proposed licence conditions and fee structure for all of the schemes.
- 9.9 Residents and tenants in Sefton are particularly very supportive on all aspects of the schemes. Landlords are understandably more resistant. However almost half of landlords are in favour of licensing.
- 9.10 3 Stakeholders responded to the consultation. The stakeholders interviewed, feel that some regulation of the private rented sector is needed in Sefton and that licensing schemes in general should have a positive impact on improving the private rented sector in Bootle.

10. Proposed changes to the licensing schemes

Staffing

- 10.1 In December 2021, Cabinet approved the proposals to consult on the re-designation of the 3 licensing schemes. That approval stated that to operate, manage and enforce the schemes, would require a team of staff including 5 compliance officers and those compliance officers would be fully funded from the licensing income. Since that report, there has been an increase in the estimated number of licence applications and consequently income from licensing fees. Comments that have come from the consultation have said that not enough compliance inspections have taken place during the current 5-year schemes. We therefore propose to increase the number of compliance officers to 6 in the new schemes, to ensure the number of compliance inspections is increased during

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the 5-year duration of the re-designated schemes. The extra compliance officer can be fully funded from licence fee income. Should the take up of licences be lower than anticipated, the number of additional officers will be adjusted accordingly to ensure the scheme remains within the available level of funding.

Licence conditions

- 10.2 A minor change to the licence conditions for all schemes will be made in relation to the requirement to have a carbon monoxide alarm. This is due to changes in legislation that will come into effect before the commencement of the new schemes:

A carbon monoxide alarm is installed in any room which is used wholly or partly as living accommodation (including a bathroom or a lavatory) and contains a fixed combustion appliance other than a gas cooker.

Licence fees

- 10.3 It is not proposed to change the licence fee structure following the consultation results. The majority of respondents felt that the fees were reasonable. Although some respondents felt that the fees were unreasonable, the fees are set so that the scheme can operate efficiently and are cost neutral, meaning the Council do not make a profit from the fee income.

11. Conclusion

Re-designate Selective licensing

- 11.1 The Council will re-designate the selective licensing scheme across defined areas of Bootle, whereby all rental properties in streets, listed in Background paper 1, be designated as an area subject to selective licensing. This will require all landlords letting a property on those streets to apply for a licence.
- 11.2 Landlords will be required to adhere to a number of licence conditions which can be found at Background paper 2.
- 11.3 We will charge a fee and award any applicable fee reductions as set out in part 5 of this report. The licence will in most cases be valid until the end of the scheme.

Re-designate the 2 Additional (HMO) licensing schemes

- 11.4 The Council will re-designate the 2 Additional (HMO) licensing schemes, across defined areas of Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-le-Sands and Southport subject to additional licensing for any non-mandatory "houses in multiple occupation" (HMO). This will require landlords who let a property occupied by at least three people, who do not make up a single household to obtain a licence. A full list of the streets subject to additional licensing can be found at Background paper 3.

- 11.5 Landlords will be required to adhere to a number of licence conditions which can be found at Background paper 4.
- 11.6 We will charge a fee and award any applicable fee reductions as set out in part 5 of this report. The licence will in most cases be valid until the end of the scheme.

12. Notice of Delegation

- 12.1 Approval is sought to give authority to prepare and publish a Public Notice of designation under sections 80 and 83 of the Housing Act 2004. This Notice shall allow for the designation of the chosen areas for the introduction of a Selective licensing scheme and for two Additional (HMO) licensing schemes.
- 12.2 The proposed commencement date for the schemes is 1st March 2023.

13. Publication requirements relating to designations under Part 2 or 3 of the Act

- 13.1 The Housing Act 2004, Parts 2 or 3, Section 59 (2) or 83 (2) requires the Council to publicly post a designation notice within seven days of Cabinet decision and must do so in the manner prescribed by the Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (England) Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/373). The designations will not come into force until at least three months after Cabinet approval.
- 13.2 Within 7 days after the date on which the designation is made the Council must:
 - (i) place the notice on the public notice board at one or more municipal buildings within the designated area;
 - (ii) publish the notice on the Council's internet site; and
 - (iii) arrange for its publication in at least two local newspapers circulating in or around the designated area in the next edition of those newspapers and five times in the edition of those newspapers following the edition in which it is first published.
- 13.3 Landlords will be encouraged to apply for a licence and the Council will promote this to landlords/agents and tenants. Those who do not apply for the required licence may be subject to enforcement.

14. Equality Impact Statement

- 14.1 The re-designation of the Selective & Additional (HMO) Licensing schemes should have a positive impact in terms of Equalities and Diversity issues and along with other Interventions support the uplift and regeneration of the designated areas. A full Equalities impact assessment for the proposal has been prepared and can be found at Background paper 5.

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APPENDIX 1



m.e.l
research

**Consultation on selective and
additional (HMO) housing
licensing in Sefton**

Sefton Council

August 2022



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Project details and acknowledgements

Title	Consultation on selective and additional (HMO) housing licensing in Sefton
Client	Sefton Council
Project number	22041
Author	Jordan Harrold
Research Manager	Adam Knight-Markiegi

M·E·L Research would like to thank the Council for their support with the consultation. We would also like to thank residents, tenants, landlords and agents in the borough and neighbouring boroughs for taking part in the consultation. Thanks also go to the stakeholders that contributed their views for the consultation.

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Executive summary

This Executive Summary provides the main findings from the consultation undertaken in Sefton on the proposals to re-designate Selective Licensing in the Bootle area and Additional (HMO) Licensing in parts of Seaforth and Waterloo, Brighton-le-Sands and central Southport. In total 787 respondents took part in the survey, along with verbal feedback provided via other forums. The consultation period spanned 12-weeks, from the 9th May 2022 – 31st July 2022. Opportunities to participate in the consultation were provided as follows:

- Online survey (219 respondents)
- Face to face residents survey across the whole of Sefton (545 respondents)
- Three online focus groups (approx. 17 attendees)
- Two stakeholders' interviews (3 respondents)

Key Headlines

Proposal for Selective Licensing in Bootle

Table 1: Responses on Selective Licensing in Bootle proposal (by respondent group)

	Overall	Sefton resident	Private tenant in Sefton	Private landlord / agent
Agree with re-designation of SL	77%	86%	90%	42%
Disagree with re-designation of SL	18%	10%	6%	51%
<i>Don't know</i>	4%	4%	4%	7%
Positive impact	36%	40%	62%	26%
Negative impact	45%	49%	22%	31%
No impact	14%	7%	8%	38%
Fees for SL reasonable	62%	70%	66%	29%
Fees for SL unreasonable	31%	22%	25%	65%
<i>Don't know</i>	8%	9%	9%	5%

Proposal for Additional (HMO) Licensing in parts of the borough

Table 2: Responses on Additional (HMO) Licensing proposal in parts of the borough (by respondent group)

	Overall	Sefton resident	Private tenant in Sefton	Private landlord / agent
Agree with re-designation of AL	80%	86%	88%	50%
Disagree with re-designation of AL	13%	10%	7%	31%
<i>Don't know</i>	7%	5%	6%	19%
Positive impact	34%	36%	55%	26%
Negative impact	51%	53%	35%	42%
No impact	7%	4%	4%	15%
Fees for AL reasonable	62%	68%	70%	34%
Fees for AL unreasonable	27%	21%	18%	50%

Don't know	11%	10%	12%	16%
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The quantitative results shown below are derived from two key methods of consultation—a residents' survey (face-to-face survey with a representative sample of 545 respondents across the borough) and an online consultation (219 respondents). Qualitative feedback was recorded online, via verbal and written responses given from interested parties.

The findings in this report have also taken into account views of other stakeholder in the form of qualitative telephone depth interviews. This includes Wirral Council and Living Well UK.

The results include support for and the likely impact on respondents for a proposal that the council is considering, which is the re-designation of the licensing schemes introduced in 2018 to help improve the local private rented sector:

- Re-designate the Selective licensing scheme in Bootle
- Re-designate the Additional (HMO) licensing scheme in Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and central Southport.

Key findings

Introduce Selective Licensing in Bootle

- **77% agree with the proposal to re-designate Selective Licensing in Bootle, whilst 18% disagree (4% don't know).**
 - Levels of agreement are significantly higher in the face-to-face survey compared to the online survey (90% compared to 47%).
 - Sefton residents (86%) and Privates tenants (90%) are significantly more likely compared to private landlords to agree with the proposals (42%).
 - Respondents from Bootle are significantly more likely to disagree with the proposals compared to the total average (35% compared to 18%).
- **36% feel Selective Licensing will have a positive impact on them, whilst 14% feel it will be negative (45% it will have no impact).**
 - Those who completed the online survey are significantly more likely to feel that the proposals will have a negative impact on them compared to the face-to-face survey (38% compared to 4%).
 - Private landlords are significantly less likely to feel the proposals will have a positive impact on them (26%), compared to Sefton residents (40%) and private tenants (62%).
 - Those in the Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and central Southport areas are significantly more likely to feel the proposals will have a positive impact on them compared to those in Bootle (50% compared to 35%).

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Introduce Additional (HMO) Licensing in parts of Waterloo, Brighton-le-Sands/Seaforth and central Southport

- **80% of respondents agree with the proposals to re-designate the Additional (HMO) licensing schemes, with 13% disagreeing and 7% stating they don't know**
 - Levels of agreement are significantly higher in the face-to-face survey compared to the online survey (88% compared to 58%).
 - Sefton residents (86%) and Privates tenants (88%) are significantly more likely compared to private landlords to agree with the proposals for the additional licensing scheme (50%).
- **Around a third of respondents (34%) feel Additional Licensing will have a positive impact on them, whilst 7% feel it will be negative (51% feel it will have no impact)**
 - Those who completed the online survey are significantly more likely to feel the proposals will have a negative impact on them compared to the face-to-face survey (19% compared to 2%).
 - Private landlords are significantly less likely to feel the proposals will have a positive impact on them (26%), compared to Sefton residents (36%) and private tenants (55%).
 - Those in the Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and central Southport areas are significantly more likely to feel the proposals will have a positive impact on them compared to those in Bootle (54% compared to 35%).

Perceptions of the licence scheme fees

- **62% of respondents feel the proposed Selective licensing fee is reasonable, whilst 31% feel it is unreasonable (8% don't know)**
 - Those who completed the face-to-face survey are significantly more likely to agree that the selective licence scheme fees are reasonable compared to those completing the online survey (72% compared to 35%).
 - Private landlords are significantly less likely than all other respondent types to disagree that the proposed fees are reasonable (29%).
- **62% of respondents agree with the proposed Additional licensing fees, whilst 27% disagreed (11% don't know)**
 - Those who completed the face-to-face survey are significantly more likely to agree that the additional licence scheme fees are reasonable compared to those completing the online survey (70% compared to 41%).
 - Similarly, the fees of the selective licensing, private landlords are significantly less likely than all other respondent types to disagree that the proposed fees are reasonable (34%).

Stakeholder views on licensing proposals

The main findings that came out of the stakeholder interviews are as follows:

- Issues with living conditions and mobility issues often come up a lot when speaking with Sefton tenants about their homes
- There is agreement that there is a lack of choice in housing options which allows private landlords to potentially not fulfil all their requirements in housing standards.
- Potential costs were discussed around being pushed onto the tenants themselves which could cause concerns on the additional fees the selective licensing induces.

- Additional aid to landlords such as instalments schemes to help especially those with large portfolios to spread out the licence fees were suggested as a way of supporting landlords.
- Some stakeholders expressed a concern over how the private landlords are governed when on the licence scheme, and to what extent the additional fees actually benefit the properties and tenants.
- There was discussion around the fact that the licensing scheme does potentially offer more security to private tenants when looking for accommodation in the area, as scheme regulations means the home, they are potentially moving into is of a higher standard.
- Some feel that awareness of the licence scheme is pretty low at this point.
- Another part of the licensing scheme is that it helps landlords to raise their management practices.

Views from the online focus groups

The main findings and queries that came out of the online focus groups (mainly landlord issues and concerns) and other feedback provided via the consultation are as follows:

- Not all landlords should be pushed together, there should be incentives for being a good landlord.
- Other ways to simplify the documentation process of complying with the scheme, such as an online portal to cut down on certification.
- Improved communication from the council to landlords to get them more onboard with working together to identify rogue landlords.
- Agreement that a lot of the licensing scheme fees will be passed onto the tenant via rent increases.
- There is a perceived lack of inspections currently taking place amongst landlords which makes them feel that the licensing scheme isn't working as intended, as many rogue landlords are still not being found.
- Further clarity on what the licence scheme fees are going towards, and some respondents perceive the scheme as a bit of a money maker for the council.

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Introduction

Since March 2018, Sefton Council has had a Selective Licensing scheme for private landlords in the Bootle area. There is also another licensing scheme which is called 'Additional (HMO) Licensing' which is only for houses of multiple occupancy (rented to at least three people, who are not part of the same family) for privately rented property situated in parts of Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and central Southport. With the current schemes due to end on 28th February 2023, Sefton Council carried out a 12-week consultation on its proposal to extend them until February 2028.

Introducing the current licensing schemes has enabled Sefton Council to work with private landlords in the areas covered to improve their standards of management. This has resulted in improved living conditions for their tenants as well as improvements for the wider areas, such as reduced anti-social behaviour.

Sefton Council believes that a well-managed PRS plays an important role in meeting housing need. However, there is concern around ASB issues and poor property condition, with the 2013 Sefton house condition survey finding that 24% of privately rented property failed to meet the decent homes standard, compared to 16% of all private housing in the borough.

Sefton Council is proposing to re-designate both Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing schemes for privately rented properties across selected areas of the Borough. The council believes that licensing will continue to improve the management and property conditions across the designated areas, and members of Sefton's Housing Standards Team will be available to offer advice and support to both landlord and tenant.

As part of the licensing considerations, Sefton Borough Council commissioned M·E·L Research, as an independent research organisation, to carry out a consultation on the proposal to re-designate the Selective Licensing and Additional Licensing schemes in identified parts of the borough.



Public consultation

The public consultation took place over a 12-week period: 9th May 2022 – 31st July 2022. A range of methods were used to consult with local residents, tenants, landlords, agents, businesses and organisation in Sefton, local stakeholders and neighbouring local authority areas. Wide-ranging communications and publicity were also used by Sefton Council itself.

Proposals

The consultation focused on the degree to which respondents support the proposal being considered to re-designate the licence schemes, along with the likely impact they are to have on respondents around:

- Re-designating the Selective Licensing scheme in Bootle
- Re-designating the Additional (HMO) Licensing scheme in parts of parts of Seaforth and Waterloo, Brighton-le-Sands and central Southport.

The consultation also considered views on the proposed licensing costs, perceptions of the private rented sector in Sefton, privately renting tenants’ experiences of living in the Borough of Sefton and landlords’ experiences of renting out property in Sefton.

Consultation methods and profile of respondents

Five main methods were used to gather responses for the consultation. These are detailed below, along with the response rates received by survey method.

1. Face-to-face survey across Sefton

A door-to-door, face-to-face survey was undertaken with 545 residents from across the borough and results are broadly representative by gender and age. Based on a total estimated population (Census 2021) of 279,300 in the borough, the results provide a margin of error of +/-4.19% . A breakdown by age and gender is provided in the table below.

Table 3: Breakdown of respondents to the residents survey by age, gender and respondent type

	Total	Sefton resident	Private tenant in Sefton	Private landlord / agent	Other
18 to 29	51	51	10	5	10
30 to 39	77	77	21	10	27
40 to 49	49	49	9	3	15
50 to 59	74	74	16	4	19
60 or over	159	159	10	14	23
Prefer not to say	2	2	0	0	0
Did not respond	133	133	12	29	16
Total	545	545	78	65	110

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Male	206	206	32	15	44
Female	206	206	34	21	50
Did not respond	133	133	12	29	16
Total	545	545	78	65	110

2. Online survey

The online consultation was widely promoted by the council (see Appendix 2 for full details of all activities undertaken to promote the consultation) and encouraged landlords, agents, tenants, residents and other interested parties to participate. In total, 219 responses were received to the online consultation. A breakdown of responses by respondent type is provided in the table below. A higher proportion of private landlords and letting or managing agents responded to the online survey, accounting for over half (58%) of respondents.

Table 4: Respondent profile to the online survey

Total	Sefton resident	Private tenant in Sefton	Private landlord / agent	Other
125	67	9	63	19

It should be noted that due to the relatively small number of respondents participating in the online survey and the fact that the survey was self-selection (i.e. biases can arise because individuals select to take part), the results are not representative of the borough as a whole. In the report, we show results from each of the two surveys separated but also combined.

3. Stakeholder consultations

A number of stakeholders were invited to take part in an interview undertaken by M·E·L Research staff as part of the consultation. The council provided a list of potential stakeholders and although attempts were made to contact all organisations, only two organisations took part in the consultation: a neighbouring local authority and a landlord's association.

4. Written responses

In addition, the National Residents Landlords Association (NRLA) submitted a written response to the consultation. Two further written responses were provided to the M·E·L Research Sefton email address. All written responses are included in the Appendices.

5. Online focus groups

We ran three online focus groups, listed below, to gain views about the proposed re-designation of the licensing schemes. No Council officers were present so that honest and independent feedback could be gathered as part of the process. We recruited to these from willing respondents to the two surveys.

There was a larger share of landlords in these groups, although they also included tenants, other residents and agents.

Table 5: Focus group attendees

Date/time	Number of participants
4 th July 2022	7
5 th July 2022	5
5 th July 2022	5
TOTAL	17

Reporting conventions

We have used the term 'landlord' in this report to collectively refer to landlord, letting or managing agents. Owing to the rounding of numbers, percentages displayed visually on graphs or charts in the report may not always add up to 100% and may differ slightly when compared with the text. The figures provided in the text should always be used. For some questions, respondents could give more than one response (multi choice). For these questions, the percentage for each response is calculated as a percentage of the total number of respondents and therefore percentages do not add up to 100%.

The consultation findings have been analysed overall, combining results by the different methods of consultation (face-to-face and online consultation), by method of consultation and by type of respondent (landlord/agent or tenant/resident).

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Survey results

This section of the report presents the results from the surveys. Results are shown for both surveys combined, then split by survey type, respondent type and geographical split where possible. A full breakdown of the respondent profile is in Appendix 4.

Re-designation of Selective Licensing in Bootle

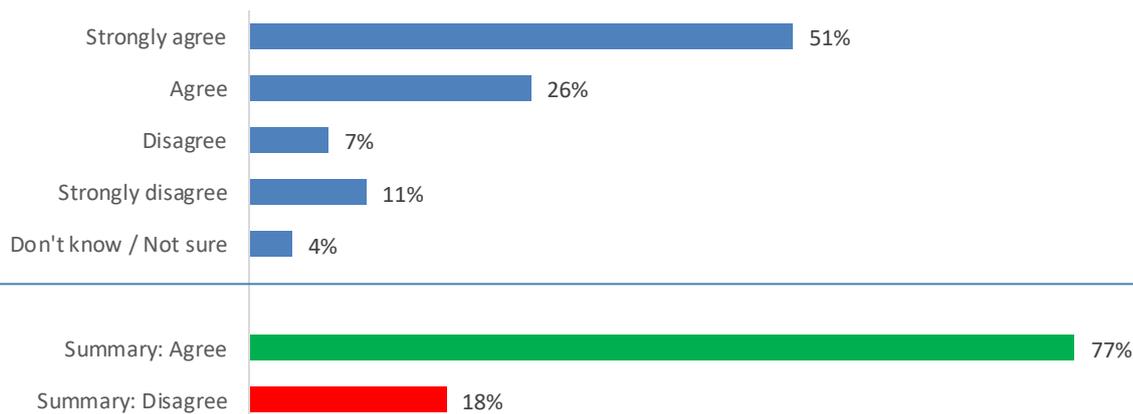
Figure 1 shows that just over three quarters of respondents agree with the proposals to re-designate selective licensing scheme in Bootle, with around half (51%) strongly agreeing. 18% disagree with the proposals, with one in ten (11%) strongly disagreeing.

