

Public Document Pack

Sefton Council 

MEETING: CABINET
DATE: Thursday 6th April, 2023
TIME: 10.00 am
VENUE: Birkdale Room, Town Hall, Southport

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
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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 9 March 2023		(Pages 5 - 16)
4	Corporate Plan, Workforce Plan & Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Report of the Chief Executive	All Wards	(Pages 17 - 122)
* 5	Determination of Proposal to Expand the Age Range at Waterloo Primary School Report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education	Church; Victoria	(Pages 123 - 134)

6	<p>High Needs Funding 2022/23 - Quarterly Monitoring Update</p> <p>Report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education</p>	All Wards	(Pages 135 - 156)
* 7	<p>Supplementary Revenue Report Domestic Abuse New Burdens Funding</p> <p>Report of the Assistant Director of People (Communities)</p>	All Wards	(Pages 157 - 160)
* 8	<p>Climate Emergency Phase 2 Update</p> <p>Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services</p>	All Wards	(Pages 161 - 178)
9	<p>Exclusion of Press and Public</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Cabinet is recommended to pass the following resolution:</p> <p>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 item 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.</p>		
* 10	<p>Council Housing Business Plan - Exempt Appendix</p> <p>Report of the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing)</p>	All Wards	(Pages 179 - 220)
11	<p>Public Session</p> <p>The Cabinet meeting will now move back into open session to consider the following agenda item.</p>		

* 12 **Council Housing Business Plan**

All Wards

(Pages 221 -
278)

Report of the Assistant Director of Place
(Economic Growth and Housing)

THE "CALL IN" PERIOD FOR THIS SET OF MINUTES ENDS AT 12 NOON ON WEDNESDAY, 22 MARCH 2023.

CABINET

MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON THURSDAY 9TH MARCH, 2023

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

129. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hardy and Veidman.

130. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

131. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

132. EMERGENCY TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PROJECT

Further to Minute No 99 of the meeting held on 9 January 2020, the Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director of People (Communities) which provided an outline strategy for delivering a robust business case for the use of two properties for use as temporary accommodation and the associated high-level costs.

The report indicated that two properties are most suited for use as temporary accommodation, and that they can be configured into the following temporary accommodation units:

- Site 1 - 6 self-contained flats
- Site 2 - 7 self-contained flats

Across both sites this would deliver 8 x 1-bed units and 5 x 2-bed units.

This is the first phase of reviewing the properties for development and, subject to approval, further exercises will commence during the next six months.

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Decision Made: That

- (1) approval be given to the progression of a robust business case for this invest to save proposal and for officers to develop the implementation plan, subject to the completion of surveys;
- (2) approval be given to the development of the financial plan which will include financing the project through one, or a mix, of the following capital funding options:
 - a) Grant funding
 - b) Borrowing; and
- (3) it be noted that progress updates will be provided to Cabinet in Summer 2023.

Reasons for the Recommendations:

- (i) The project will reduce significant revenue costs in order to use those funds upstream on homeless prevention activities. Increases in homeless prevention will improve outcomes for households in Sefton by preventing evictions and homelessness.
- (ii) Increasing the portfolio of emergency temporary accommodation reduces the need to use nightly rate accommodation (e.g., hotels) which is subject to market demand. At times of high demand for this type of accommodation in Sefton, homeless households may need to be placed out of borough and at higher cost.
- (iii) Both properties are currently out of use and the condition is poor and in need of development.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. Sell the assets on the open market.

Independent valuations (February 2022) of the sites reported that the following capital receipts could be achieved, were the properties to be sold for the conversion of the properties to residential uses:

Site 1 £110,000

Site 2 £225,000

Risk: The impact is threefold.

Firstly, there would be the loss of potential accommodation for the most vulnerable in the community as the properties would likely be developed privately and yield unaffordable rents or sold on for profit.