Figure 2 shows the differing levels of support or lack of support for the proposal by the different methodology adopted for the consultation. These show that agreement is highest amongst those who took part in the face-to-face survey for Bootle (90% in support) and lowest amongst those who took part in the online survey (47% in agreement).

Residents in Sefton are very positive, with 86% in support of the proposals, and nine in ten (90%) of privately renting tenants are also in agreement. Just 42% of private landlords agree with the proposals to re-designate the selective licensing scheme in Bootle.

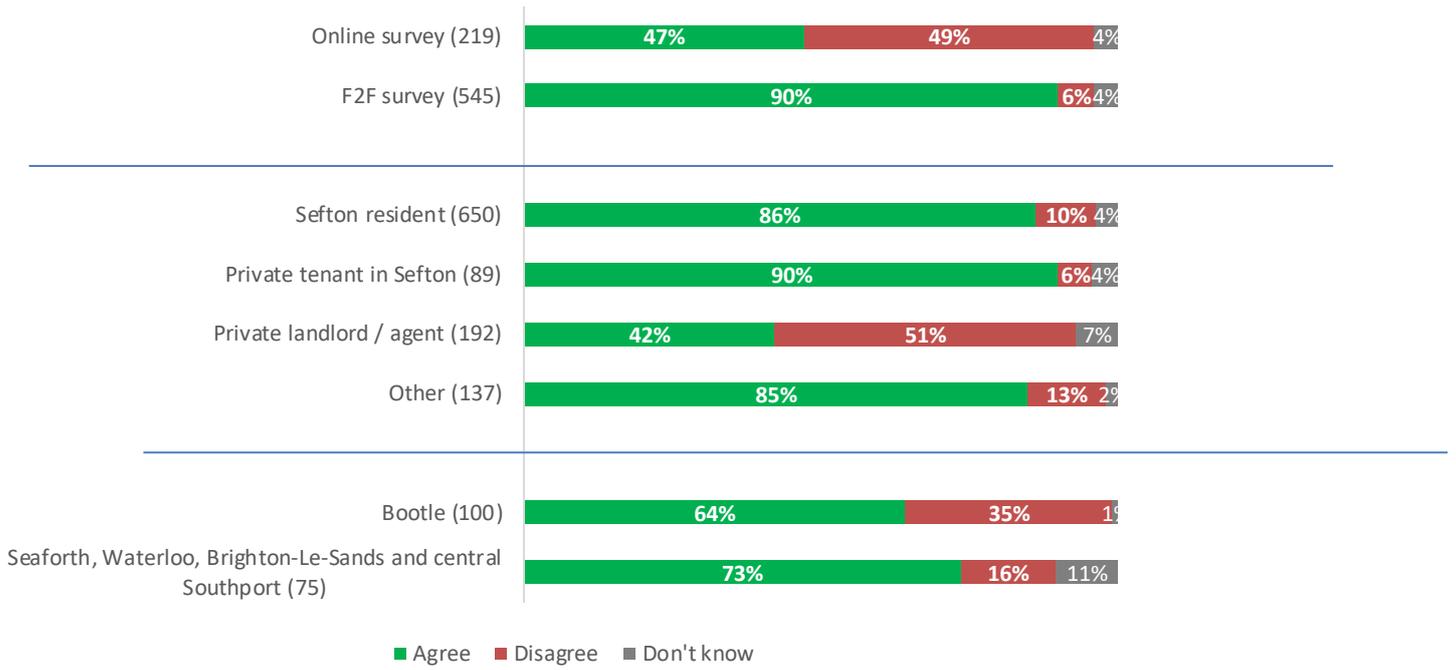
Those living in Bootle (63%) are less likely to agree with the redesignation compared to those living in the Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and Southport area (73%).

Figure 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to re-designation a Selective licensing scheme in Bootle?



Sample base: 764

Figure 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to re-designate a Selective licensing scheme in Bootle? – By subgroup



Sample base in brackets

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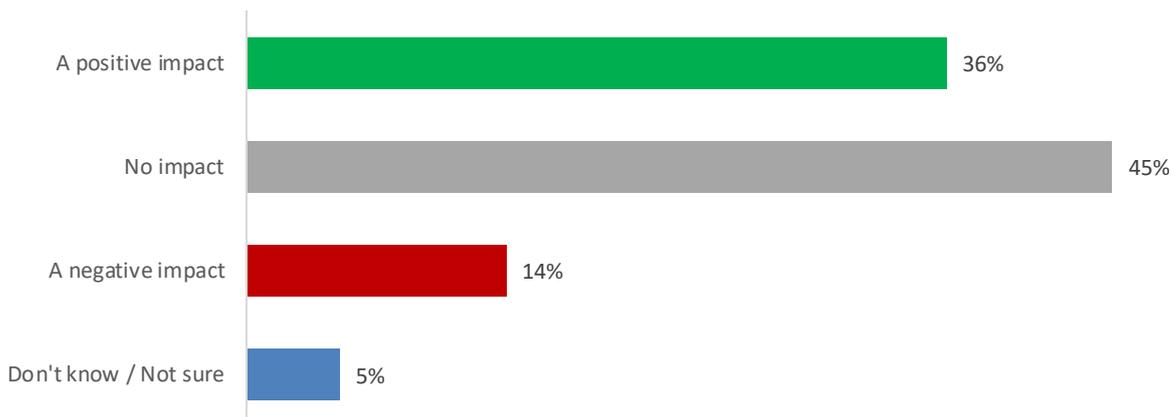
Likely impact on respondents

Respondents were then asked what impact, if any, introducing a selective licensing scheme would have on them. Figure 3 shows that overall, around a third (36%) feel it will have a positive impact and 14% feel it will have a negative impact. The majority feel that it will have no impact on them (45%), whilst 5% do not know what impact it will have on them.

Those responding to the online survey, however, are more likely to feel it will have a negative impact on them compared to those completing the face-to-face survey as shown in Figure 4 (38% compared to 4%). Private tenants in Sefton are most likely to feel the licensing scheme will have a positive impact on them (62%), whilst private landlords are significantly more likely than both Sefton residents (7%) and private tenants (8%) feel it will have a negative impact on them (38%).

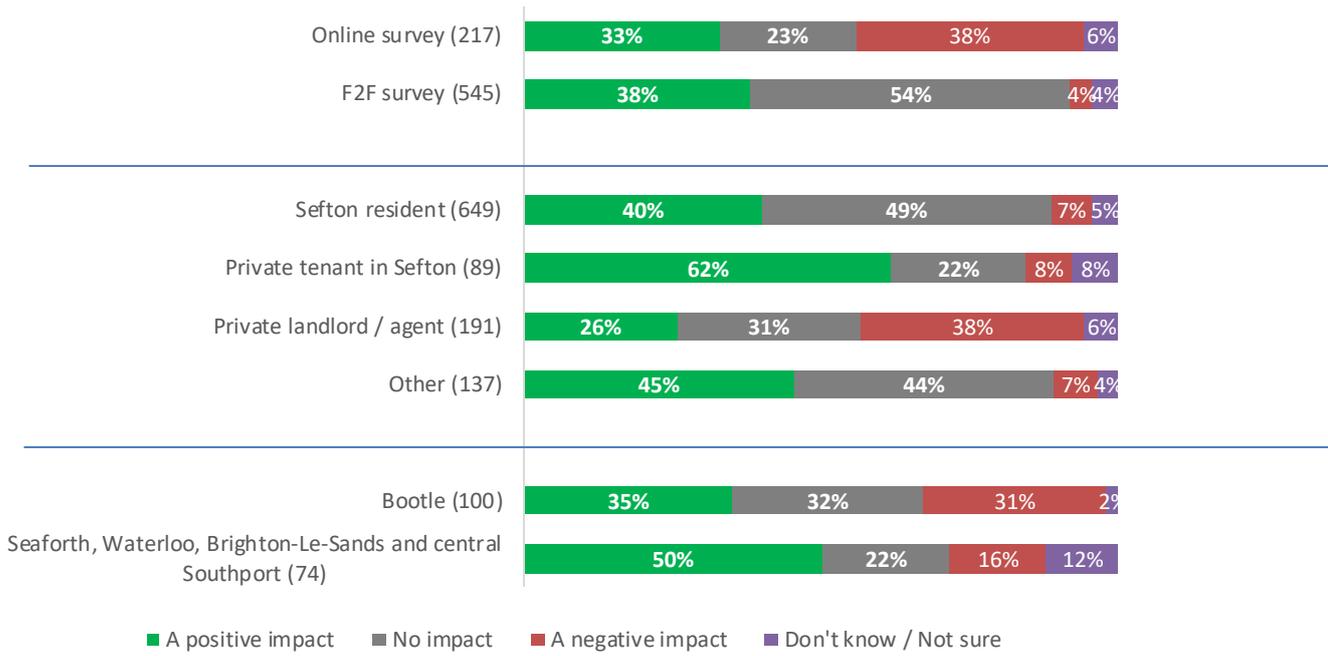
Those living in Bootle (35%) are less likely to feel positive towards the implementation of the selective licensing scheme compared to those living in the Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and Southport area (50%).

Figure 3: What impact, if any, do you feel implementing a Selective licensing scheme would have on you if it were introduced?



Sample base: 762

Figure 4: What impact, if any, do you feel implementing a Selective licensing scheme would have on you if it were introduced? – By subgroup



Sample base in brackets

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Re-designation of Additional (HMO) licensing scheme

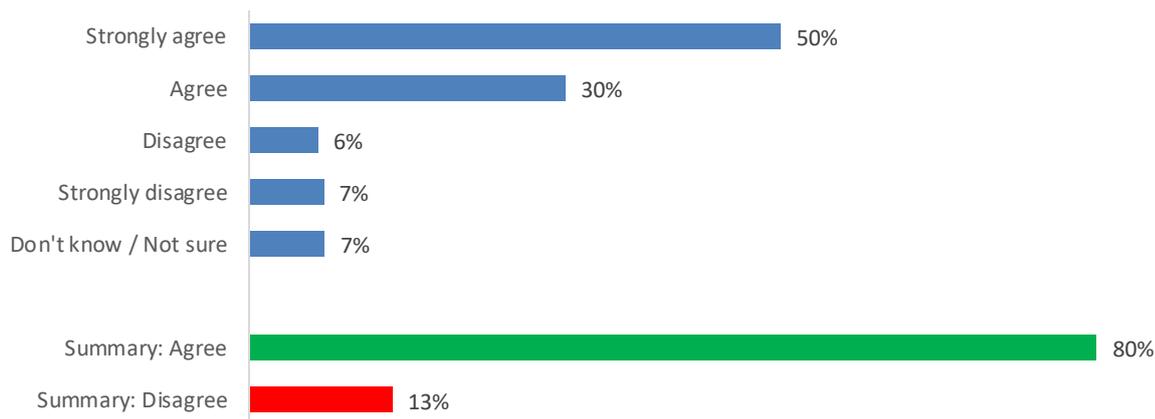
The re-designation of an additional (HMO) licensing scheme is supported by the majority of those who took part in the surveys, with 80% in agreement and 13% disagreeing.

As seen in the figure 5 below, support is high amongst those who took part in the face-to-face survey (88%). Although lower among those who took part in the online survey, a majority are still in favour (58% in support and 31% do not support).

Residents in Sefton (86%) and private Sefton tenants (88%) are significantly more likely to agree with the re-designation of additional (HMO) licensing compared to landlords, who are least positive towards the re-designation (50%).

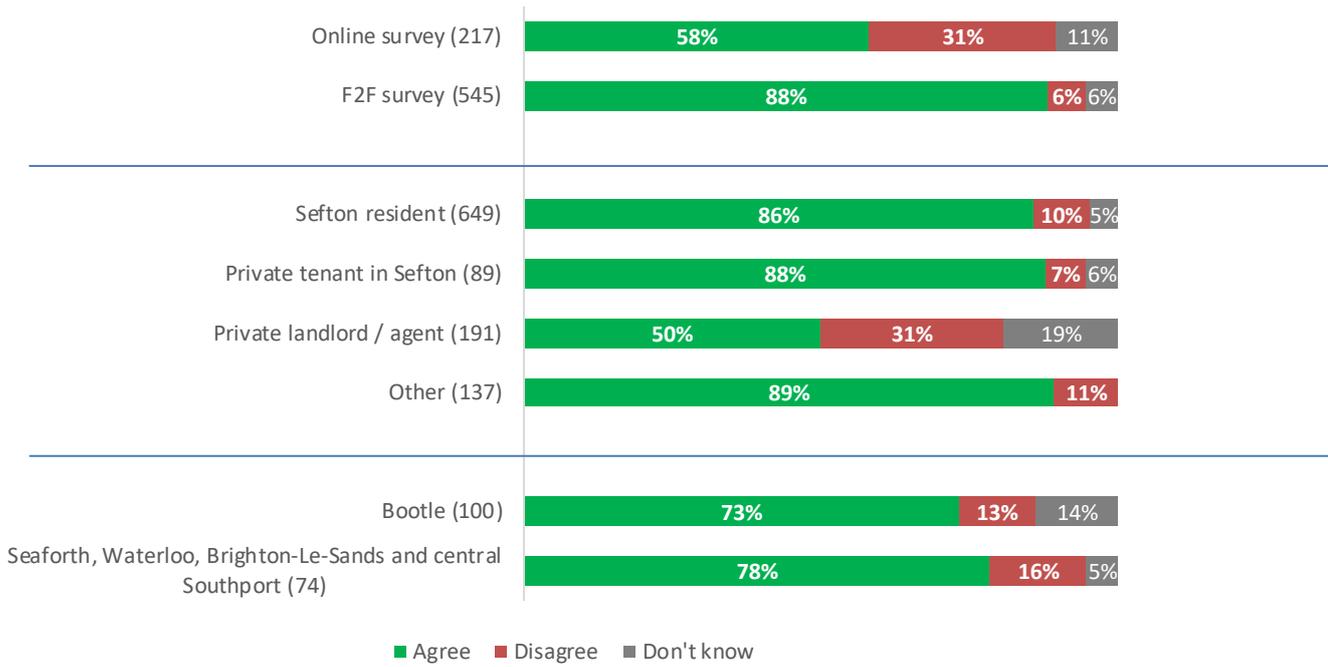
Those living in Bootle (73%) are less likely to agree with the re-designation of an additional (HMO) licensing scheme compared to those living in the Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and Southport area (78%).

Figure 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to re-designate an Additional (HMO) licensing scheme?



Sample base: 762

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to re-designate an Additional (HMO) licensing scheme?– By subgroup



Sample base in brackets

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Likely impact on respondents

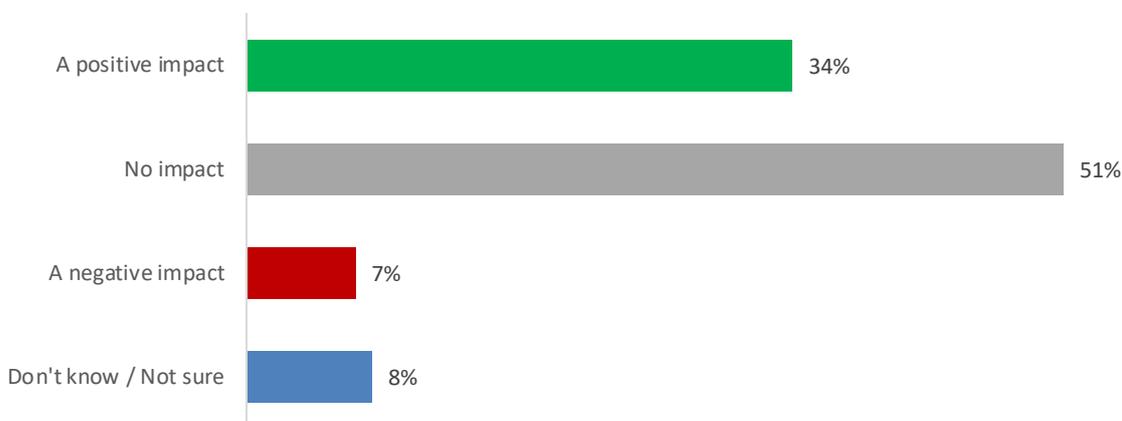
Overall, around a third of respondents (34%) feel that the re-designation of additional (HMO) licensing will have a positive impact on them, whilst only 7% feel it will have a negative impact. Similarly with the re-designation of the selective licensing scheme, the majority of respondents feel it will have no impact on them (51%). Fewer than one in ten (8%) said they did not know.

Those who completed the online survey are more likely than the face-to-face respondents to feel the re-designation of the additional (HMO) licensing scheme will have a positive impact on them (38% compared to 32%), as seen in Figure 8. Those completing the online survey were also more likely to feel this will have a negative impact on them compared to the face-to-face survey (19% compared to 2%). More of the face-to-face respondents feel it will have no impact on them (59% compared to 32% for those online).

Private renting tenants in Sefton are more likely to feel this will have a positive impact on them (55%), compared to Sefton residents (36%) and private landlords (26%). Along with 'other' respondents, more Sefton residents and private landlords believe the re-designation will have no impact on them, up to 53% for Sefton residents.

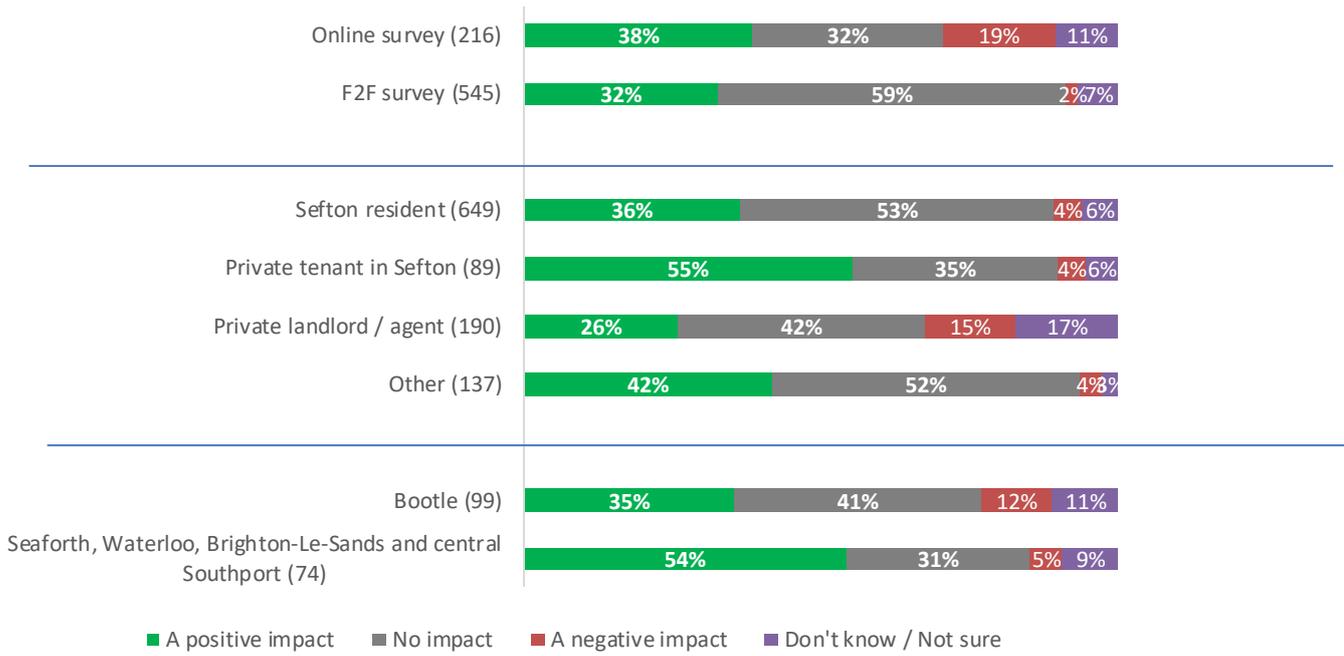
Those living in Bootle (35%) are less likely to feel positive towards the implementation of the additional licensing scheme compared to those living in the Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and Southport area (54%).

Figure 7: What impact, if any, do you feel the Additional (HMO) licensing schemes would have on you if they were introduced?



Sample base: 761

Figure 8: What impact, if any, do you feel the Additional (HMO) licensing schemes would have on you if they were introduced? – By subgroup



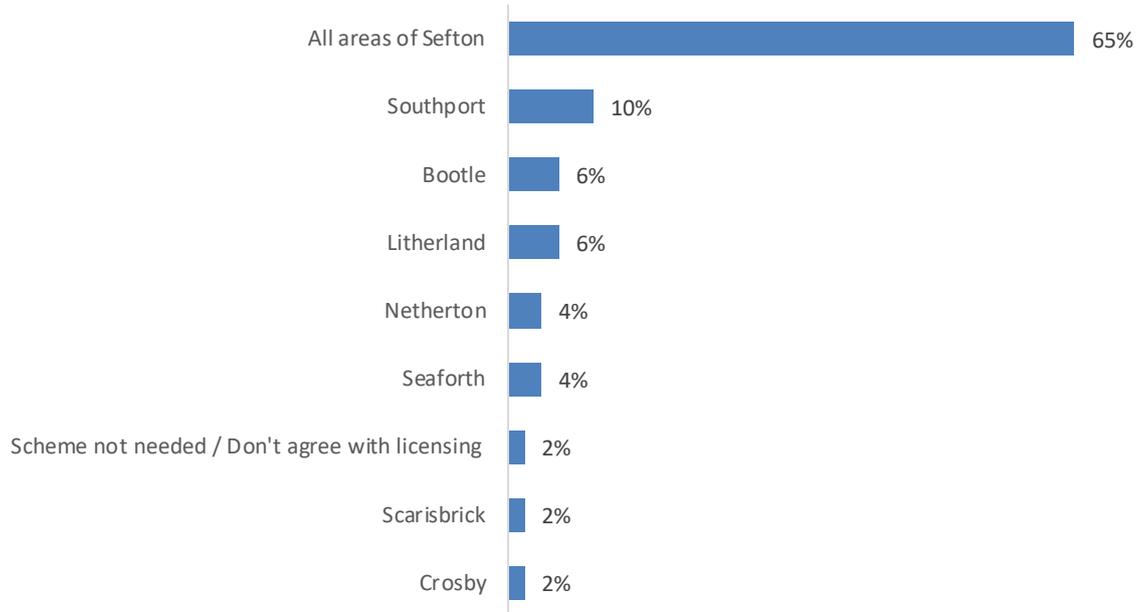
Sample base in brackets

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Respondent comments on Additional (HMO) licensing in other areas

Respondents were asked whether they thought any other areas in Sefton would benefit from the additional (HMO) licensing scheme. 48 respondents to the online survey gave an answer which can be seen in Figure 9. By far, the most common answer was that of all areas in Sefton, with 65% of respondents stating this, followed by one in ten (10%) stating Southport. All other answers were chosen by 6% or less.

Figure 9: Are there any other areas in Sefton that you feel would benefit from an Additional (HMO) licensing scheme?

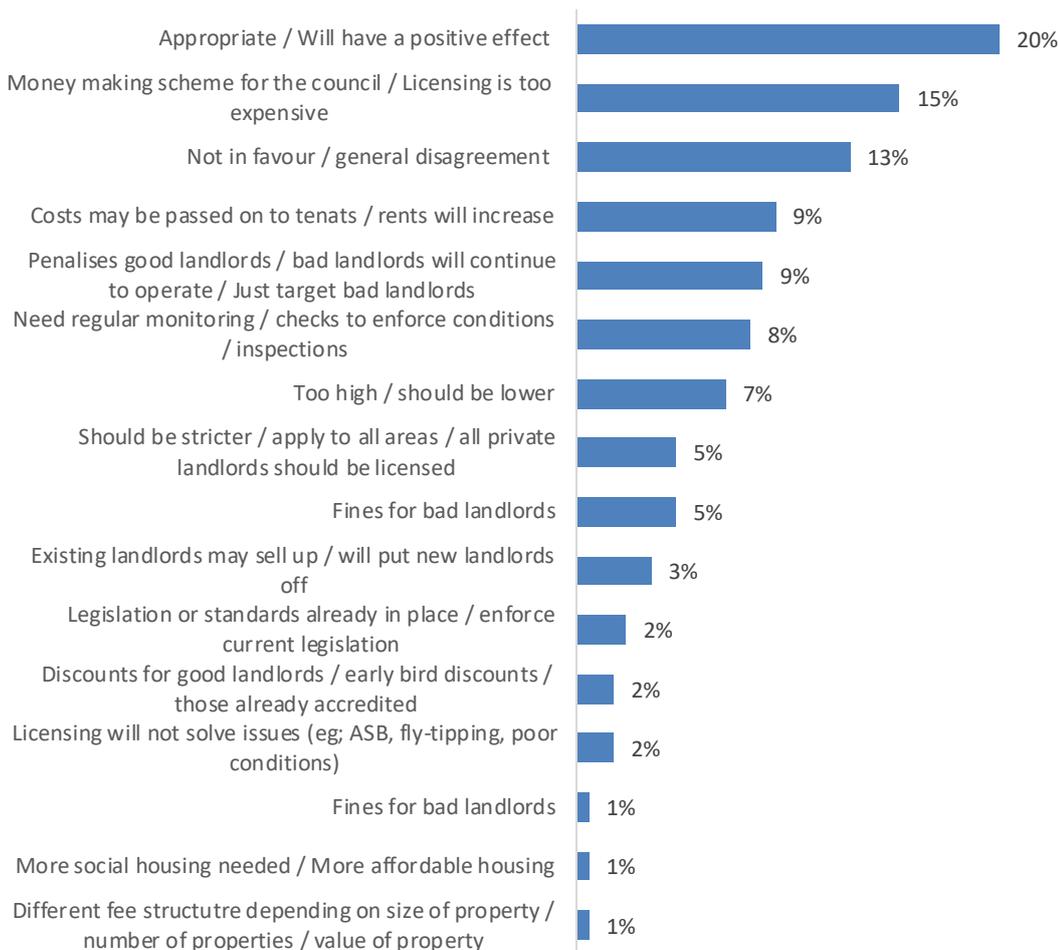


Sample base: 48

Respondent comments on both re-designation proposals

Respondents were invited to add any further comments about either of the licensing schemes. 129 respondents from the online survey gave an answer to this question which have been coded into groups. The results depicted in Figure 10, show that a fifth (20%) of respondents stated that the schemes were appropriate and will have a positive effect, the most common answer. 15% did, however, feel that the licensing schemes were a money-making scheme for the council and that the licences are too expensive. 13% stated they were not in favour or had a comment around general disagreement.

Figure 10: Are there any other comments you would like to add about either of the proposed schemes?



Sample base: 129

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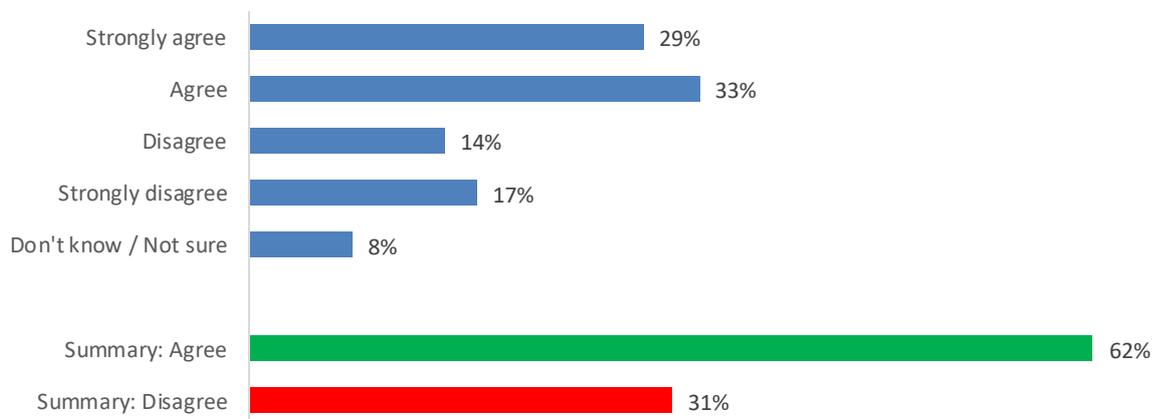
Selective licensing fees

As part of the consultation, respondents were asked to comment on the proposed fee of £695 for the selective licensing scheme for a five-year licence (excluding any discount or additional costs). This equates to £139 per year or £2.67 per week. It is also proposed that for each additional unit (under the same ownership and within the same building) a charge of £30 per additional unit will apply.

Figure 11 shows that around six out of ten (62%) respondents to the surveys agree that the proposed selective licensing fee is reasonable, with 29% strongly agreeing and a third (33%) somewhat agreeing. Around three in ten (31%) respondents disagree with the proposed fees for the selective licensing, with 17% disagreeing strongly.

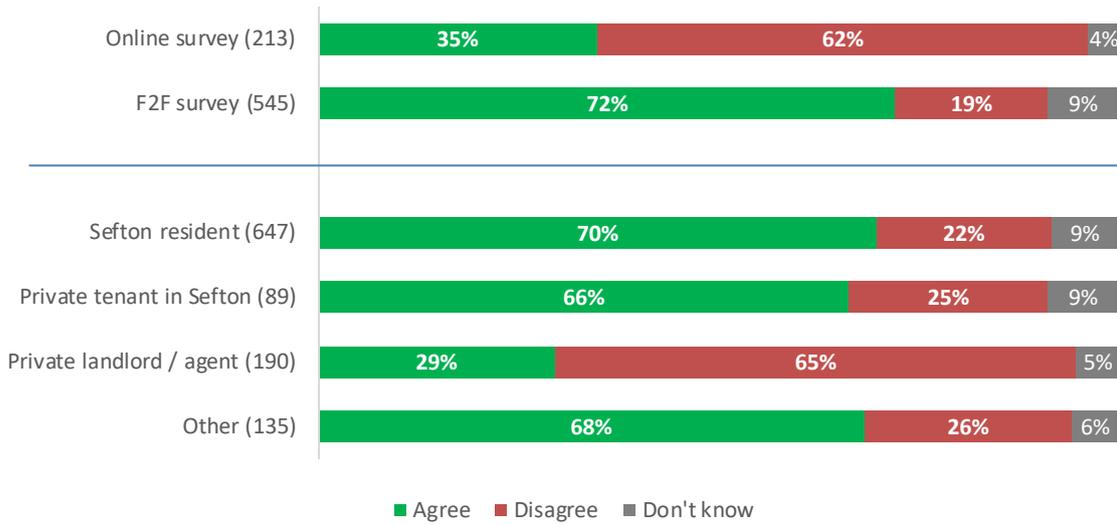
Figure 12 shows that agreement with the selective licensing fees is significantly higher amongst those who completed the face-to-face survey compared to the online respondents (72% compared to 35%). Almost half (46%) of those completing online strongly disagreed with the fee proposals, compared to just 5% of those completing the survey via face to face. Both Sefton residents (70%) and private tenants in Sefton (66%) are significantly more likely to agree the fees are reasonable compared to private landlords and agents (29%). Private landlords are much more in opposition of the proposed fees, with almost two thirds (65%) disagreeing with them.

Figure 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed fee for Selective Licensing?



Sample base: 758

Figure 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed fee for Selective Licensing? By subgroup



Sample base in brackets

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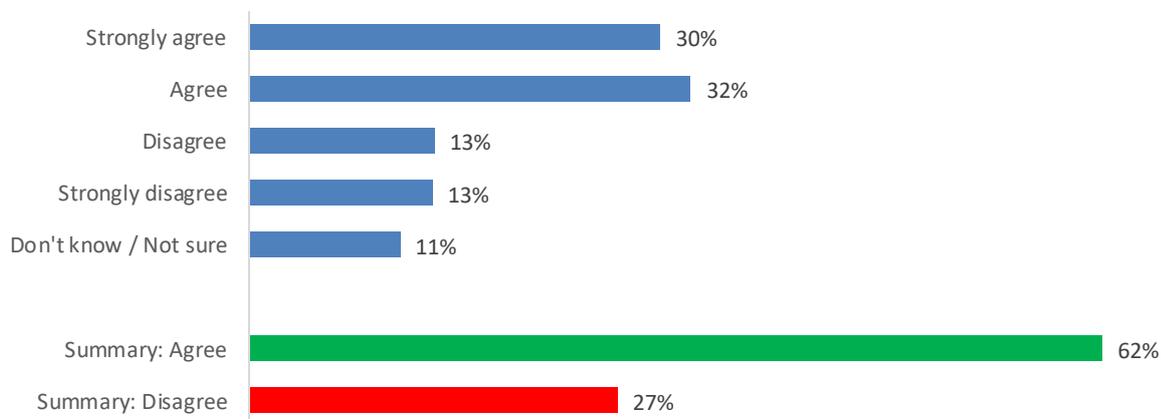
Additional (HMO) licensing fees

Respondents were also asked to comment on the proposed fee of £950 for the additional (HMO) licensing scheme for a five-year licence (excluding any discount or additional costs). This equates to £190 per year or £3.65 per week with additional unit costs for those larger properties. It is also proposed that for each additional unit (under the control of the same proposed licence holder and within the same building) a charge of £30 per additional unit will apply.

Figure 13 shows that similar to the selective licensing scheme, around six out of ten (62%) respondents to the consultation agree that the proposed additional (HMO) licensing schemes fee is reasonable, with 30% strongly in agreement and a third (32%) somewhat agreeing. Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents disagree with the proposals for the additional (HMO) licensing fees, with 13% strongly disagreeing.

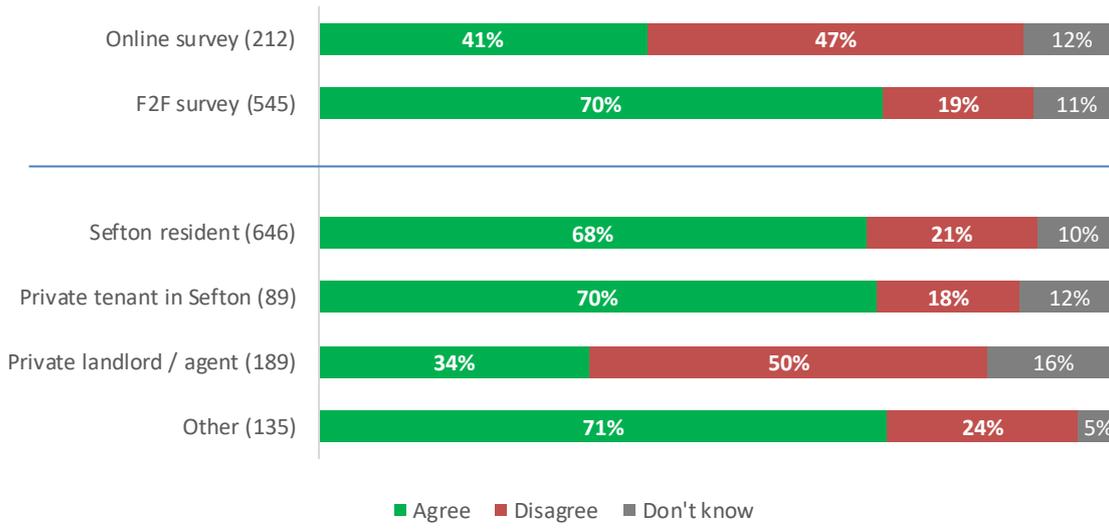
By survey method, Figure 14 shows that those completing the online survey are significantly more likely to disagree with the fee proposals compared to those who completed the survey via face to face (47% compared to 19%). Sefton residents (68%) and private tenants in Sefton (70%) are also significantly more likely to agree with the fee proposals compared to private landlords and agents (34%).

Figure 13: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed fee for Additional (HMO) Licensing?



Sample base: 757

Figure 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed fee for Additional (HMO) Licensing? By subgroup



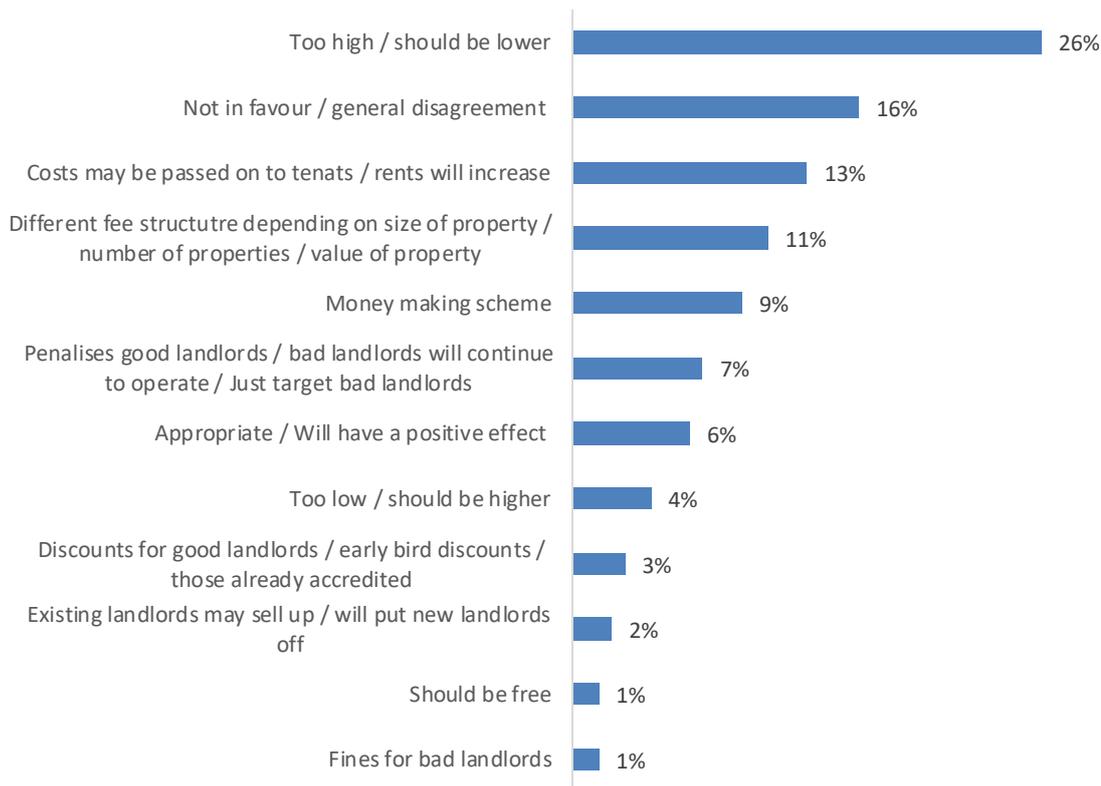
Sample base in brackets

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Comments on Licensing fees in general

128 respondents gave an answer in response to being asked on whether they had any comments regarding the licensing fees. Around a quarter (26%) of responses were around the fees being too high and should be lower, followed by 16% stating they are not in favour and a general disagreement. 13% commented on the fact costs may be passed onto tenants in the form of rent increases, a topic which was also covered in the online focus groups.