Secondly, with the current cost of living increases it is highly likely that more households would have difficulty covering their accommodation

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costs leading to more evictions and increased homelessness. If savings on temporary accommodation are not realised, less prevention activity will be delivered.

Finally, temporary accommodation (e.g., hotels or other nightly rate accommodation) is currently funded through grants from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (the Homelessness Prevention Grant). If this grant was to reduce in future years, the cost of providing temporary accommodation to statutory homeless households would fall on the local authority.

2. Purchase similar sized accommodation across Sefton to use as temporary accommodation.

Properties on the open market (December 2022) of similar size and location to the units in this proposal are priced at between £100,000-£130,000 per unit. Based on purchasing 13 units the cost of this option could range between £1.3m-£1.69m.

Risk: The above figure is solely based on purchase price alone and many of the properties will need additional refurbishment work carried out to bring them up to standard. Acquiring this volume of properties could take much longer.

133. EXTENSION OF PARK AND RIDE BUS CONTRACT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) which sought approval for a six-month extension to the contract for the provision of the bus service for the Park and Ride operation in Southport and authority to procure a new contract for the operation of the Park and Ride bus service from the expiry date of the extended contract.

Decision Made: That

- (1) the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) be authorised to enter into a six-month extension to the contract for the provision of the bus service for the Park and Ride operation in Southport;
- (2) the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) be authorised to commence the procurement of a new contract to operate the Park and Ride bus service from the expiry date of the above extended contract; and
- (3) the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) be authorised in consultation with the Cabinet Member Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, to award a contract for a period of five years to the highest scoring Tenderer in the above procurement process.

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Reasons for the Decision:

To ensure continued provision of the service until the tender exercise can be completed and to secure a new contract once that exercise is completed.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Consideration was given to not extending the contract. This was rejected as this is not considered to be the best value option for the Council, for the reasons set out in the report.

134. PARKING AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT CONTRACT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) which sought approval to invite tenders through the appropriate procurement route for the provision of a parking and environmental enforcement, cash collection and car park management service.

Decision Made: That

- (1) approval be given to the tender process to procure the provision of a parking and environmental enforcement service as outlined in the report;
- (2) the contract be for period of five years from 1 October 2023; and
- (3) the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) be authorised in consultation with the Cabinet Member Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, to award a contract to the highest scoring Tenderer in the above procurement process.

Reasons for the Decision:

To ensure continued provision of a statutory service.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No other options have been considered.

135. PROVISION OF LIQUID FUELS

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services which sought approval to the proposed approach for the procurement of Liquid Fuels with effect from 22 November 2023.

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Decision Made: That

- (1) approval be given to Sefton Council sourcing the supply of Liquid Fuels via the new Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Liquid Fuels supply framework to be established with effect from 22 November 2023, for a maximum period of four years to 21 November 2027. The contract will be for two years with options for two one-year extensions.
- (2) the Assistant Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services (Strategic Support) be authorised in consultation with the Cabinet Member Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services to approve and implement the resulting supply arrangements to ensure uninterrupted service.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Council must procure quantities of liquid fuels to operate its daily business. Under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, the level of expenditure involved (approximately £965,300.00 per annum) requires that Pre-Procurement Approval is sought from Cabinet.

It is considered that the Council can best be assured of value for money, in terms of price and security of supply, by continued procurement through an external framework contract that is able to offer considerably more collaborative usage volume to the market than Sefton Council alone can offer.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The Council could decide not to continue procuring Liquid Fuels through an external framework and instead undertake its own procurement process. This process would need to be a procurement process compliant with the Public Contract Regulations and would take approximately six months to complete.

The significant risk in that, and the reason this option has not been recommended, is that it is considered that the separate procurement of lower volumes of fuel (i.e., Sefton Council procuring fuel alone) is certain to result in much higher unit prices, potentially greater fluctuation in price, and potentially less reliable supply, than if the Council pools its requirement with a significantly wider user group.