Figure 15: If you have any comments about the licensing fees, please provide them below



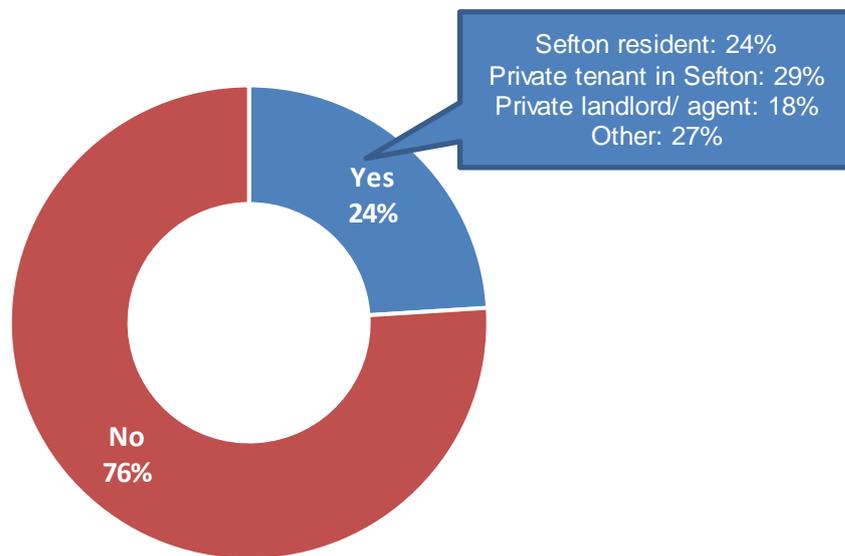
Sample base: 128

Licensing conditions

There are mandatory licence conditions that must be applied to Additional (HMO) and Selective licences. The Council can also apply other conditions to deal with the management, use and occupation of the property. The proposed licensing conditions would seek to prevent overcrowding, poor property conditions and help tackle deprivation and anti-social behaviour.

Respondents in the face-to-face survey were asked whether they had read the licence conditions. Just a quarter (24%) said they have read through the licensing conditions; this figure was slightly higher among the private tenants (29%) as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Have you read these licence conditions?



Sample base: 545

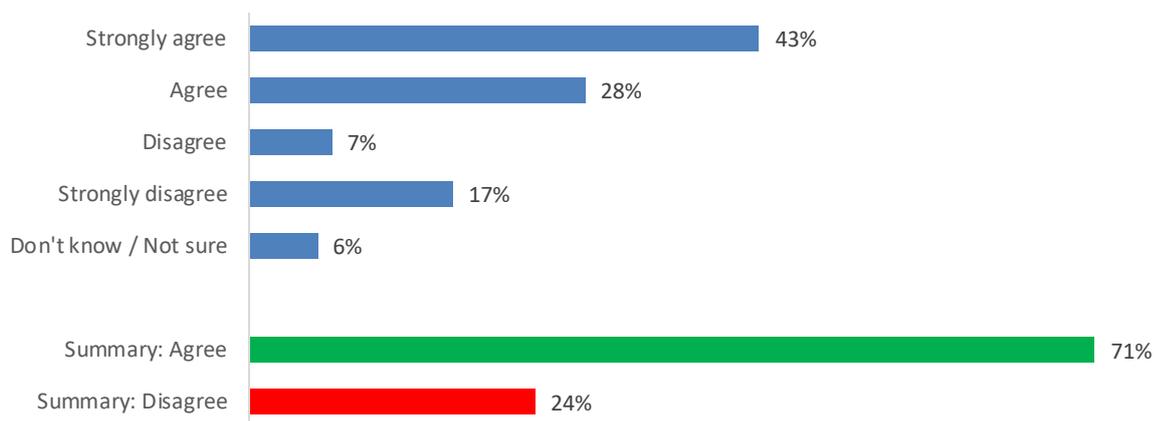
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Agreement with proposed Selective Licensing conditions

Both surveys asked respondents about their level of agreement or disagreement with the proposed licensing conditions. Figure 17 shows that around seven in ten (71%) agreed with the proposed selective licensing conditions, with 43% strongly agreeing. About a quarter (24%) disagreed with the conditions, with 17% strongly disagreeing. A further 6% said they did not know or were not sure.

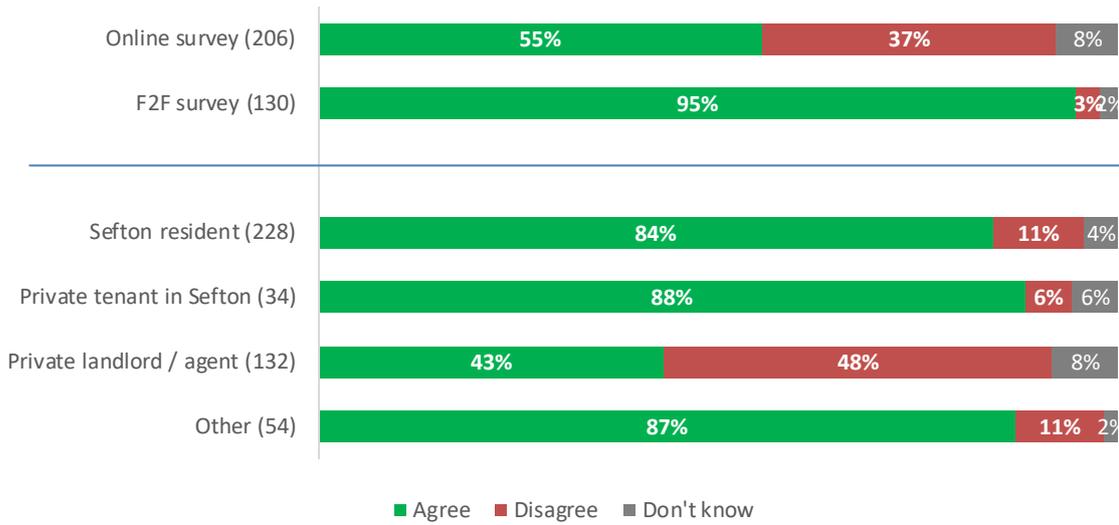
Figure 18 shows that 94% of those who completed the face-to-face survey agree with the selective licensing conditions, a significantly higher proportion compared to those completing the survey online (55%). Similar to other perceptions throughout the consultation, both private rented tenants (88%) and Sefton residents (84%) are significantly more likely to agree with the selective licensing conditions compared to private landlords and agents (43%). Amongst private landlords and agents, a higher proportion disagreed with the selective licensing conditions (48%) than agreed with them (43%).

Figure 17: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Selective Licensing conditions?



Sample base: 336

Figure 18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed licence conditions for Selective Licensing? By subgroup



Sample base in brackets

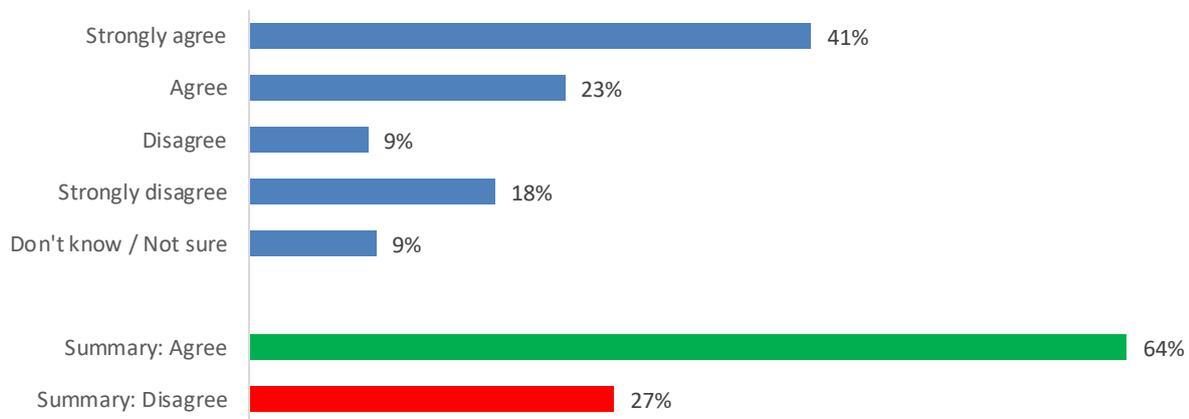
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Agreement with proposed Additional (HMO) licensing conditions

With the additional (HMO) licensing conditions, Figure 19 shows that around two thirds (64%) respondents agreed with them, with 41% strongly agreeing. Just over a quarter (27%) disagreed with the conditions, with 18% strongly disagreeing. Around one in ten (9%) said they did not know or were not sure.

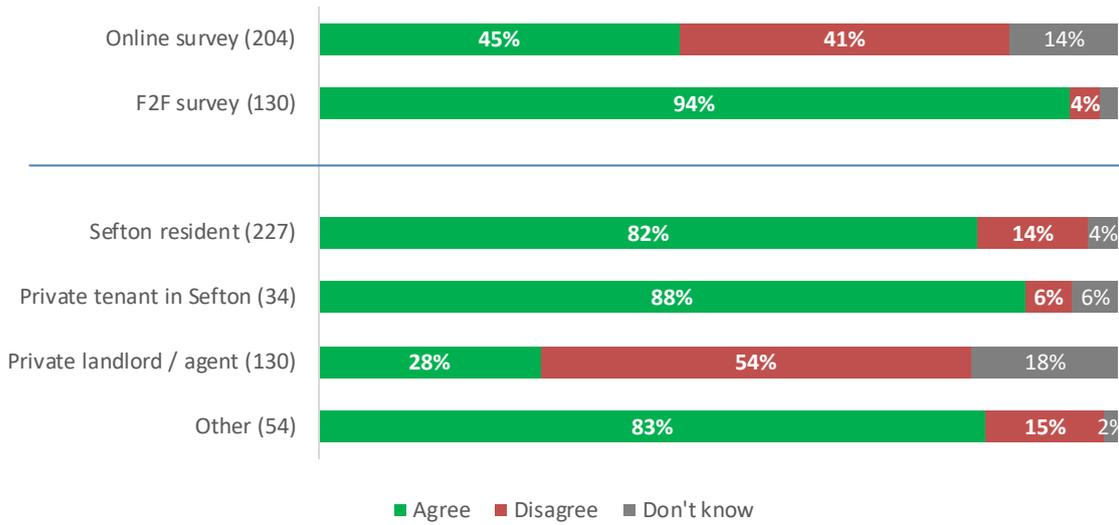
94% of those who completed the face-to-face survey agree with the additional (HMO) licensing conditions, in Figure 20 you can see that this is a significantly higher proportion compared to those completing the survey online (45%). By respondent type, just 28% of private landlords and agents agree with the additional (HMO) licensing conditions, a significantly lower proportion when compared to Sefton residents (83%) and private tenants in Sefton (88%).

Figure 19: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Additional (HMO) Licensing conditions?



Sample base: 334

Figure 20: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Additional (HMO) Licensing conditions? By subgroup



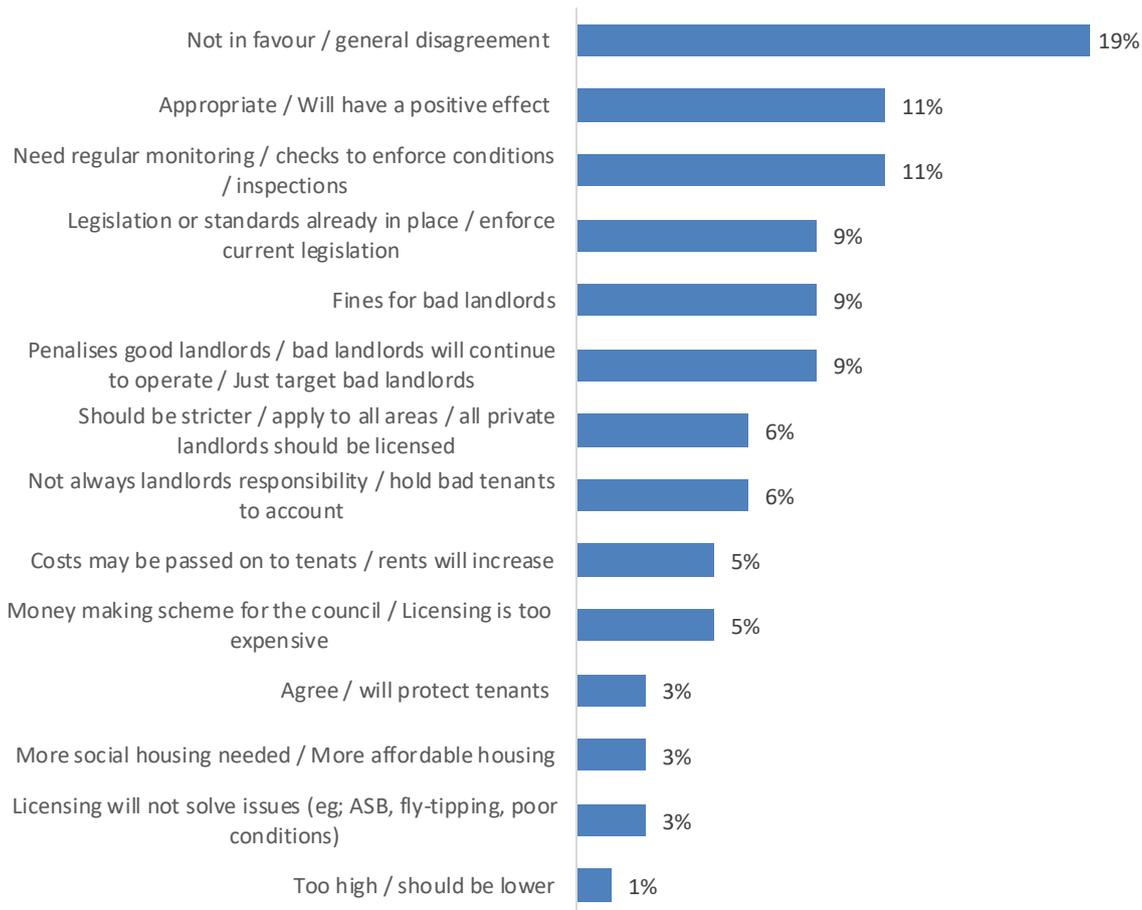
Sample base in brackets

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Comments on proposed licensing conditions

Respondents completing the survey online were also asked to provide any other comments that they have around the proposed licence conditions. Comments made are shown in Figure 21. Around a fifth (19%) mentioned they were not in favour or had a general disagreement towards them and this was the most common response to this question.

Figure 21: If you have any comments about the proposed licence conditions, please provide them below

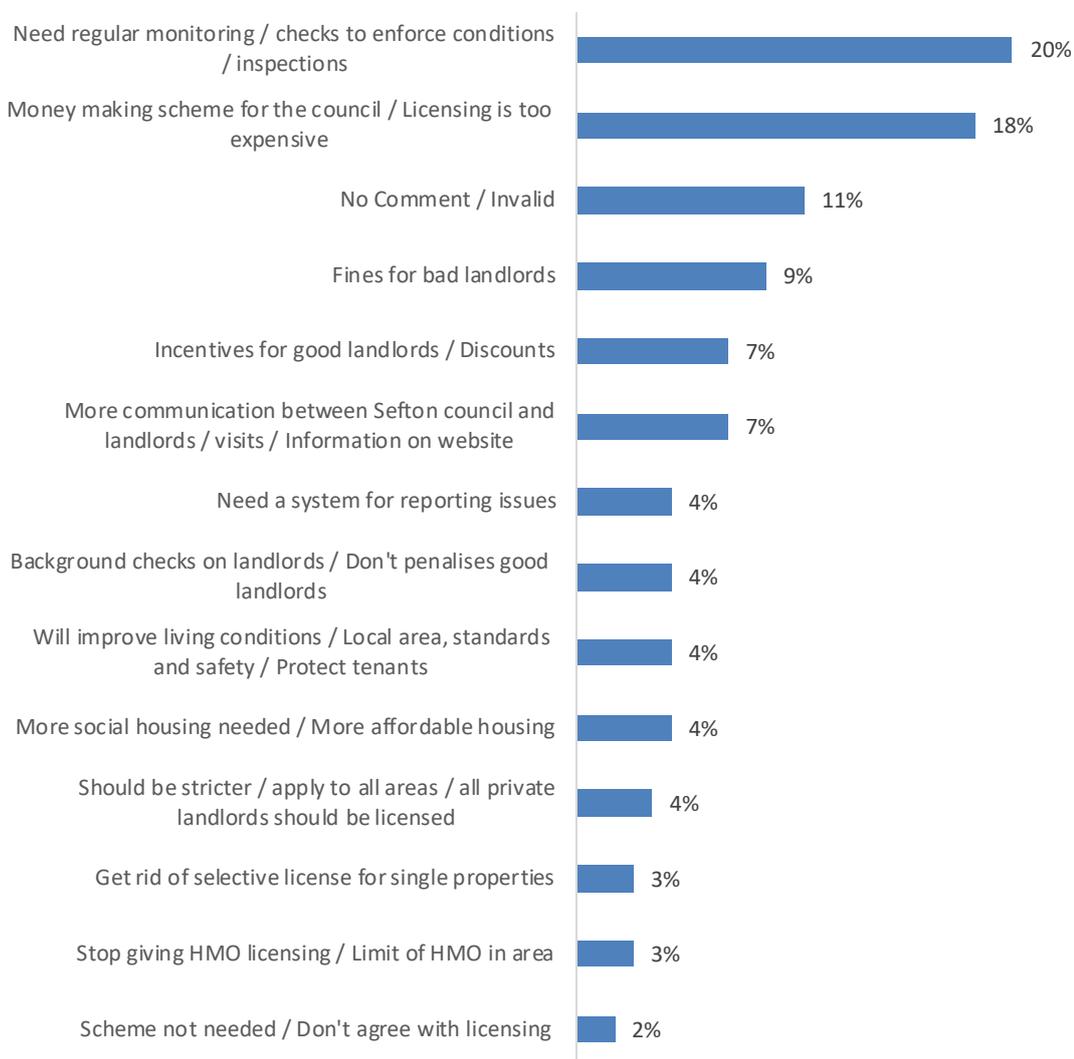


Sample base: 67

Any further comments about the licensing proposals

Finally, respondents were asked if that had any further comments for the consultation around Sefton Councils licensing proposals. 92 respondents gave a comment. A fifth (20%) of respondents answering this question gave a comment around the need for regular monitoring/ check for enforcement conditions and inspections. This was the most common response given to this question. Figure 22 shows other responses with 18% that commented negatively on the proposals in terms of the proposals being a money-making scheme for the Council and the licensing being too expensive.

Figure 22: Do you have any further comments about the Licensing proposals?



Sample base: 92

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Stakeholder views on licensing schemes proposal

As part of the consultation, we spoke to two organisations for comment, although invited a wider group. These were with Wirral Council and Living Well UK, which provides social prescribing health and wellbeing support in Sefton. Views were often applied about both licensing schemes.

Wirral Council were largely positive towards the proposals and discussed the successes they have had with similar schemes to tackle the private rented sector. Living Well, whilst in favour of the re-designation, did share concerns over the finance side and how much of this is passed down to the tenant.

Need to deal with poor housing conditions in the PRS

Some stakeholders noted that living conditions and mobility issues often come up a lot when speaking with Sefton tenants about their homes.

“...with additional regulation it’s not as easy for everyone to just rent out properties and neglect the conditions for those living in the area...”

These stakeholders are also in agreement that there is a lack of choice in housing options which allows private landlords to potentially not fulfil all their requirements in housing standards. This is mentioned as especially in the case of smaller accommodation such as bungalows.

“The lack of stock is a big one, smaller accommodation such as bungalows is a big thing, especially within the Northern parts of the area, which means those that need these properties are struggling to get in the market”.

Costs of licensing passed onto tenants

Potential costs being pushed onto the tenants themselves were also discussed.

“I wonder whether rents and costs will increase to cover the work that needs to be done with licence. Some private rent is extremely high already, and this could be somewhere landlords look to recoup the costs”.

Another mentioned the Council should support landlords in affording licensing such as having an instalment scheme to help especially those landlords with large portfolios to spread out the licence fees.

“To supplement the licence scheme, something we have done is to help the landlord out, is to offer instalments, such as the fees being paid in two parts, which helps to spread out the burden”.

How the licensing requirements are monitored

One organisation expressed a concern over how the private landlords are governed on the licence scheme, and to what extent the additional fees actually benefit the properties and tenants.

“How often are they checked, a landlord has to go through all these procedures, but how often are they checked by the Council and if they are buying lots of properties, do they have a certain number of checks that need to be carried out?”

One stakeholder said they are working with and have support for monitoring landlords such as the Residential Landlord Association.

“...we have the support of the RLA, so we can sought their views which helped to bring extra perks to the licensing scheme such as a bulky waste collection”.

Impact on tenants

Stakeholders noted that the licensing scheme does potentially offer more security to private tenants when looking for accommodation in the area, as scheme regulations mean the home they are potentially moving into is of a higher standard.

“...I’d like to think it was having a positive impact on tenants as they know when a licence is approved they have to provide a well-maintained home, which adds security to the tenant”.

“Things like boiler checks and other things that occur when a tenant moves in should be done prior which relieves stress.”

Some feel that awareness of the licence scheme is pretty low, which may allow private landlords to get around keeping to regulations they agreed to with the licensing scheme.

“I’d say no [most in Sefton are not aware of the scheme] to be honest, I only really have an idea as I work in housing, the general public I’m not sure people are aware. Would people be aware of what their private landlord under the scheme should be doing? I think some promotion of the scheme would be a positive thing, especially if it’s going to be extended to 2028”.

Stakeholders mention that the licensing scheme may help to put private renting on par with social housing in terms of tenant protection and safety in renting a property.

“Maybe in the past people have thought housing associations are safer...I think in the past there has been a worry the private landlords can just remove tenants when they like, with the licensing schemes this offers more protection for tenants”.

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One interviewee also mentioned that the scheme helps to stop the bloat in the private rented sector and has the potential to remove some private landlords who are offering a poor product for tenants.

“Some less desirable landlords are moving out of the area as they don’t want to and can’t afford the licensing fees...I think with Sefton and indeed Liverpool, the joint efforts across the Mersey region helps for a unified approach in removing poorer landlords”.

Landlord support and concerns

Whilst these stakeholders agree that the licensing scheme is often seen as a negative amongst private landlords, one organisation believes some landlords are actually on board with the proposals, especially in terms of levelling the playing field as they feel some private landlords do not play by the rules which can tarnish their image.

“We get the landlords that love the scheme as it creates a level playing field across the landlord sector. However, you get the other landlords that don’t like the licensing as it means they have to do things. This helps to Council to tackle poor housing conditions however”.

Another part of the licensing scheme is it helps landlords to raise their management.

“The scheme helps to get landlords to do what they should be doing, raising the management standards. That’s what we are finding. We do get a lot of landlords that don’t want to be told what to do and claim the scheme is an additional tax”.

“We have teams that work solely in selective licence areas which offer support for private rented tenants. They deal with tenants and signpost them to different organisations and charities which can support them.”

Feedback from online focus groups

As part of the consultation, M·E·L Research ran three online focus groups, with a range of people taking part after having expressed an interest from the surveys. General feedback and comments from the online focus groups includes the following:

Issues locally

- One respondent questioned the link of the licensing and ASB, saying they operate in areas where ASB is lowering and feels if there is a licence fee on private landlord schemes, it should be for all landlords.
- All respondents in one focus group have issues with the Council dealing with fly tipping and littering. The way it is sorted means that tenants/ landlords are encouraged to leave things outside the house when they move out, which means it looks not very nice for neighbours.
- One landlord who operates and lives in Sefton noted a couple of properties in a “rough” area with ASB issues. He discussed some examples of tenants who did not get on with neighbours, dog issues and garden issues, unable to resolve between themselves.
- One private tenant noted that a lack of housing options within Sefton makes it really hard to find a good landlord, and that the licensing scheme can help to alleviate this issue. They said that managing agents often side with the landlord, which makes tenants feel isolated when dealing with their rent and housing.

Current and proposed schemes

- Some landlords feel that the licensing scheme tars all landlords with the same brush and does not separate the good landlords from rogue ones. Landlords in the groups feel they provide a really great service to tenants but feel they are being punished because of a small number of poor landlords with the current licensing scheme.
- There were comments made on the types of communications landlords receive from the Council, with letters often perceived as worded harshly. This causes a ‘rift’ between landlords and the Council and does not help when they should be working together to improve the sector and to identify rogue landlords.
- One participant had read in the consultation documents that inspections would take place during the scheme. They thought there had been a very low number of inspections during the current scheme, which other respondents agreed. A number of landlords across the focus groups commented on very few inspections for their own properties, especially from those who own a large portfolio. Some had received no inspections on their properties, raising questions about whether the scheme is actually tackling rogue landlords. One landlord said that the inspections the Council runs as part of the licensing scheme did not seem to have a large impact on the sector and made no huge changes to residents either.
- Some landlords who operate across Merseyside also commented on the cost of the licence scheme within Sefton compared to similar schemes, such as in Liverpool. Some respondents agreed that they would feel more comfortable with the scheme if they saw more evidence on what the licence fee was going to offer, rather than what sometimes feels like a money-making scheme for the Council.
- Some are unsure what the scheme achieves on top of all the regulations landlords have to abide by anyway, with documents such as EPC certificates.
- Another issue that was brought up was around the amount of support around the licensing scheme. An example was made of another local council that ran a landlord forum, where the council can work with landlords to help tenants from both a financial aspect and maintenance aspect. There was agreement about a seeming lack of interaction with Sefton Council.

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- Some landlords wanted support for good landlords in the form of incentives. They mentioned that the licence fees should go purely on putting money back into the scheme in the form of increased inspections to actually make actionable decisions on rogue landlords. Many feel they are just pushing the licence fees onto rents and not actually making better changes to the properties they maintain.
- Certain landlords working with HMOs made comment on the lack of value they feel they have had with the additional licences, with one commenting that they cause more trouble than they are worth, especially with the increased maintenance costs compared to a standard private rented property.

Alternatives

- Some landlords indicated that automation of the licensing scheme and the documents they need to submit would be ideal, helping to reduce the slow process they sometimes experience when getting checks done.
- Others mentioned an AirBnB type programme where properties and private landlords could be reviewed, which would help tenants to have a better idea of the property and landlord before they started a tenancy.
- Some residents and private tenants suggested that landlords should have to take a type of training course to be able to let properties in Sefton, which would ensure they are keeping their properties maintained to the current standards. There was also a suggestion that private landlords living outside of the area should have to use a managing agent within Sefton so tenants have local access to support and property maintenance.
- Other residents suggested higher penalties, as this would further help to combat poor maintenance of properties. This would not only benefit the tenant living in the property but also residents around the property, helping to increase the visual aspect of the local neighbourhoods.

Differences the scheme will make

- Several landlords were largely in agreement that the licence fees the scheme incurs will likely be passed onto the tenant through rent increases across the local area.
- Others felt that the scheme will have a minimal impact on rogue landlords due to a perceived lack of inspections and action from the Council. One landlord commented on the funding for local councils, saying that environmental standards are often underfunded and understaffed to deal with certain regulations. They commented that councils often raise money through new licensing schemes, which adds to the conveyor belt of costs for landlords that then pass into tenants' rent.
- Another participant said that the police and environmental teams can hardly ever help with ASB as a tenant is under tenancy agreement and that nothing will change with a licence scheme.
- Some tenants across the focus groups agreed that it can be difficult to work with landlords. One tenant mentioned they have had multiple rent increases but no improvement to their properties, even though they have been advised about needing things done. As an example, they said their kitchen was 30 years old and the back wall needs replacing yet the landlord says most things are down to tenant. If inspections were to increase as part of the re-designated licensing scheme, these issues may be supported quicker and tenants may feel they have the Council on their side, as they often feel isolated when working with private landlords and agents.
- However, tenants and landlords often agreed that if inspections and penalties are not increased, they can't see the licensing scheme having a profound impact on the local private rented sector, other than costs being passed along to tenants.

Written response feedback

Finally, all stakeholders were offered the chance to provide their feedback to the consultation in a written response, which were sent to a dedicated email address, or forwarded on from members of Sefton Council. In total, two stakeholders provided feedback to the consultation, as well as a written response from the National Residents and Landlords Association (NRLA). The verbatim written responses can be seen below.

Response from two landlords

“Dear Ms Harding, I am a Labour Party member and a landlord that has a license. My son who is a facilities manager and deals with the letting agency and tenant. has had to jump through hoops to get the license and pay for it on my behalf.. I have only one property that is rented out, the tenant is an elderly lady who is always apologetic when she contacts my son when she needs a job doing at the property as she is afraid that she will be evicted. This will not happen as my son and I understand her insecurities. So much so that the rent hasn't been increased for years as we believe the tenant would be badly affected if we were to increase it. The license is five hundred and thirty pounds, add this cost to the letting agent fees, gas and electric safety checks, insurance etc and I am absolutely convinced that these costs lead to higher rents. I am holding onto the property in trust for my autistic grandson, I am not wealthy, my income in total is under thirteen thousand pounds annually. I am disgusted with the council only targeting certain areas for licensing as this is discrimination. If you believe in landlord licensing, then all landlords should have to obtain a license, and the license fee should be a lot less than five hundred and thirty pounds. My son is of the opinion that landlords should pay for a license if they don't let through a letting agent, perhaps the council will take this suggestion in consideration, as he thinks my having to pay out this year over two thousand six hundred pounds is excessive.

Best Wishes Mrs J Kemp”

“Hi, my view is, I am a good landlord. I only have one rental property. I am a nurse with little extra money. Anything my tenant texts me about is resolved in a few days. I pay this fee to Sefton but I have no idea how it benefits my tenant or makes me a better landlord. I understand why landlords who have many rentals or a bad record should be challenged but this achieves nothing for my tenant or my care of her and the property. I think it's an unfair fee.

Regards Sara “

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Response from the NRLA

Dear Sir or Madam,

Selective and Additional Licensing Proposals

The NRLA is an association following the National Landlords Association and the Residential Landlords Association merger. Our membership represents over 95,000 landlords and agents, the largest organisation in the sector. Members own and manage around 10% of the PRS, equating to half a million properties.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation to renew selective and additional licensing schemes in the borough. The NRLA objects to the relevance of property licensing schemes by local authorities. Although we understand the aims of Sefton Council, we believe that licensing does not align with the successful completion of these aims.

The NRLA seeks a fair legislative and regulatory environment for the private rented sector while ensuring landlords know their statutory rights and responsibilities.

Main Objections

Waste management

When tenants are nearing the end of their contract/tenancy and are moving out, they will dispose of excess household waste through various methods. These include but are not limited to putting waste out on the street for the council to collect. This is in the hope of getting their deposit back and is made worse when the council does not allow landlords access to municipal waste collection points. Local authorities with many private rented properties need to consider a strategy for collecting excess waste at the end of a tenancy in place of selective licensing.

Suppose such a scheme is not already in place. Would the council consider a free/low-cost service for private landlords to remove numerous bunk items for when tenants vacate the property and not dispose of such waste beforehand?

Antisocial Behaviour

Landlords are usually not experienced in managing antisocial behaviour and do not have the professional capacity to resolve tenants' mental health issues or substance dependency. Suppose there are allegations about a tenant causing problems, and a landlord ends the tenancy. In that case, the landlord will have dispatched their obligations under the selective licensing scheme, even if the tenant suffers from any of the above issues.

At the commencement of a tenancy, the landlord outlines the tenant's obligations concerning noise (and other matters such as waste disposal, compliance with relevant legislation, and consideration for surrounding neighbours). The landlord can manage a tenant only to the extent of their mutually signed and agreed contract for living in the property - not for a tenant's activities beyond this.

Sefton Council has many existing enforcing powers that can rectify the identified problems as part of the council's housing strategy. These include:

- Criminal Behaviour Orders
- Crime Prevention Injunctions
- Interim Management Orders
- Empty Dwelling Management Orders
- Improvement Notices (for homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard)
- Litter Abatement Notices (Section 92 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990)
- Fixed Penalty Notices or Confiscation of equipment (Sections 8 and 10 of the Noise Act 1996)
- Directions regarding the disposal of waste (for example, Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990)
- Notices to remove rubbish from land (Section 2-3 of the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949)

Conclusions

The NRLA believes local authorities need a healthy private rented sector to complement the other housing in an area. This provides a variety of housing types that can meet the needs of residents and landlords in the area. The sector is regulated, and enforcement is essential for keeping criminals who exploit landlords and tenants. An active enforcement policy that supports good landlords is crucial as it will remove those who exploit others and create a level playing field. It is essential to understand how the sector operates as landlords can often be victims of criminal activity and antisocial behaviour with their properties being exploited.

If the scheme is approved, the council should consider providing an annual summary of outcomes to demonstrate improvements to tenants' and landlords' behaviour and the impact of licensing on the designated area over the scheme's lifetime. This would improve transparency overall. The NRLA has a shared interest with Sefton Council in ensuring a high-quality private rented sector but strongly disagrees that introducing selective and additional licensing is the most effective approach to achieve this aim both in the short term and long term.

Yours Faithfully,

Samantha Watkin, Policy Officer, National Residential Landlords Association

Samantha.Watkin@nrla.org.uk

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consultation document

Appendix B: Coverage of consultation

Appendix C: Survey (online version)

Appendix D: Profile breakdown

Appendix A: Consultation Document

Selective & Additional (HMO)
Licensing Proposal for Sefton



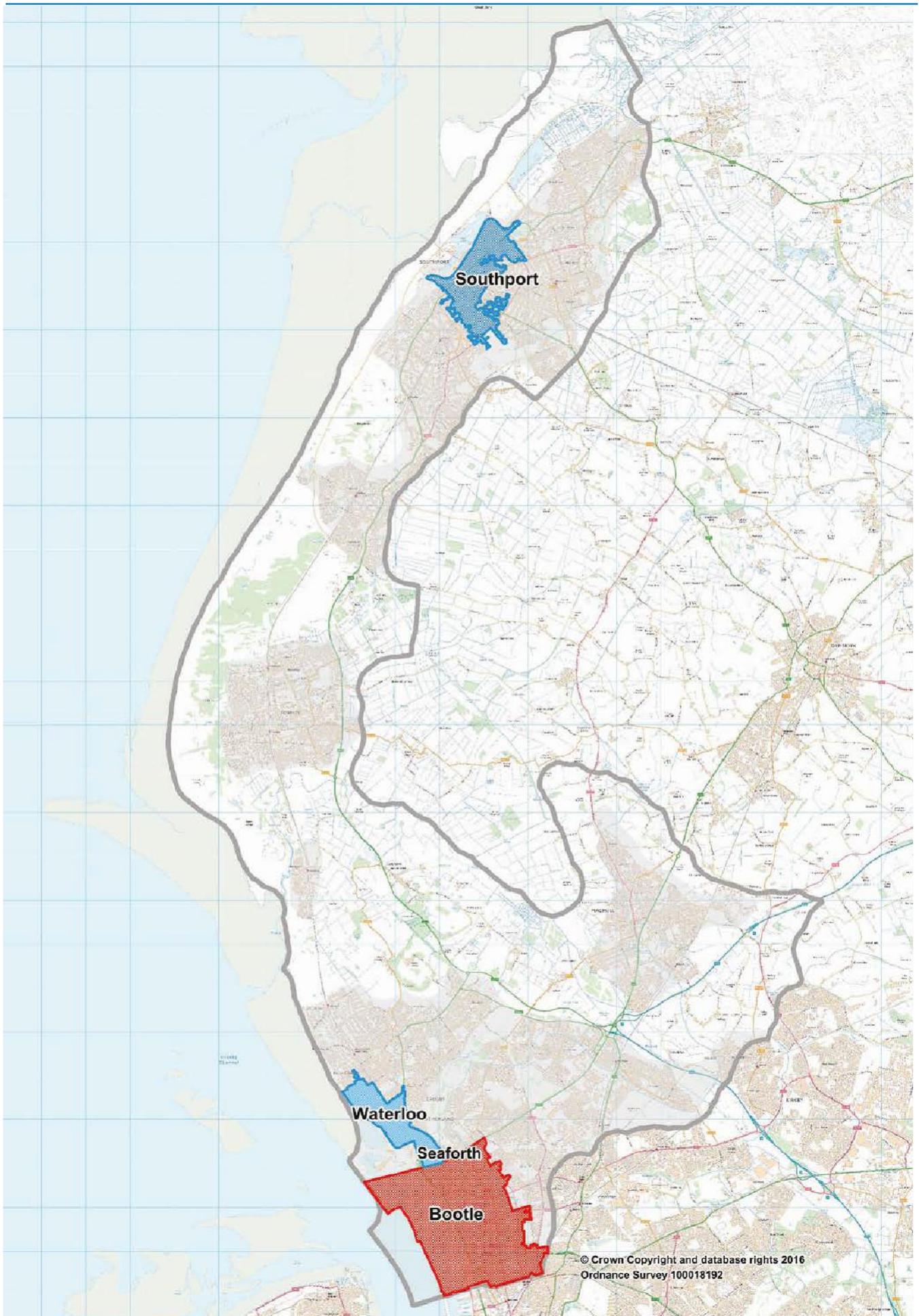
Consultation Document

9 May to 31 July 2022



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Selective & Additional (HMO) Licensing Proposal for Sefton



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Selective & Additional (HMO) Licensing Proposal for Sefton

The Appendices below will be available on the consultation page on the website at www.sefton.gov.uk/licensing-consultation

Appendix 1

Maps and Address List of Proposed Selective Licensing Designated Area

Appendix 2

Draft Selective Licensing Conditions

Appendix 3

Maps and Address List of Proposed Additional (HMO) Licensing Designated Areas

Appendix 4

Draft Additional (HMO) Licensing Conditions

Introduction

Sefton comprises a largely self-contained housing market, however, there is a north-south divide with a higher proportion of owner occupiers outside of Bootle and Netherton, and house prices are generally higher in central and north Sefton than in the south of the Borough. Whilst there is a mix of house types and tenures across Sefton, there is less choice in south Sefton where there are more terraced houses, and more homes owned by housing associations or private landlords.

Bootle located in the South of the borough suffers from a wide range of entrenched problems that arose out of many years of socio-economic change. As one of the most deprived areas in England, Bootle suffers from high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) and poor housing conditions.

Central Southport and parts of Waterloo/Seaforth also suffer similar problems, a situation that is not uncommon in other coastal communities. In the north of the borough, Southport was a highly desirable area with a viable economy based on tourism, but longer-term changes in the tourism industry and the recent economic downturn have had a detrimental impact and decline on this traditional seaside resort. Many guest houses and small hotel property owners had to sell up or diversify. That has led to many buildings being converted into flats or Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs), particularly bedsits, to maximise rental income. A number of property owners also decided to create small flats in pursuit of the maximum number of rental units.

Changing socio-economic conditions have also created a demand and need for privately rented HMO's, in areas such as Waterloo/Seaforth and Southport, which have a shortage of alternative social rented housing. The economic downturn,

welfare reform, seasonal work, international migration has all helped create a larger cohort of people who have come to rely on private rented sector flats and bedsits. In recent years, the accommodation offer has largely been aimed at the lower end of the market, accommodating many vulnerable households.

The three proposed licensing areas for re-designation are now characterised by high levels of unemployment, benefit dependency, crime and ASB, and health inequalities. While individual private landlords cannot be held responsible for these wider changes, a significant number are contributing to the deprivation and poor health outcomes by providing poorly managed and unsafe homes.

Here we evaluate and highlight the successes relating to the implementation of the current private sector licensing schemes in March 2018. However, we also outline the requirements for the continuation of these schemes; to further improve the housing conditions and management for our residents in the private rented sector and to fully achieve Sefton's strategic housing vision

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Why is Sefton Council seeking to re-designate the 3 licensing areas?

To achieve Sefton's vision, it is clear that although great strides have been made through our current schemes, more still needs to be done to improve the housing conditions for our residents in the private rented sector.

The Local Authority considered whether there are any courses of action, other than re-designating Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing, that might achieve the same objectives in the proposed areas such as;

Property Accreditation which continues to be supported by the Local Authority in promoting good property management. The Local Authority will again offer licence fee discounts for members of Sefton's Property Accreditation Scheme as is offered in the current licensing schemes. The majority of properties accredited are within the licensing areas which suggest that many landlords and agents may have only signed up to receive the licence fee discounts and would not have done so otherwise. Sefton have accredited 664 properties, 535 of those have been accredited since the introduction of the Selective and Additional (HMO) licensing schemes and almost all of them have been licensed properties. Despite a considerable uptake in accreditation applications this still only represents 4.2% of the private rented stock in the Borough. Any reliance on voluntary accreditation, as an alternative to Selective/ Additional (HMO) Licensing, is not considered to be a viable alternative to licensing.