136. PROPOSED INSURANCE PROCUREMENT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services which sought approval for a procurement exercise to be undertaken for a new Insurance Contract, to ensure the continued provision of effective insurance and to secure the most advantageous position for the Council.

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Decision Made: That

- (1) approval be given to a procurement exercise been undertaken for a new insurance contract, to be effective from 29 September 2023 onwards, using the YPO Dynamic Purchasing System Framework Agreement for Insurance Placement DPS - 978 to enable a new contract to be implemented for three years with two one-year extensions; and
- (2) the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services be authorised in consultation with the Cabinet Member, Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services to award the contract (and any subsequent extension) to the highest scoring bidder from the procurement exercise to be undertaken in 2023/2024.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Council should tender the insurance programme to ensure that the Council obtains value for money in accordance with the Contract Procurement Rules. Use of the YPO Dynamic Purchasing System Framework Agreement DPS – 978 for Insurance Placement beyond September 2023 also offers the opportunity to access a large number of pre-vetted insurers, including any new entrants to the market.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Renewing with the existing insurance programme insurers would be in breach of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and would open the Council to challenge.

Council could self-insure and not insure through third parties. All claims including catastrophic claims would need to be paid for by the Council which the current financial budget is not designed to respond to. Insurance is designed to provide catastrophic cover for low likelihood but high financial impact. There are therefore not viable.

137. CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services which provided details of the progress made to implement the Council's Health and Safety policy during 2021/22.

Decision Made:

That the progress made on implementing the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy during 2021/22 be noted.

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Reasons for the Decision:

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

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

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

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services which provided details 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 January 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.

Decision Made:

Revenue Budget

- (1) the current position relating to the 2022/23 revenue budget be noted;
- (2) the actions being taken to offset the budget pressures being faced in 2022/23 be noted;
- (3) 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 remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved;
- (4) 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;

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Capital Programme

- (5) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 7.1) be noted;
- (6) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 January 2023 of £26.898m (paragraph 7.3); and the latest full year forecast of £43.493m (paragraph 7.4) be noted;
- (7) it be noted that 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 7.12-7.14);

Council Tax Support Fund

- (8) the intention to auto-award up to £25 to all Local Council Tax Support scheme claimants against their Council Tax Liability for 2023/24 in line with Government guidelines be noted;
- (9) approval be given to the amendment of the “Council Tax Reduction in Liability” Policy for 2023/24 to make additional discretionary awards, as described in Paragraph 8.5, to utilise the Government funding allocated to the Council;

Business Rates – Implementation of Local Discount Schemes for Retail, Hospitality, Leisure in 2023/24

- (10) approval be given to the implementation of the Business Rates Local Discount Scheme for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure in 2023/24 in line with the guidelines issued by the Government;

Business Rates – Implementation of Supporting Small Business Relief Scheme from 2023/24

- (11) approval be given to the implementation of the Business Rates Supporting Small Business Relief Scheme for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure in 2023/24 in line with the guidelines issued by the Government.

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.

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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:

None.

139. 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 had been published regarding the intention to consider the following matter in private for the reason set out below.

Decision Made:

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 item 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.

140. LAND AT FOUL LANE, SOUTHPORT - EXEMPT APPENDICES

The Cabinet considered exempt information provided by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services in relation to the Land at Foul Lane, Southport (Minute No. 141 below refers).

Decision Made:

That the exempt information be considered as part of the report in relation to the Land at Foul Lane, Southport (Minute No. 141 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.

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141. PUBLIC SESSION

Decision Made:

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

142. LAND AT FOUL LANE, SOUTHPORT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services which sought approval to complete the disposal of land at Foul Lane (the former park and ride site) in Southport to Homes England. Following the disposal, the site will be developed out as part of a larger residential development proposal, dependent upon the award of detailed planning consent.