Officers again considered introducing a district-wide scheme for Selective licensing, but this was not taken forward because the evidence is not yet sufficient to introduce the whole district and therefore such an application is unlikely to be supported by the Secretary of State (who has

to agree to the implementation of such a big scheme)

The Local Authority has, therefore, concluded that re-designating remains the effective course of action to assist in achieving its objectives. Licensing since 2018 has had a substantial impact on landlord and agent behaviour and has improved their engagement and relationship with Sefton.

Licensing of privately rented properties, albeit generally unpopular with landlords can provide several benefits to them for example as mentioned in the quotes below. There are also benefits to their tenants and the wider community.

Comment from a local Managing Agent:

"The fire hazard in the property was only brought to our attention as a result of the Selective licensing scheme, and with the guidance from the Housing Standards Officer, we were able to remove the serious hazard without delay"

Comment from local landlord:

"I grew up within the local community where I have my rental property and have noticed many changes over the 45 years that I have been in and around the area.

Since the purchase of my rental property I was shocked by the lower standards of living that people were having to put up with and I always said I wouldn't be one of those landlords that monopolise off these unfortunate ways.

The licensing scheme is a very good idea of weeding out any landlords who are not up to standard, it is also a very good way for the local authority to keep a closer eye on hot spots.

This scheme should have started a few years ago in my opinion."

What are the benefits of licensing for landlords?

- Responsible landlords will receive information and support to help tackle antisocial behaviour
- Poor performing landlords will receive support and training to help them improve
- Landlords will be more knowledgeable and legally compliant with tenancy matters
- Improved rental income as areas are maintained and improved
- Increase of property value
- Improvement in the reputation of private landlords
- Shorter void periods
- Landlords who have voluntarily engaged with a recognised accreditation scheme can also benefit from a reduced licensing fee
- Greater ability for the landlord and authority to deal with rogue tenants.

What are the benefits of licensing for tenants?

- More professional landlords providing good quality homes
- Likelihood of improvements to their properties
- Licensing will create a clear set of rules that all landlords must follow
- Reduced risk of homelessness and increased length of stay
- Licensing would ensure private landlords are managing and maintaining their properties
- Minimum standards for rented housing are met leading to improved health outcomes for occupiers.

What are the benefits of licensing for the community?

- Increased housing demand
- Reduce crime and ASB
- An areas image is improved and more desirable to live in
- Improved security and more settled communities
- Reduced number of empty properties
- Better housing
- Reduced environmental problems, such as graffiti, litter and fly-tipping
- Landlords will also have to give and ask for references for their tenants
- Protecting vulnerable people who may currently be living in poorly maintained properties.
- Lower demand on public services such as NHS/Council/emergency services due to improved living environments

How licensing fits with Sefton Council's strategies

Licensing alone cannot guarantee improvements in the designated areas. The Local Authority and its partners recognise that a holistic and joined-up response can achieve beneficial outcomes for the community.

Housing should provide a living environment that is as safe and healthy as possible. Tackling problems of poor housing to protect the health, safety and welfare of the occupants is a significant wider determinant of health. Officers within the Housing Standards team focus primarily on helping tenants living in private rented sector housing, by requiring landlords to carry out necessary repair or improvement works, to remove serious health and safety hazards.

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Whilst great improvements have been made in recent years through the Decent Homes programme within the social housing sector, and Housing Market Renewal has sought to redevelop the poorest groups of housing in Bootle together with some improvements to existing housing stock, too much of the borough's existing stock is not fit for purpose, and in its current state risks becoming unsustainable. The Local Plan and Housing Strategy interventions will help provide a further drive to ensure that our existing homes play a full role in raising the quality of place and become part of neighbourhoods where people choose to live, work and invest.

Sefton's Housing Strategy

A key priority of Sefton Council's Housing Strategy (2016-21) is to improve the quality of existing housing stock to benefit households, neighbourhoods and communities. This will remain a key message in the emerging Housing Strategy refresh (currently under development and anticipated to be fully adopted by the Council in April 2022). It is recognised at a borough-wide level; that an up-to-date Housing Strategy is prerequisite for introducing a Selective Licensing scheme within Sefton. As guidance states:

"selective licensing is not a tool that can be used in isolation. The local housing authority will have to show how such a designation will be a part of the overall strategic borough wide approach".

Empty Homes Plan

Sefton Council remains fully committed to tackling empty homes. Our current Empty Homes Plan ensures that we continue to have a targeted approach to bring long term empty properties back into use. Much of the Local Authority's intervention and effort since 2018 has focused on Bootle and Southport, in conjunction with Selective and Additional licencing schemes, which contain the highest concentrations of empty homes.

The Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing schemes have provided a tool for engaging with empty homeowners and targeting resources across the designated areas.

Homelessness Strategy

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 includes several changes to the way that people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness are supported. In the Council's subsequent Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 Action Plan, there are a number of actions relating to Private Rented Sector offer to increase engagement with the Private Rented Sector.

The Local Authority places greater emphasis on prevention of homelessness. Finding alternative housing in the PRS has become an increasing means of assisting households threatened with homelessness.

Renting from a private landlord has long been the main housing option for single homeless people. Yet with more people finding home ownership unaffordable and social housing unavailable, the private rented sector is increasingly seen as a long-term solution to broader housing needs.

The sector, however, currently presents real challenges for people regarding access, affordability, standards and security. Licensing should help reduce these challenges.

By re-introducing Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing, the Local Authority will have greater confidence that there are adequate safeguards in place to ensure that any homeless applicants are allocated appropriate, safe, affordable, good-standard accommodation in a greater number of PRS properties in the Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing areas.

In the social housing sector, there is a shortage of one-bedroom accommodation and

virtually a nil supply of single room (bedsit) accommodation. So many young, single households will become reliant on the PRS and HMOs.

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)

It is essential that private landlords take their responsibilities seriously and work with local agencies to ensure that communities do not suffer from persistent ASB from their tenants.

Sefton ASB Mission Statement: Statement of Purpose

This strategy sets out how agencies in Sefton will work together to effectively manage and resolve reports of anti-social behaviour; building upon the excellent partnership work already operating across the Borough and ensuring together we continue efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour and provide every member of the community with the highest possible standard of service. This strategy does not sit in isolation but is intended to run alongside existing anti-social behaviour policies as a framework of activity adopted by agencies in Sefton as an overarching approach to tackling anti-social behaviour

What has licensing achieved so far?

Since the commencement of the licencing schemes in March 2018 to end of August 2021, 288 licensable properties have had serious Category 1 health and safety hazards removed. The total number of hazards removed from all licensable properties is 1113 and 370 of them being the most serious Category 1 hazards. The main hazards that have been removed from the properties are hazards relating to Fire Safety, Electrical Hazards, Damp & Mould, Excess Cold and Falls between Levels.

In the first 3 years of the schemes 570 compliance visits took place. The number of compliance visits undertaken was severely

below target due to the Covid pandemic, that prevented officers from the Housing Standards Team carrying out routine compliance visits in the third/fourth year of the scheme. Of those 570 inspections, 58% of properties were non-compliant on first inspection. However, following informal intervention by the Housing Standards Team, 98% of these properties became compliant. The main reasons for non-compliance were the failure to have a Gas Safe report for the property, failure to have an Electrical Installation Condition Report where required, and failure to have smoke alarms fitted.

To summarise, there is evidence to indicate that the licensing schemes are leading to improvements in housing conditions. Selective and Additional (HMO) licensing and the need to obtain a licence has helped Sefton Council identify high risk properties requiring intervention, often where tenants would not have risked complaining to their landlord. Licensing has further highlighted the large number of landlords who are unaware of the basic legal responsibilities when renting out property. The application process identified just how many properties do not have the minimum requirements such as a Gas Safe Certificate. Without licensing, it is fair to conclude that most of these properties would remain without one, leaving tenants at serious risk.

Re-designate the Selective Licensing in the Bootle area

A Selective Licensing designation may be made if the area to which it relates satisfies one or more of the following conditions. The area is one experiencing:

- low housing demand (or is likely to become such an area)
- a significant and persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour (ASB)

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- poor property conditions
- high levels of migration
- high level of deprivation
- high levels of crime

A designation can only be in force for a maximum of 5 years.

A licence would be valid until the end of the scheme no matter at what point during the scheme it was issued. The Local Authority also has the discretion to grant the licence for a shorter period of time where there are problems with the application such as evidence of insufficient management. Once the licence has been issued the licence holder must comply with the conditions attached to the licence. Where there is a breach of those conditions the licence holder may be prosecuted with a fine of any amount per breach.

When assessing ASB, government guidance says that a Local Authority should consider crime, nuisance neighbours and environmental crime and then assess whether landlords are failing to take appropriate action to help resolve the problem.

The law states that any decision to implement a Selective or Additional (HMO) licensing scheme must be consistent with the Local Authority's housing strategy and must be part of a coordinated approach for dealing with homelessness, empty homes and ASB. The Local Authority must be satisfied that there are no other courses of action that might provide an effective remedy and that the introduction of a licensing scheme will significantly assist in dealing with the problem. So, there is a lot of evidence that Sefton analysed before it introduced its current scheme.

A Local Authority can implement a Selective Licensing scheme provided it meets all the

requirements in the Housing Act 2004 and they have consulted with everyone affected by the designation for a minimum of 10 weeks.

When assessing the geographic breakdown of the Housing Standards service requests with regards to poor property conditions and disrepair since the start of the current housing licensing schemes, the hotspot highlight that the current Selective and Additional (HMO) licensing areas remain the main areas of housing disrepair and poor conditions. Therefore, the renewal of the licensing schemes in March 2023 should persist with broadly the same neighbourhood boundaries and streets, to help continue to improve the quality of the private sector properties in these focused areas.

Re-designate the Additional (HMO) Licensing areas in parts of Waterloo, Brighton-le-Sands/Seaforth & Southport

An Additional (HMO) Licensing designation may be made "if a Local Authority considers that a significant proportion of HMOs are being managed insufficiently enough to give rise to one or more particular problems either for those occupying the property or for members of the public."

Evidence of poor management practices can be evidenced through issues that arise within the property such as poor conditions or within the local community including ASB and crime. Over the 3.5-year period 189 service requests were received from HMO properties. 153 of those within the licensing areas equating to 81%.

Therefore, this provides evidence of poor property management across this sector and specifically within the proposed re-designated areas.

Parts of Waterloo/Seaforth and central Southport have high levels of deprivation, being within the worst 10% most deprived areas nationally. Both areas also have above the national average of

flats/maisonettes within the PRS and have a significant stock of larger style properties that in recent years have been prone to conversion, to either bedsits or self-contained flats. Hence there is a strong correlation between these issues and the location of the PRS.

The number of service requests received by the Council regarding poor property conditions within Southport and Waterloo/Seaforth are just over twice the rate of the Sefton average. This highlights both areas as having poorer housing conditions, therefore, poor management practice.

Overall, Additional (HMO) Licensing can provide additional powers to help the Local Authority tackle poorly managed privately rented property. An estimated 33% of the private rented sector HMO accommodation across Sefton is in Waterloo/Seaforth and central Southport. Re-designating the Additional (HMO) Licensing areas will continue to build upon improvements to the management standards in this sector, improve living conditions and ultimately lead to a better quality of life for residents. It will help the areas to be more conducive to good landlords but provide an environment that is less opportunistic and attractive for poor and rogue landlords.

How will the schemes be delivered?

The Local Authority is committed to ensuring that the Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing schemes continue to contribute to improvements in housing conditions across the private rented sector. All licensable properties should receive a compliance inspection over the period of the licence. The Local Authority will provide advice and support to landlords to help to bring property conditions up to the required standards along with ensuring that the landlord's statutory responsibilities are also met.

The administration of the licensing application process, including the undertaking of inspections

and the provision of general advice and support to landlords will continue to be undertaken by Licensing Compliance Officers. Specialist support services will also be provided in relation to supporting landlords to deal with ASB. The income received from the fees shall be used to cover the additional costs incurred by the Local Authority in employing these staff with associated costs.

The Housing Standards Team will focus resources proactively with the key aim to improve the physical appearance of neighbourhoods and the quality of housing across the designations, particular focus will be on ensuring that the management of properties meet required standards and where necessary landlords or agents are educated appropriately to improve their management processes ensuring any issues are dealt with promptly and effectively.

Landlords will need to abide by a set of conditions as part of their licence. These conditions shall be finalised following feedback from the consultation process.

Licensing has enabled the Council to take a proactive approach to improve the living conditions and environment for tenants, some of which are the most vulnerable. Considerable progress has already been made with landlord engagement and the proposed re-designations should continue to build on this relationship. This will enable the Council to focus resources on housing related enforcement activity within the designated areas, whereby landlords either fail to licence their properties or fail to comply with licence conditions. It is also likely that issues regarding poor housing conditions or ASB across other areas of the Borough may be brought to the attention of the Local Authority as a result of the increased awareness generally brought about by licensing.

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Licence application and Fees

In setting licence fees, the Local Authority must follow certain principles. In particular, the fee must not exceed the actual and direct costs of processing an application, monitoring compliance, and enforcing the scheme. The fee structure is also required to be reasonable and proportionate.

The licence fee, is therefore, set to cover the administration and associated

costs of the licence. A review of fees will be undertaken annually and will be adjusted to reflect changes in costs.

A licence would normally be granted for a period of the scheme and no further fees would be payable during the life of the licence. However, licences are non-transferrable in accordance with sections 68 (6) & 91(6) of the Housing Act 2004. A change of licence holder will, therefore, require a new application fee.

Selective Licensing	£	Annual Equiv. £	Weekly Equiv. £
Full Fee	695	139	2.67
Accreditation	545	109	2.10
Accredited Managing Agents	495	99	1.90

In addition to the above fee:

For each additional unit (under the same ownership, within the same building) a charge of £30 per additional unit will apply.

Although the costs of running the Selective licensing scheme have increased, for example higher staffing costs in line with cost of living and additional staffing numbers. Sefton now has more data on the private-rented sector within the Borough, particularly within the Selective (and Additional) licensing areas. The original scheme implemented in 2018 had fees estimated on 2800 Selective licences being issued, however,

this figure was exceeded and the additional number received has been factored into the above and allows the proposed fees, therefore, to remain the same for Selective licences.

Furthermore, feedback from landlords throughout the duration of the current scheme was that they felt it was unfair for larger portfolio landlords to benefit as they only needed to pay one licence fee when they owned multiple flats within the same building. So, although they were receiving higher rental income in relation to another landlord owning only one property in the same building, they paid the same fee. Sefton, therefore, has proposed that in these instances an extra charge will be applicable at the rate of £30 per additional unit within the same building. This unit charge is proposed to be included across all housing licensing schemes.

Additional (HMO) Licensing fees for HMOs are proposed to be similar to those charged for mandatory HMO licences under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004.

Within the proposals for the re-designation of the Additional (HMO) licensing schemes, the fees have been increased from current levels. The reasoning for this, is that in the current Additional (HMO) Licensing Scheme, it has become apparent that the licensing of HMOs consisting entirely of self-contained flats (so called 'Section 257' HMOs) is extremely time consuming due to the multi layered ownership arrangements and conflicts between freeholders who often cannot agree who would apply and pay for the licence. There were also several HMOs where the type and status of occupiers varied due to sales of flats. The definition of a section 257 HMO requires that for a building to be an HMO, more than a third of the flats within it must be occupied by persons other than leaseholders. Thus, a building comprising of three flats could cease to be an HMO because of just one of the flats becoming owner occupied. It also makes it difficult for

freeholders to identify whether their property is licensable as they may not know whether an individual leaseholder is in residence or has sub-let the flat.

Additional (HMO) Licensing	£	Annual Equiv.	Weekly Equiv.
Full Fee	950	190	3.65
Accreditation	800	160	3.08
Accredited Managing Agents	750	150	2.88

In addition to the above fee:

For each additional unit (under the control of the same proposed licence holder, within the same building) a charge of £30 per additional unit will apply.

Discounts

The following discounts have been factored into the proposed fee calculations which will be confirmed following consultation feedback.

For the purposes of Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing, an accredited landlord is a landlord who is accredited with the Sefton Property Accreditation Scheme. A landlord who is accredited with the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) will also benefit from a discount. The ability to apply for an accreditation discount will be available for 6 months after the commencement of the scheme only OR 6 months from date of completion for newly purchased properties until 28 February 2027. It is intended, subject to Council agreement, to offer a reduced and proportionate rate for landlords where the date of completion of a newly purchased property is between 1 March 2027 and 28 February 2028.

There is also a discount for managing agents who are part of our Managing Agent Accreditation Scheme and then only if they are the proposed

licence holder. Managing Agent accreditation is only available to agents who manage properties for other landlords and a full assessment of managing practices will be made by Housing Standards Officers to achieve accredited status. Further information on managing agent accreditation is available on our website.

Refund policy

We will give a refund for a property licence only if an application was made by mistake. Situations considered to be a mistake are if:

- the property is outside the designated area
- a duplicate application has been made
- an application was made for an exempted property.

How have fees been calculated?

The introduction of any housing licensing scheme needs to operate on a cost neutral basis to the Council. Sefton has calculated its fees, based on the anticipated running costs of the schemes.

The licence fee covers a five-year period. The fee is to pay for staff to administer and enforce the scheme, with additional funded legal support and resources. This amounts to £2,268,587

An estimate of the projected costs of administering the schemes together with the corresponding fee income is shown in the following table. The income has been based on an assumed number of licensable properties being 3465, an estimated percentage rate has also been applied to take account of discounts. The projected income has been calculated at £2,268,585

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Any shortfall will be met by the Council. However, the Council has identified large numbers of privately rented properties during its current schemes and we expect these numbers will continue to increase. Additionally, based on evidence from our current schemes we expect to issue increasing numbers of penalty notices on non-compliant landlords especially following the lifting of Covid restrictions. We, therefore, expect to meet any shortfall within the fee structure.

Estimated total for 5 years

Expenditure	Costs (£)
Staffing costs	2,112,438
Legal	49,948
Support & Resources	106,200
Total Income	2,268,585
Total Expenses	2,268,587
Overall Total (deficit)	2

Consultation

The Housing Act 2004 requires that before making a designation, the Council is required to undertake a formal consultation process on the proposed implementation of any licensing designations and take reasonable steps to consult with persons likely to be affected. This includes local residents, tenants, landlords, managing agents and other members of the community who live or operate businesses or provide services within the proposed designation and neighbouring areas that may be affected.

Our engagement and consultation process will last for a period of 12 weeks, which commences on 9 May 2022. To provide an impartial consultation, M·E·L Research, an independent research agency, are undertaking the consultation process.

Evaluation and decision making

Following the closure of the consultation period the responses will be evaluated and published on the Sefton Council's website. The responses will be considered and will inform officer recommendations to Cabinet Members before making a final decision as to whether to proceed with Selective and/or Additional (HMO) Licensing.

If the Council's Cabinet agree the proposed re-designations for the purpose of Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing, we expect the Selective Licensing and Additional (HMO) Licensing designations would become operative on 1 March 2023, with both schemes lasting for a period of five years. If Cabinet decide not to designate the area, Sefton could continue solely with a reactive enforcement regime, linked with the more assertive promotion of Accreditation.



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Appendix B: Coverage of consultation

Consultation activities

Pre-consultation activity:

Cabinet approval to present Business Case and receive approval to consult 2 Dec 2021

Press Releases:

Pre consultation 25 March 2022

Start of consultation 9 May 2022

During 17 May 2022

During 24 May 2022

Reminder near end 19 July 2022

Promotion of consultation includes news articles on:

Sefton website

My Sefton

M·E·L Research webpage

All Sefton social media (see statistics below)

Staff intranet

Article on the NRLA website

All HST officers including link to consultation on email signature.