The report indicated that a comprehensive review of the Council's asset base is being undertaken in phases, with assets defined as either supporting operational activity, having heritage value, being required to support the growth programme or being available for disposal. Land at Foul Lane was identified as being available for disposal to facilitate a housing redevelopment scheme in line with the site's designation in the Local Plan. Foul Lane was therefore included in the Asset Maximisation: Phase 2 Disposals Programme presented and approved by Cabinet on 24 June 2021.

Homes England approached the Council in Autumn 2022 seeking to acquire the site at Foul Lane, Southport, as they had recently acquired the adjoining site known as Land at Crowland Street, which is also allocated for housing redevelopment in the Local Plan. Acquiring the site at Foul Lane will provide Homes England with single ownership of a site in excess of 63 acres, which will be subject to a detailed master plan and a planning application to deliver a policy compliant housing scheme.

Decision Made: That

- (1) the agreed Heads of Terms for the disposal of Land at Foul Lane, Southport, as detailed within Appendix 2 of the report be approved;
- (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 the Capital Accounting Regulations be approved; and
- (3) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be authorised to complete the necessary legal formalities.

Reasons for the Decision:

This property transaction ensures delivery of new housing in line with the site's allocation in the Local Plan and allows the land at Foul Lane and

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land at Crowland Street to be brought forward as single master plan and delivered over a number of phases.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

(Option 1 – “*Do nothing*”: do not dispose of the site to Homes England. The Council would retain the former park and ride site.

Risk: the site would likely remain vacant and on the Council asset register. There would be ongoing holding costs liability and no capital receipt would be received.

Option 2 – “*Redevelop the Foul Lane site in isolation*”: the Council could look to secure outline planning consent and to dispose of the site on market to a housebuilder.

Risk: completion of land transaction would move into a later financial year and make delivery of a single, well-designed housing scheme difficult due to the need for combine sewers across sites and potential need for construction vehicular access to be provided to the Crowland Street site, which would cause disruption for residents.

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Report to:	Cabinet Council	Date of Meeting:	6 April 2023 20 April 2023
Subject:	Corporate Plan, Workforce Plan & Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy		
Report of:	Chief Executive	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing, Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report presents the Corporate Plan, Workforce Plan & Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to Cabinet for consideration and subject to comment recommendation to Council.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to:

- (1) consider the draft Corporate Plan and subject to comment, recommend the draft Corporate Plan to Council for approval;
- (2) note that the next Corporate Peer Challenge is planned for 21 to 24 November 2023;
- (3) consider the draft Workforce Plan and subject to comment, recommend the draft Workforce Plan to Council for approval; and
- (4) consider the draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and subject to comment recommend the draft Strategy to Council for approval.

Council is asked to approve the draft Corporate Plan, draft Workforce Plan and draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To agree the draft Corporate Plan, Workforce Plan & Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities for the next three years and

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these are underpinned by achieving financial sustainability, the Workforce Plan, the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and living our values.

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 revenue costs arising from this report. Any financial implications from specific activities will be addressed as part of the development of the proposal

(B) Capital Costs- There are no direct capital costs arising from this report. Any financial implications from specific activities will be addressed as part of the development of the proposal

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
Legal Implications:	
Equality Implications: The equality Implications have been identified and risk remains, the three draft documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to reducing inequalities.	
Impact on Children and Young People: Yes The draft Corporate Plan articulates the vision for Children's Services and the work that will be undertaken to improve outcomes for children and their families. The draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy recognises that Council have agreed care experience should be treated like a protected characteristic.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	Yes
Have a neutral impact	No
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
The draft Corporate Plan recognises the Council's commitment to being a carbon neutral and climate resilient organisation by 2030.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: All three of these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable.
The draft Corporate Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to be a good Corporate Parent.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: All three of these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to facilitating confident and resilient communities.
Commission, broker and provide core services: All three of these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering its Core Purpose.
Place – leadership and influencer: All three of these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering its Core Purpose.
Drivers of change and reform: All three of these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering its Core Purpose.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: All three of these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering its Core Purpose.
Greater income for social investment: All three of these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering its Core Purpose.
Cleaner Greener: All three of these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering its Core Purpose.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7188/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5388/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

The Corporate Equalities Group has considered the draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

(B) External Consultations

A range of partners have considered the draft Corporate Plan.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Council meeting.

Contact Officer:	Jan McMahan
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Appendices:

Appendix A Draft Corporate Plan

Appendix B Draft Workforce Plan

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Appendix C Draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the Corporate Plan, Workforce Strategy & Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to Cabinet for consideration and subject to comment recommendation to Council.

2. Corporate Plan

- 2.1 As part of the Council's response to the feedback to the Local Government Association Peer Challenge Revisit in April 2022 a draft Corporate Plan is presented to Cabinet at appendix A for consideration and subject to comment recommendation to Council.

- 2.2 The draft Corporate Plan contains the Council's priorities for the next three years

- Children & Young People
- Health & Wellbeing
- Adult Social Care
- Working for Our Communities Every Day
- Inclusive Growth

- 2.3 The priorities are underpinned by achieving financial sustainability, the Workforce Plan, the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and living our values.

- 2.4 The draft has been developed from existing strategies and recognises the work that has already been undertaken and as such has been shared with partners and the workforce.

- 2.5 The Corporate Plan will run for a three year period and that progress will be reported to Cabinet on an annual basis. Delivery of the plan will be monitored through existing mechanisms and plans such as the Children's Improvement Plan and Service Plans.

- 2.6 Cabinet members are asked to consider the draft Corporate Plan and subject to comment recommend the draft Corporate Plan to Council for approval.

- 2.7 Alongside the introduction of the Corporate Plan it is intended to refresh the approach to Service Planning. Good service planning is a cornerstone of effective performance management and provides a solid foundation, keeping priorities and principles firm, even in times of change. They link how services are contributing to the delivery the Vision 2030, the Core Purpose and Corporate Plan through to individual appraisals.

- 2.8 Cabinet is asked to note that the next the Corporate Peer Challenge planned for 21 to 24 November 2023.

3. Workforce Plan

- 3.1 The draft Workforce Plan, appendix B outlines the vision for the Council, values and behaviours, and the priorities to be focused on to achieve our vision.

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3.2 The Council needs to continually develop and evolve to meet the needs of residents, communities, businesses and indeed its workforce. That pace of change has been in place for many years now and was further impacted during the pandemic when what the Council delivered and how, changed fundamentally. This once again demonstrated the value, skills and flexibility of the Council's workforce.

3.3 The next few years will present a different set of challenges and opportunities for Sefton and the Council's workforce, and the Workforce Plan outlines how the Council is planning to respond.

3.4 Cabinet members are asked to consider the draft Workforce Plan and subject to comment recommend the draft Workforce Plan to Council for approval.

4. Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

4.1 The draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Appendix C, aims to make the Council a more inclusive and diverse place for people to work, recognises the need to work with partners to remove barriers for under-represented groups across Sefton and demonstrates the Council's commitment to improve inclusivity in Sefton.

4.2 The draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy reaffirms the Council's commitment to recognising care experience as a protected characteristic.

4.3 The draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy also recognises the work the Council needs to prioritise internally.

4.4 Cabinet members are asked to consider the draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and subject to comment recommend the draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to Council for approval.

5. Equality Implications

5.1 The Equality Act 2010 says public authorities must comply with the public sector equality duty. In carrying out their functions, they need to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- Age

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

- 5.2 In Sefton, a motion was approved by Council, at its meeting on 19th January 2023 to treat Care Experience, as a protected characteristic. This decision is recognised in the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- 5.3 All three draft documents demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to reducing inequality.

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Sefton Council Corporate Plan 2023 to 2026

A confident and connected borough that offers the things we all need to start, live and age well, where everyone has a fair chance of a positive and healthier future.