Social media:

Facebook			
May	Engagement Rate	Reach	Reactions
16	8.87%	9486	6
25	3.35%	4541	3
June			
11	8.62%	58	3
20	2.29%	350	3
27	0.69%	723	2
July			
4	30.77%	26	3
12	7.59%	1977	1
17	2.44%	41	0
29	4.05%	74	0
Total	7.63%	17,276	21

Twitter			
May	Engagement Rate	Engagements	Impressions
16	1.49%	20	1345
25	1.80%	13	724
June			
11	0.90%	6	668
20	1.08%	10	927
27	3.31%	65	1961
July			
4	2.63%	33	1256
12	2.69%	22	819
17	5.45%	63	972
29	6.66%	44	661
Total	2.89%	276	9,333

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LinkedIn				
May	Engagement Rate	Reactions	Shares	
16	3.01%	4	1	
June				
11	7.53%	15	1	
20	1.40%	2	0	
27	0.43%	0	0	
July				
4	2.68%	5	0	
12	2.59%	1	0	
17	3.22%	0	0	
29	1.18%	1	0	
Total	2.76%	28	2	

Leaflet published and distributed:

64,000 leaflets distributed by Royal Mail across licensing and its neighbouring areas to all residential and commercial properties.

Housing Standards officers provided information to tenants, landlords and agents when dealing with disrepair complaints or undertaking compliance visits.

Emails promoting consultation with links sent to:

Elected members

Landlords/Agents/others – who expressed interest in being kept updated

Officers of HST added 'signature' to all emails

All neighbouring Local Authorities

All landlords/agents/accredited landlords who we hold email addresses for

All current licence holders and managing agents

Other stakeholders including police, fire and rescue, housing associations, landlord associations/groups, CVS organisations public health and other local organisations.

Consultation methods:

Online survey to residents, tenants and landlords

Residents survey (face to face survey of 545 residents across Sefton))

Focus groups amongst residents, tenants and landlords

Written responses from stakeholders to the consultation

Stakeholder consultation – 3 completed/returned

Meetings and events held/attended

M·E·L Meetings with landlords/residents/tenants etc:

4th July 2022 (Online focus group – 7 attendees)

5th July 2022 - morning (Online focus group – 5 attendees)

5th July 2022 – afternoon (Online focus group – 5 attendees)

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Appendix C: Online survey

22041 - SEFTON PRS CONSULTATION 2022

Private Rented Sector Licensing Consultation in Sefton

We want to hear your views about proposed licensing schemes to improve private rented sector housing in Sefton.

As a thank you for participating, you will be entered into a prize draw to win one of three prizes of high street gift vouchers. The 1st prize is £100 in vouchers, 2nd prize of £50 in vouchers and a 3rd prize of £25 in vouchers.

Before making a decision, the Council wants to hear your views about the proposal and any alternatives we could consider. The Council would specifically like to hear from private tenants, landlords, letting and managing agents, residents and businesses or organisations operating in Sefton and surrounding areas.

You can see full details, including supporting documents, at www.sefton.gov.uk/licensing-consultation.

If you have any questions, then please email seftonprs@melresearch.co.uk or call freephone 0800 0730 348

This should take no more than 10 minutes. The closing date for the consultation is 23:59 on 31 July 2022.

The consultation is being run by M·E·L Research, an independent research company. Information you provide will only be used for research purposes and you will not be personally identifiable in any reports, however organisations may be identifiable. M·E·L Research work to the Market Research Society code of conduct.

We will hold all information securely and strictly in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Please visit the following to read our privacy notices: <https://melresearch.co.uk/privacypolicy>.

To begin the survey please click "Next"

Background

Sefton Council is committed to making the Borough a safe and attractive place to live in. As part of its Sefton 2030 vision there is a significant ambition to improve and attract investment to improve Sefton's prosperity. This includes ensuring Sefton residents have access to good-quality housing choices. Housing Licensing will play an important part in achieving this, by improving conditions within the private rented sector, which has previously had less regulation.

Since 2001, Sefton has seen a significant increase in the size of the private rented sector. This increase is Borough-wide, but particularly high in the areas being considered for the redesignation of the housing licensing schemes.

Sefton Council is proposing to continue with its Selective and Additional licensing schemes for privately rented properties across selected areas of the Borough. It feels that although improvements are showing across property conditions, crime and anti-social behaviour, there is still more to do, particularly around the management of privately rented properties and to improve the living conditions of its residents. Therefore, the Council feels that re-designating both the Selective and the Additional (HMO) licensing schemes for another five years will enable further improvements to be made.

Consultation on the proposal

The Council is consulting on two proposals (full details of the matters being considered and the evidence behind the proposals are detailed in a consultation document which can be found here: www.sefton.gov.uk/licensing-consultation). The proposals are:

Re-designate the Bootle area for Selective Licensing

The current Selective Licensing scheme in this area has made significant impact to improve the living conditions for the residents but there is more to achieve. Landlords of all privately rented properties in the Bootle area would need to apply for a licence from the Council. They will need to meet minimum management and property standards and these will help protect landlords, tenants and residents.

Re-designate the Additional (HMO) licensing scheme in parts of Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands/Seaforth and central Southport

This is where landlords of any house in multiple occupation (HMO) in these specific areas would need to apply for a licence from the Council. This would help the Council ensure the properties are managed properly.

Please give us your views.

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Q1 - Which of the following best describes you?

Which of the following best describes you?

Please select all that apply

- Sefton resident
- Private landlord
- Letting agent
- Managing agent
- Private tenant in Sefton
- Work in Sefton
- Business in Sefton
- Other (please specify) _____

Q2 - What is your full postcode

What is your full postcode?

This information will not be used to identify you. The information will only be used to help the Council to understand if there are differing views from respondents in different areas.

Please type in

Q3 - What is the name of the business/organisation you are responding on behalf of?

What is the name of the business/organisation you are responding on behalf of?

Please type in

Scheme Proposals

Local authorities can choose to require private landlords or their agents to obtain a licence so that they can rent out their properties. This gives the Council the ability to offer support to landlords as well as identifying who and where landlords are, and powers to improve management and property standards. This can be done via 'selective' or 'additional (HMO)' licensing.

The Council is committed to improving the private rented sector and believes that by redesignating its licensing schemes would lead to an improvement of management and property conditions across the designated areas and aims to:

Improve the quality of homes in the private rented sector, and make them more attractive to tenants

Reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB) Improve the image of Sefton and make areas more desirable to live in Increase property values Ensure shorter void (empty) periods Provide support to landlords to help tackle ASB Protect vulnerable people who may currently be living in poorly maintained properties The Council is therefore considering the following proposals.

Q4 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to re-designation a selective licensing scheme in Bootle?

Re-designate a selective licensing scheme for private rented properties in the Bootle area
This requires all private sector landlords renting a property in the area to have a licence and meet the necessary criteria in order to hold a licence.

This would allow the Council to take action where there is non-compliance with licence conditions.
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to re-designation a selective licensing scheme in Bootle?

Please select one option only

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ Not sure

Q5 - What impact, if any, do you feel implementing a selective licensing scheme would have on you if it were introduced?

What impact, if any, do you feel implementing a selective licensing scheme would have on you if it were introduced?

Please select one option only

- A positive impact
- No impact
- A negative impact
- Don't know/ Not sure

Q6 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to re-designate an additional (HMO) licensing scheme?

Re-designate the additional licensing scheme for HMO properties in parts of Waterloo, Brighton -Le-Sands / Seaforth and central Southport
This requires all private sector landlords to hold a licence for each house in multiple occupation (HMO) and they would have to meet the necessary criteria in order to hold a licence.

This would provide safe homes for tenants to live in and allow the Council to take action where there is non-compliance with licence conditions.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to re-designate an additional (HMO) licensing scheme?

Please select one option only

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree

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- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ Not sure

Q7 - What impact, if any, do you feel the additional (HMO) licensing schemes would have on you if they were introduced?

What impact, if any, do you feel the additional (HMO) licensing schemes would have on you if they were introduced?

Please select one option only

- A positive impact
- No impact
- A negative impact
- Don't know/ Not sure

Q8 - Are there any other areas in Sefton that you feel would benefit from an additional (HMO) licensing scheme?

Are there any other areas in Sefton that you feel would benefit from an additional (HMO) licensing scheme?

Please type in

Q9 - Are there any other comments you would like to add about either of the proposed schemes?

Are there any other comments you would like to add about either of the proposed schemes?

Please type in

Q10 - To what extent do you agree if disagree with the proposed fee for Selective Licensing?

If licensing is re-introduced, in order to cover the Council's costs of administering the schemes the Council would need to charge landlords a fee to apply for a licence that would last up to five years. If licensing is re-designated, it becomes a mandatory requirement within the Borough. As the licence fee would then be a mandatory cost to landlords it will be subject to relevant tax relief, which will further lower the actual cost to landlords (and any cost which landlords might pass on to tenants).

1. Selective licensing fee

The proposed fee for selective licensing is £695 to cover up to five years. This equates to £139 per year or £2.67 per week. It is also proposed that for each additional unit (under the same ownership, within the same building) a charge of £30 per additional unit will apply. Details can be found here at www.sefton.gov.uk/licensing-consultation. This is based on an estimate that there are around 3,200 properties that may fall under this scheme. A reduction in the fee of £150 is proposed to be given for those who are accredited with the Sefton Property Accreditation Scheme or the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA). There is also a discount of £200 for managing agents who are part of

Sefton's Managing Agent Accreditation Scheme and then only if they are the proposed licence holder.

To what extent do you agree if disagree with the proposed fee for Selective Licensing?

Please select one option only

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ Not sure

Q11 - To what extent do you agree if disagree with the proposed fee for Additional (HMO) Licensing?

2. Additional (HMO) licensing fee

The proposed fee for additional licensing is £950 to cover up to five years. The costs for processing an additional licence are higher because the properties are large and can have more complex ownership arrangements this increases the time required to process an application so the licence fee reflects the level of resources required for the running of the scheme. This equates to £190 per year or £3.65 per week with additional unit costs for larger properties. It is also proposed that for each additional unit (under the control of the same proposed licence holder, within the same building) a charge of £30 per additional unit will apply. Details can be found in www.sefton.gov.uk/licensing-consultation. This is based on around 240 properties that fall under this type of scheme. A reduction in the fee of £150 is proposed to be given for those who are accredited with either Sefton's Property Accreditation Scheme or the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA). There is also a discount of £200 for managing agents who are part of Sefton's Managing Agent Accreditation Scheme and then only if they are the proposed licence holder.

To what extent do you agree if disagree with the proposed fee for Additional (HMO) Licensing?

Please select one option only

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ Not sure

Q12 - If you have any comments about the licensing fees, please provide them below.

If you have any comments about the licensing fees, please provide them below.

Please type in

Q13 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Selective Licensing conditions?

There are mandatory licence conditions that must be applied to Additional and Selective licences. The Council can also apply other conditions to deal with the management, use and occupation of the property. The proposed licensing conditions would seek to prevent overcrowding, poor property

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conditions and help tackle deprivation and anti-social behaviour.

A copy of the proposed conditions can be found at: www.sefton.gov.uk/licensing-consultation.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Selective Licensing conditions?

Please select one option only

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ Not sure

Q14 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Additional Licensing conditions?

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Additional Licensing conditions?

Please select one option only

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ Not sure

Q15 - If you have any comments about the proposed licence conditions, please provide them below.

If you have any comments about the proposed licence conditions, please provide them below.

Please type in

Q16 - Do you have any further comments about the Licensing proposals?

Do you have any further comments about the licensing proposals? Please include any suggestions for alternative ways of dealing with problems in the areas or any ideas for improving the proposed schemes.

Please type in

Q17 - Would you be interested in attending one of our online focus group discussions?

Would you be interested in attending one of our online focus group discussions?

Please select one option only

- Yes, I would be interested
- No

Q17_Email - Please provide your email address below.

Please provide your email address below.

Please type in

Q18 - If the Council decides to go ahead with the proposed licensing schemes, would you like them to contact you with details of the scheme?

If the Council decides to go ahead with the proposed licensing schemes, would you like them to contact you with details of the scheme? If so, we will share just your contact details with Sefton Council, not your response to this survey.

Please select one option only

- Yes, I would be interested
- No

Q18_Email - Please provide your email address below.

Please provide your email address below.

Please type in

Q19 - Finally, would you like to be included in the free prize draw?

Finally, would you like to be included in the free prize draw? Please tick the relevant option below.

Please select one option only

- Yes, please include me in the prize draw.
- Yes, please include me but give my prize to a local charity.
- No

Q19_Email - Please provide your email address below.

Please provide your email address below.

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Please type in

Q20 - Do you consent for your personal information to be processed in this way, for this survey only?

This last section asks you some optional questions about yourself so we can fully understand different people's views and experiences. You can complete as much or as little as you wish. This is being collected to help the Council in meeting its public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. All information that you provide is used only for the purpose of this survey and is not shared with any party, including Sefton Council.

Do you consent for your personal information to be processed in this way, for this survey only?

Please select one option only

- Yes
- No

Q21 - How old are you?

How old are you?

Please select one option only

- 18 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 - 69
- 60 or over
- Prefer not to say

Q22 - Are you...?

Are you...?

Please select one option only

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Q23 - Do you consider yourself to have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment?

Section 7 (1) of the Equality Act states that: 'A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.'

(Please note that 'process' does not mean only a medical process)

Regarding the above statement, do you consider yourself to have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment?

Please select one option only

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q24 - Do you currently identify with your birth sex?

Do you currently identify with your birth sex?

Please select one option only

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q25 - Are you...?

Are you...?

Please select one option only

- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Define differently (please type in) _____
- Prefer not to say

Q26 - How would you describe your sexual orientation?

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Please select one option only

- Heterosexual / straight
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Define differently (please type in) _____
- Prefer not to say

Q27 - Do you have any of the following?

Disability: Do you have any of the following?

Please select all that apply

- No, none of these
- Physical impairment
- Learning difficulty
- Learning disability
- Autism / Asperger's
- Mental health condition

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- Visual impairment/blind
- Hearing impairment / deaf
- Long-term illness that affects your daily life
- Dementia
- Prefer not to say

Q28 - Do you consider yourself to be 'disabled'?

If you have ticked any of the boxes above, or you have cancer, diabetes or HIV this would be classed as 'disability' under the legislation, do you consider yourself to be 'disabled'?

Please select one option only

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q29 - What is your religion/belief?

What is your religion/belief?

Please select one option only

- No religion/belief
- Christian
- Hindu
- Muslim
- Jewish
- Sikh
- Other religion/belief (please specify) _____
- Prefer not to say

Q30 - Do you identify as...?

Race/ethnicity (please note that Sikh and Jewish are collected in the Religion/Belief question previously) – do you identify as:

Please select one option only

- White
- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Roma
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Latvian
- Any other White background (please specify) _____

- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
- White and Black Caribbean
- White & Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background (please specify) _____

- Asian/Asian British
- Indian
- Pakistani

- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background (please specify)_____

- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (please specify)_____

- Another ethnic group
- Arab
- Any other ethnic background (please specify)_____

- Prefer not to say

Thank you for your time.

Please click on the "Submit" button below to submit your survey.

If you would like more information about who we are and how we use the information provided please see our privacy policy at: <https://melresearch.co.uk/privacypolicy>. This includes information on your privacy rights, including the right to withdraw your consent at any time.

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Appendix D: Profile information

Profile information of those completing the survey

Please note that 227 respondents did not give a response to the profile information questions so have been excluded from the tables below.

Age (537 responses)

	Number	%
18 to 29	59	11%
30 to 39	94	18%
40 to 49	71	13%
50 to 59	111	21%
60 to 69	108	20%
60 or over	92	17%
Prefer not to say	2	0%

Gender (537 responses)

	Number	%
Male	270	50%
Female	264	49%
Prefer not to say	3	1%

Do you consider yourself to have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment? (537 responses)

	Number	%
Yes	31	6%
No	478	89%
Prefer not to say	28	5%

Do you currently identify with your birth sex? (31 responses)

	Number	%
Yes	30	97%
No	1	3%

Sexual orientation (537 responses)

	Number	%
Heterosexual / straight	488	91%
Gay	5	1%
Bisexual	4	1%
Prefer not to say	40	7%

Do you have any of the following (537 responses)

	Number	%
No, none of these	428	80%
Physical impairment	39	7%
Learning difficulty	2	0%
Autism / Asperger's	3	1%
Mental health condition	22	4%
Visual impairment / blind	3	1%
Hearing impairment / deaf	6	1%
Long-term illness that affects your daily life	22	4%
Dementia	1	0%
Prefer not to say	31	6%
Summary: Any	78	15%

Disability (537 responses)

	Number	%
Yes	69	13%
No	442	82%
Prefer not to say	26	5%

Religion (537 responses)

	Number	%
No religion/belief	176	33%
Christian	315	59%
Hindu	5	1%
Jewish	2	0%
Other religion/belief	4	1%
Prefer not to say	35	7%

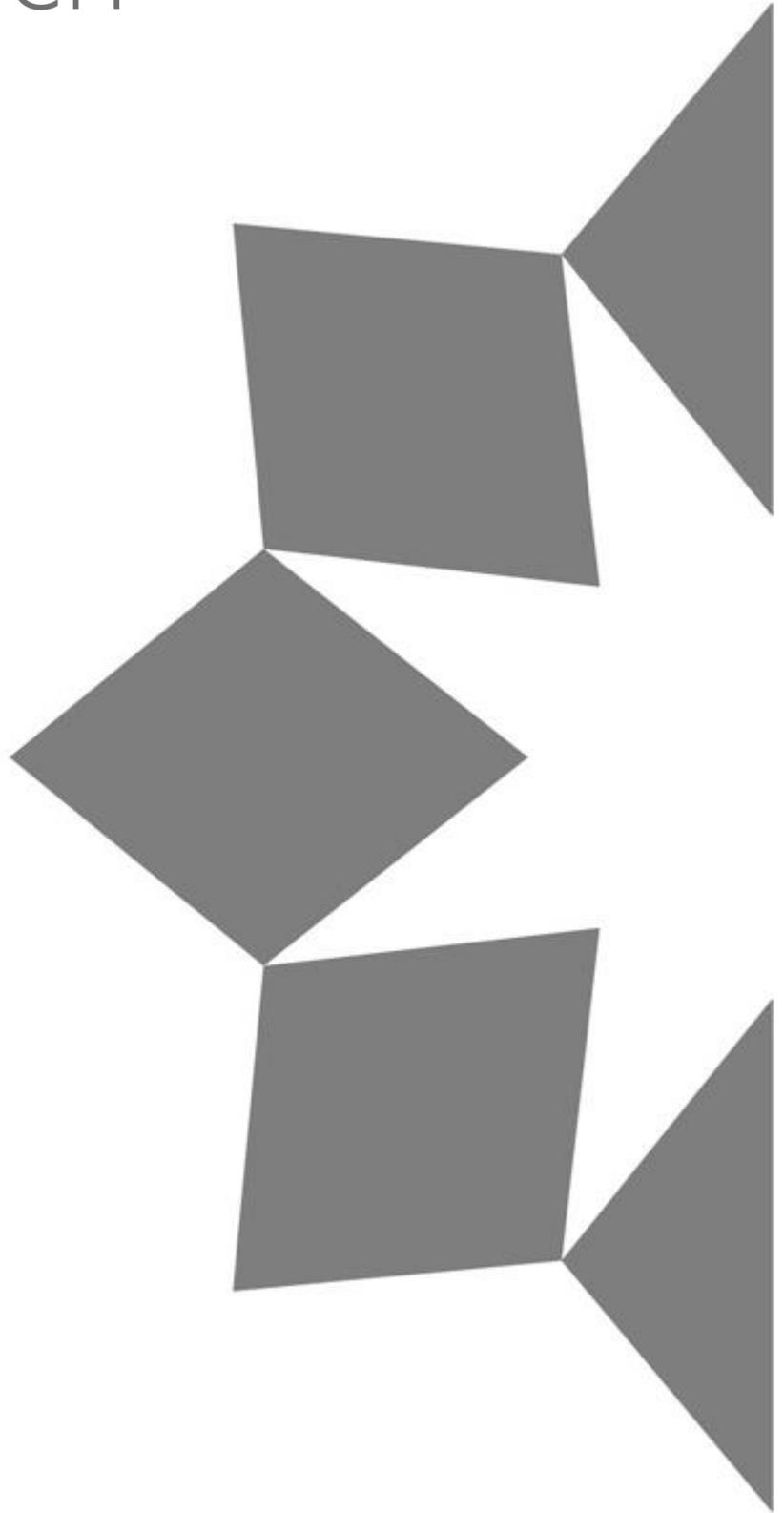
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Ethnicity (537 responses)

	Number	%
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	467	87%
Irish	9	2%
Polish	8	1%
Any other White background	12	2%
White and Asian	4	1%
Indian	8	1%
Chinese	2	0%
Any other Asian background	2	0%
African	6	1%
Any other ethnic background	4	1%
Prefer not to say	15	3%



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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 6 October 2022
Subject:	Disposal of Land at Southport Old Road and Holgate, Thornton		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Services	Wards Affected:	Manor Ward
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	NO but Appendices 1, 2 and 4 of the Report are NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours the information being treated as exempt.		