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Foreword



Welcome to our 2023 – 2026 Corporate Plan which builds on our achievements of recent years and brings together our priorities for the next three years. It is underpinned by our Workforce Strategy and values. Our ambition is for Sefton to be a confident and connected borough that offers the things we

all need to start, live and age well, where everyone has a fair chance of a positive and healthier future.

Local people are at the heart of our plan, and we will continue to work with our partners to reduce the many inequalities that exist across Sefton.

Safeguarding children, with our partners, is our highest priority and improving services for children and their families will be at the heart of everything we do. Our Children’s Services team continues to face high demand and increases in complexity of need. The actions in our Improvement Plan identify the steps we are taking to make the required changes. Most importantly we will ensure that we listen to our children as we develop and implement our plans. I know that every councillor and member of staff in Sefton is committed to being a good Corporate Parent and we, with our partners, will do all we can to raise aspiration for the children that we care for and keep children safe.

Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy “Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025” is directed towards large scale, meaningful changes on the big issues which matter to people who live, study and work here. Our ambitions are for better and more equal health and wellbeing spanning all the way from pregnancy and the start of life, to the close of our lives, it is not just about health and care services. This is because we know that the most powerful changes come from creating more of the right conditions and opportunities for people’s health to thrive. We want

people to live as independently as possible for as long as possible.

Every day we deliver many diverse services to our communities, empty bins, maintaining parks and our beautiful coast, supporting people during the Cost of Living Crisis and much more. I know that these services make such a difference to everyday life and this plan brings together our priorities for these much valued services.

We will continuously act on our commitments to be a net zero organisation by 2030, we will continue to focus our efforts on energy use reduction as well as exploring the potential for green infrastructure and offsetting.

At the heart of the Council’s activity is the requirement and clear objective to deliver and maintain financial sustainability, make every pound count, invest wisely and creatively to make and save money and celebrate diversity. Delivering Value for money for our residents is critical.

Our Growth Programme brings together the steps that we are taking to deliver 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 to achieve their ambitions, and the benefits of growth are maximised for the people and places of Sefton. Ultimately this is about more and better jobs for local people.

None of our priorities can be delivered without the diverse talents, skills and commitment of our workforce and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for everything they do.

Cllr. Ian Maher
Labour Leader, Sefton Council

Our Priorities

Children & Young People - Improving outcomes for children and their families

Health & Wellbeing - Improving the health and wellbeing of everyone in Sefton and reduce inequality

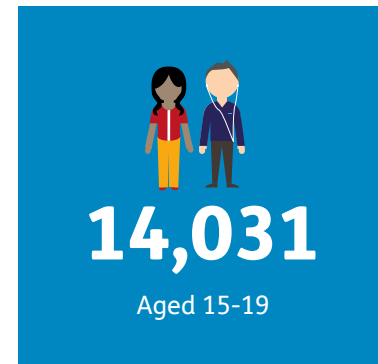
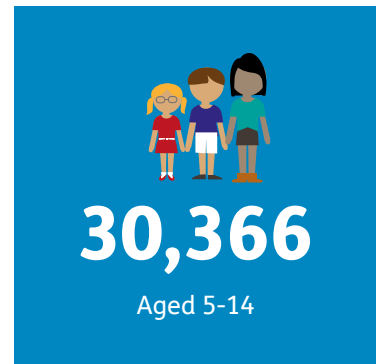
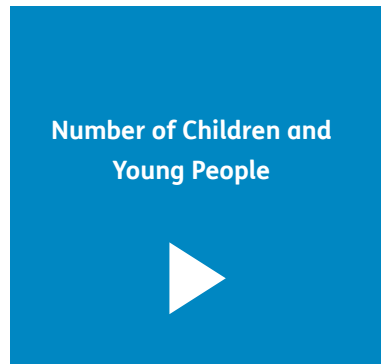
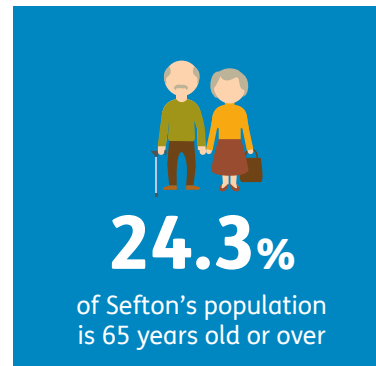
Adult Social Care - Empowering people to live an independent life, exercise choice and control, and be fully informed

Financial Sustainability

Working for Our Communities Every Day - Working together to deliver affordable services which achieve the best possible outcomes for our communities

Inclusive Growth - Creating more and better jobs for local people

About Sefton



Our Core Purpose

- **Protect the most vulnerable:** i.e., those children and adults who have complex care needs with no capacity to care for themselves and no other networks to support them. For those who are the most vulnerable we will have a helping role to play, we will challenge others to ensure we all protect the most vulnerable children and adults and where we need to, we will intervene to help improve lives.
- **Facilitate confident and resilient communities:** the Council will be less about doing things to and for residents and communities and more about creating the capacity and motivation for people to get involved, do it for themselves and help one another. We will create an environment in which residents are less reliant.

- **Commission, broker and provide core services:** the Council will directly deliver fewer services but will act as a broker and commissioner of services which meet the defined needs of communities, are person-centred and localised where possible.
- **Place-leadership and influencer:** making sure what we and what others do are in the best interests of Sefton and its residents and has a contributing role to the 2030 vision of the borough. The Council will use data and feedback from our communities, children and young people in shaping plans. The Council will demonstrate strong leadership and influence partner organisations to:
 - work towards common goals
 - deliver the best opportunities and outcomes for the children in young people in and leaving our care by being good Corporate Parents
 - deliver the best opportunities and outcomes for residents and every child in Sefton
 - ensure Sefton is a child, older person and disability friendly place and build pride in the borough.
- **Drivers of change and reform:** the Council will play a key role in leading change and reform to improve outcomes for Sefton residents, every child's future and continuously improve the borough.
- **Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:** that is, people having the level of money they need to take care of themselves and their family; creating the conditions where relatively low unemployment and high income prevail, leading to high purchasing power; opportunities for future generations and having enough money to invest in infrastructure.
- **Generate income for social reinvestment:** the Council will develop a commercial nature and look to what it can do either by itself or with others to generate income and profit that can be reinvested into delivering social purpose and preparing for the future.
- **Cleaner and Greener:** the Council will work with others to act as guardians and protect and maintain Sefton's natural beauty and ensure that its many assets can be enjoyed by everyone and future generations and provide a contribution to Sefton's economy, people's wellbeing and the achievement of the 2030 Vision.



How we work

The Council works hard to ensure what we and others do is in the best interests of Sefton and our residents through true collaboration, mutual trust and rigorous prioritisation.

Our Workforce

Our workforce is our greatest asset, engaging and developing them is key to improving outcomes for our communities. Our Workforce Plan aims to enable the Council to achieve real and lasting change and to get ready for the challenges ahead. This plan has been developed by cross section of staff from across the organisation. We aim to make sure we are focused on our priorities under a One Council (single team) approach with joined up thinking, actions and making sure we deliver what we promise.

Our Governance

The Council is composed of 66 Councillors with one-third elected annually (three years in every four) for a term of four years.

The Cabinet comprises of the Leader of the Council and nine Cabinet Members of the Council. Each has responsibility for a defined portfolio.





Our Finance

The Council has a proven track record in sound financial management. We will ensure the Council is financially sustainable through effective medium term planning, delivers value for money and manages effectively within available resources at a time of ongoing cost inflation, increased demand and need. Long term financial sustainability is key to delivering the objectives of the council and value for money.