Summary:

Asset Maximisation is a project within the Council's Framework for Change, Public Sector Reform programme. As part of this project, the Council's assets will be defined as being required for operational purposes, having heritage value, being required for the economic growth programme or being available for disposal. The first phase of this review was completed in 2019. The site known as Land at Holgate, Thornton was identified as being not operational, surplus to requirements and therefore available for disposal.

In November 2019, Cabinet approved that Legal Services and Property and Facilities Management finalise an agreement for the disposal of the Council's land known as Plots B and C, Holgate, Thornton. In 2020 an option agreement was entered into with the developer and purchaser, Forth Homes. This has enabled Forth Homes to commence technical due diligence work to inform a planning application for 206 dwellings on the site that was approved in June 2022.

As part of the negotiated deal with Forth Homes, the developer was required to bring on board a strategic partner. Forth Homes has agreed terms for a sale of the Council's land to a larger housebuilder, Castle Green Homes (a management buy-out of Housebuilder Macbryde Homes, backed by Steve Morgan CBE, founder and former chairman of Redrow). The deal agreed between Forth Homes and Castle Green Homes effectively triggered an overage payment for the Council's land, and therefore changed some conditions of the land sale previously reported to Cabinet.

The Option Agreement sets out the gross land value and allows deductions for abnormal development costs, Section 106 contributions (including affordable housing contribution required by the Council), external highway works and planning gain costs.

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Cabinet previously approved that Officers would be required to report back to Members when sale contracts and all financial issues were resolved. This final report now seeks Cabinet approval to conclude the land sale transaction for Plots B and C at Holgate, Thornton.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

- (i) As per the terms of the Option Agreement, gives approval for Forth Homes to appoint Castle Green Homes as their Nominated Strategic Partner for the reasons detailed within 3.4 of this report
- (ii) Approves the Heads of Terms for the long lease of land on the north side of Southport Old Road, Thornton as detailed within Appendix 4 of this report.
- (iii) Gives approval for the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer to complete the long lease and land sale agreements to secure the capital receipt presented at Appendix A.
- (iv) Note the work undertaken by Property and Facilities Management to verify abnormal costs deductions and that the agreed disposal price as set out in Appendix 1 meets best consideration requirements in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- (v) Approves that the land disposal receipt can be paid in two equal instalments, being 50% on completion and 50% twelve months thereafter.

Reasons for the Recommendations:

- (i) The deal agreed will enable a comprehensive scheme to be brought forward. This will avoid the sterilisation of the Council's land (Plot C – 3.15 acres) if Orchard Farm was redeveloped in isolation with highways access provided from Holgate Road.
- (ii) The developer will fund and deliver an off-site highways solution, which provides an appropriate access into the Council's land at Plot A, unlocking this site. This site will be brought forward in future years as a separate disposal.
- (iii) A final capital receipt is supported by an independent valuation provided at Appendix 2 to verify the Market Value of the site. All costs associated with progressing ground investigations and technical surveys have been passed onto the developer – the Council has not had to fund these works. The basis of the deal therefore meets with the Council's duty to receive best consideration requirements in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

- (i) Option 1 – “*Do nothing*”: the developer has successfully appealed their planning refusal and indicated that they will exercise their option and develop out their consented scheme, utilising Holgate for construction and residential access.

Risk: by redeveloping Orchard Farm in isolation, Holgate Road would be the main highways access into the site, but there would be insufficient capacity on this road to support the redevelopment of Plot C – this would likely remain as farmland. The impact would be the Council taking the remaining Plots A and B to market (see Option 2). The Council would incur costs associated with technical surveys, planning and marketing fees and lose the value of Plot C.

- (ii) Option 2 – “*Council bring forward Plots A and B in isolation*”: the Council would appoint consultants to progress desktop surveys (ecology, highways and ground conditions) and prepare a planning brief. The Council’s remaining land would then be marketed to prospective partners – the deal to be conditional upon planning consent.

Risk: The Council would incur costs and staff resource to progress the upfront technical works and due diligence to take the site to market, including the appointment of property agents to market the land.

- (iii) Option 3 – “*Council buy out the Option Agreement*”: this would ensure that the Council had control of the whole site and would be free to take the site to the open market seeking a disposal or joint venture partner.

Risk: Option would mean that the Council would need to pay compensation for costs incurred to date in pursuing planning and loss of future development profit, in addition to a land value to reflect the 14-dwelling scheme proposed. This would not be financially viable.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Not applicable – work streams to conclude the sale will be progressed by internal team resources. As part of the draft terms issued to the developer they are required to pay the Council’s legal costs and surveyors fees (capped at £25,000).

(B) Capital Costs

Not applicable – the Council’s contribution towards the off-site highways access from the A565 (Park View) is calculated on a pro-rata basis according to the respective site areas, and be deducted from the land receipt for Plots B and C. There are no cash flow implications arising.

Implications of the Proposals:

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

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<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): Property and Facilities Management to work alongside the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer to oversee the completion of the disposal.</p>									
<p>Legal Implications: The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer will complete the legal documentation for the disposal in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</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"> <tr> <td>Have a positive impact</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a neutral impact</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a negative impact</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> </table> <p>The recommendations within this report will have a negative impact on the carbon footprint of the Borough. There are the direct emissions which result from redevelopment of the vacant site for housing purposes as well as the long-term carbon emissions from each new building / operation created.</p> <p>The development of the site with buildings will be required to go through the Planning and Building Regulations processes which will help to minimise their carbon impact by applying the nationally required environmental standards.</p> <p>Redevelopment of the site will however be expected to contribute to energy efficiency and other public transport provision in line with standard planning policy requirements.</p>		Have a positive impact	N	Have a neutral impact	N	Have a negative impact	Y	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
Have a positive impact	N								
Have a neutral impact	N								
Have a negative impact	Y								
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y								

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The disposal will facilitate a comprehensive redevelopment that will provide a planning policy compliant scheme, providing for 30% on-site affordable housing for the benefit of the local community in Thornton.
Commission, broker and provide core services: The proposed housing development will provide 206 new dwellings on Plots B and C, which will deliver additional Council Tax contributions to allow the Council to invest in key services.
Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable.
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The terms agreed with the developer requires (as a condition of the land sale) the developer to commit to providing local

apprenticeships and use of local labour during the construction works.
Greater income for social investment: The disposal of the land will secure a capital receipt that will directly contribute to funding of the Council's Growth Programme.
Cleaner Greener: Redevelopment of the site will be expected to contribute to energy efficiency and other public transport provision in line with standard planning policy requirements.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6959/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5159/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable.

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer:	Suzanne Rimmer
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Appendices:

The following Appendices are attached to this report.

Appendix 1 – Capital Receipt

Appendix 2 – Valuation

Appendix 3 – Site Plan

Appendix 4 – Head of Terms for long lease of land on the north side of Southport Old Road Thornton.

Appendices 1, 2 & 4 are Exempt.

Background Papers:

N/A

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Disposal Land at Southport Old Road and Holgate, Thornton, L23 1TJ

Introduction

- 1.1 Land at Holgate and Southport Old Road (“Land at Holgate”) collectively forms three neighbouring sites located on the northern edge of the village of Thornton and is owned by the Council. Immediately to the east of the sites is the Thornton Garden of Rest, a cemetery and crematorium. Agricultural and greenfield land lies to the north of the sites, which are separated by the road network. A site plan is located within in Appendix 3 of the report.
- 1.2 Site B is more rectangular in shape and the largest of the three sites at 11.74 acres and is bounded by the A565 to the west and Holgate to the east. To the south are existing residential houses.
- 1.3 Site C is also rectangular in shape, 3.15 acres and is located to the east of Site B across Holgate with the A5758 to the north and Thornton Garden of Rest to the east.
- 1.4 Site A is a triangular parcel of land of 8.82 acres bounded by the A565 to the north and east and residential properties to the south.

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 Land at Holgate is allocated in the Local Plan and forms a significant housing development opportunity. The Council’s land ownerships (Plots B and C) together with Orchard Farm (in private ownership) are identified as Site MN2.25. Plot A is a separate site allocation – MN2.24. The Local Plan sets out a policy requirement for the development of the sites to provide a proportional financial contribution towards the implementation of the A565 Route Management Strategy. All vehicular access to the sites is to be from a new signal-controlled junction onto Park View.
- 2.2 A planning application for 14 houses (DC/2018/01568) on Orchard Farm was refused in December 2018. This decision was appealed. The Planning Inspectorate allowed the Appeal and granted planning permission, meaning that the scheme can be implemented in full. Furthermore, the developer (Forth Homes) submitted a revised pre-application proposal for an alternative scheme for 44 homes on the same site, but with a social/affordable housing emphasis. This was an attempt to deal with certain aspects of the original reasons for refusal, however most significantly, it failed to address the significant highway issues previously raised. Forth Homes agreed to hold this proposal in abeyance, awaiting the outcome of the appeal and the concurrent discussions regarding the adjacent Council land assets.
- 2.3 The impact of the appeal decision is that – if implemented - it undermines the Local Plan requirement to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment of Plots B and C which form the remainder of the Local Plan site allocation MN2.25. It also involves the development of this site taking sole construction and residential traffic from Holgate (contrary to the Local Plan requirements), which was a main concern raised by the community, Ward Councillors, Parish Council and Planning

Committee in refusing the original planning application. Redevelopment of Orchard Farm in isolation will also mean that the Council's land forming Plot C will be landlocked, as Holgate will unlikely be able to accommodate the additional traffic associated with the 30-40 residential units this site could accommodate, in addition to the 14 dwellings on Orchard Farm. Given the objections to the 14 units, irrespective of highway and junction capacity, this additional development would likely receive an even stronger level of opposition. The land value for Plot C would be lost if the disposal to the developer partner does not proceed.

- 2.4** Forth Homes engaged positively with the Council since the original refusal of planning permission, however, they made their intentions clear that they would honour their deal with the landowner and develop Orchard Farm in isolation, if there was no other realistic option available. The proposal involving the adjacent land Plots B and C, the closure of Holgate to vehicular traffic beyond a specified point (so it cannot be used for construction traffic nor to serve the new residential properties), and the creation of a new vehicular access onto Park View to serve both Local Plan allocations at Holgate and Southport Old Road offers that opportunity.
- 2.5** To resolve the situation and secure an agreeable way forward for both parties, Cabinet agreed (7 November 2019 – Item 70) to an off-market transaction with the land disposal to be structured with the necessary financial checks and protocols in place to ensure that the Council receives “best consideration” in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Land Disposal Deal

- 3.1** Further to Cabinet Approval, the Council and Forth Homes entered into an option agreement in 2021, which gives the developer the right to acquire the Council's land subject to conditions being achieved within agreed timescales. The option agreement set out a gross land price that was supported by an independent valuation. The basis of the deal accepted that the gross land price would be reduced to take into account deductions for abnormal development costs, S106 contributions, external highway works and planning costs. Deductions from the gross land price were to be calculated on a pro-rata basis according to the respective site areas.
- 3.2** The option agreement required the developer to progress all necessary technical surveys and submit a planning application for Plots B and C (to include Orchard Farm). The planning application (DC/2021/00417) was approved in June 2022.
- 3.3** Overage provisions were also made in the option agreement, setting out that the sale contract would include an Overage Deed lasting for a period of 21 years from completion. This was to ensure that the Council would receive an additional payment should either of the following scenarios take place within this period:
- Future land sales of undeveloped land parcels forming part of Plots B and C: the Council to receive 50% of any receipt (to be independently verified) over and above the agreed Purchase Price, reflected on a pro-rata basis per acre. Any undeveloped land sale will be sold subject to the overage deed and the Buyer will enter a direct covenant with the Council.

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- On completion of individual development phases brought forward by the developer, the Council to receive 50% of any “windfall profit return”, over and above an agreed benchmark of 17.5% profit on GDV, (each development phase to be independently verified).

3.4 The Option agreement also obliged Forth Homes to bring on board a strategic partner with the experience, financial and resource capability to deliver large housing developments. In 2021, Forth Homes applied to the Council for approval to appoint Castle Green Homes as their Nominated Strategic Partner. Further to Officers undertaking due diligence in relation the financial stability of Castle Green Homes, this was noted subject to award of planning, the finalisation of sale contracts/ overage deed, and final Cabinet approval.

3.5 In practice, this means that Castle Green Homes will be the actual purchaser of Plots B and C and develop out the scheme in line with the approved planning consent. Castle Green offered a higher gross land price and as such would trigger the overage scenario of sale of undeveloped land. The higher land price offered by Castle Green Homes is conditional upon the Council accepting a staged payment: 50% on completion of sale contracts with the balance to be paid 12 months later, so in financial year 2023/24. It is advantageous for the Council to accept a staged payment of the capital receipt for the reasons detailed within the table at Appendix 1.

Assessment of Abnormal Costs

4.1 In June 2022 Castle Green submitted all cost and technical design works relating to accepted abnormalities and off-site highways works as required by the option agreement. Officers appointed a firm of civil engineers/quantity surveyors to review this information and independently verify costs that can be deducted from the gross land price, in line with the option agreement.

4.2 The cost verification exercise has accepted the figure presented at Appendix 1 as a cost deduction from the agreed gross land value in line with the option agreement. A new valuation for the site, which was required due to the length of time that has passed since the initial valuation in 2020, has been completed and is appended at Appendix 2 and sets out the market value of the Council's land being sold to Castle Green.

Planning Consent

5.1 A Section 106 agreement finalised through the planning determination process will secure the following planning gain benefits presented at Table 1 below.

5.2 The developer was also required to comply with the obligations for the Wildlife Mitigation Strategy as set out in the Section 106 Agreement to allow for the feeding of pink-footed geese on the land. Terms have now been provisionally agreed for the Council to grant a long lease of adjacent land on the north side of Southport Old Road Thornton. These are detailed within Appendix 4 of this report. The premium for the grant of the Lease is a deduction from the land value,

but effectively repaid to the Council and thereafter a rental of one peppercorn per annum if demanded.

Section 106 Contributions	
Education contribution	£459,380.00
Monitoring fee	£6,685.05
Recreational pressure contribution	£61,594.00
Road Management Contribution	£106,000.00
Wildlife Mitigation Contribution	£118,939.00
Wildlife Mitigation Strategy Monitoring Contribution	£60,000.00
Council Legal Fees	£4,000.00
Total	£816,598.05

Table 1: Section 106 Contributions

Timescales

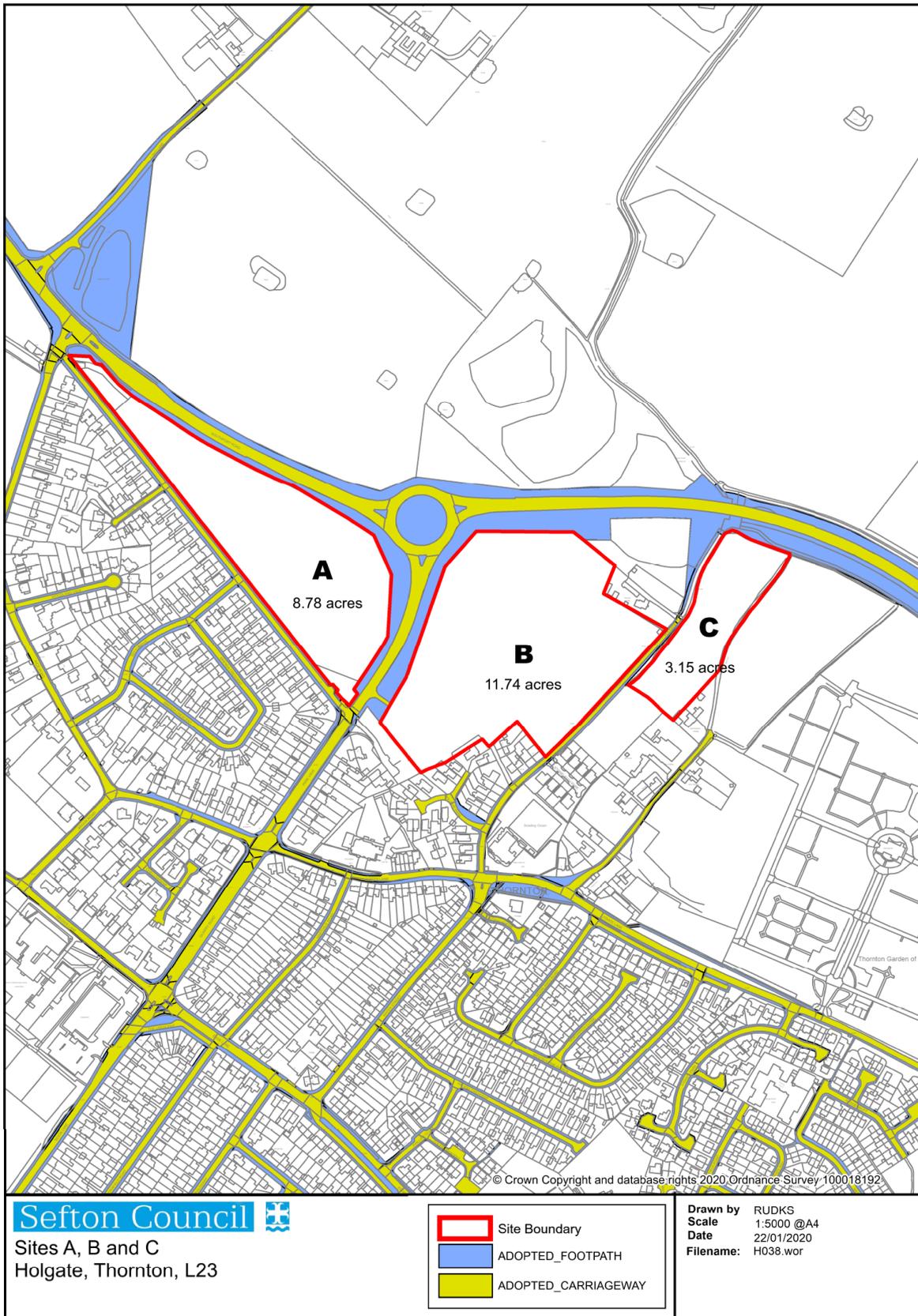
- 6.1** Pending Cabinet approval to the proposed deal, completion of sale contracts will take place in October 2022. Castle Green will start on site on 17th October with the first housing completions due October 2023 (after 12 months). Build out of the development is anticipated to last between two and a half to three years in total.

Best Consideration

- 7.1** The Council is under an obligation to ensure that any offers for properties represent “best consideration” in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The approach set out in the preceding sections of the report for the disposal complies with such an obligation. Market value has been established by the procurement of independent valuation advice.
- 7.2** The proposed approach also takes account of the Council agreed Asset Disposal Policy which enables sales by way of private treaty or negotiated disposal where there are compelling reasons to treat with a purchaser such as the nature of the sites and the identified parties’ status as a special or unique purchaser. The Councils Legal Services has reviewed the process undertaken and is satisfied that all aspects of this transactions are in order and comply with the above legislation and the Councils own policies.

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Appendix 3 – Site Plan



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