We will make all of our service decisions taking into account financial implications and the impact on the wider Council's long term financial position.

Wherever possible, we will spend our money locally to support local businesses and organisations and seek to maximise social value.

The Council will look to build on the successful bids for Government, City Region and other funds to ramp up our capital investment programme, promoting growth and economic resilience locally and expect to continue this work over the lifetime of this plan.

Our Partnerships

The role of the Council is unique in delivering change, sometimes we contribute directly to it, but we also play a unique role in convening partners, mobilising action and developing support for our collective work.

The Council's partnership arrangements are many and include the Sefton Partnership (Health & Social Care), Sefton Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Sefton Adults Safeguarding Board, Safer Sefton Together Partnership, SEND Improvement Board, Early Help Partnership Board, Sefton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, Southport Town Deal Board, Sefton Economic Forum and Bootle Local Partnership Group. We will work with our partners to raise aspiration, work towards common goals and build a sense of pride and belonging in the borough, together we will have a greater impact. We will galvanise our partners to ensure that we are all working together as good Corporate Parents.

We recognise that as the needs of Sefton's communities change over time we must adapt and continuously improve the way we work together, in order to facilitate changes which have a positive, lasting impact on the lives and wellbeing of local people. To help achieve this, since 2015, we have established an operational framework, [New Realities](#), that strengthens working relationships between the local authority and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.

Our Communities

The voice of our communities was central to shaping our Vision 2030 and we will continue to focus on ensuring that all people continue to have a powerful and meaningful voice to shape the future of the Sefton and the services provided by the Council.

We want Sefton to be a place where children and young people can grow up happy, safe and secure, with a voice that matters and so that they get the opportunities they need to thrive.

The [Public Engagement and Consultation Framework](#), outlines a set of principles, standards for consultation and engagement and the work of the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel.

Our commitment to equality goes beyond complying with our statutory duties. We are determined to remove barriers and supporting individuals and families to reach their full potential.



How we will drive system wide delivery

Through continuous engagement with our partners, we will deliver joined up plans. Existing governance and partnership arrangements will oversee the delivery of key strategies and action plans that underpin this plan. Cabinet will oversee the progress made against this plan on an annual basis.



Delivering Our Priorities

Children & Young People - Improving outcomes for children and their families.

Vision for Children's Services – we want our all of our services to enable and support every child, young person and family to reach their full potential.

What we want to see



All children having a happy and healthy start in life

The Council and its partners are good Corporate Parents

More local Foster Carers

Stability and capacity in the workforce

The voices of children and young people are heard and influence change

Children are protected from exploitation and have access to trauma informed support

Children are safeguarded and feel safe to live at home with their families

Children with additional needs and vulnerabilities feel safe and supported

Children and young people feel like they belong and are proud of their neighbourhood

Families have access to increased and effective targeted early help support to ensure problems are addressed earlier

Children, young people and their families have access to good information and advice and early help

All children and young people enjoying a positive educational experience with education and training unlocking the door for every child

A range of services to address both the short and long term impact of domestic violence and abuse

Tackling child poverty with our partners at the heart of our role as a service provider, educator, employer and community leader

Children with Complex Needs and their families have access to effective and timely support



So Far We Have

Stable Workforce

We have

- strengthened the Children’s Services leadership and management team
- introduced a Social Work Academy
- improved our recruitment and retention offer
- created a working environment in which senior leaders are visible and staff feel supported

Being a Good Corporate Parent

We have

- recognised Care Experienced as a protected characteristic
- introduced a mentorship scheme for care experienced young people
- launched the Caring Business Charter

Tackling Child Poverty

We have

- agreed our Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan
- supported families with holiday meals and activities

Good Information & Advice and Early Help

We have

- refreshed the Local Offer for SEND
- created and launched a new approach to Targeted Family Support for those families who need intensive interventions
- commissioned integrated advocacy services
- realigned Targeted Early Help to Children’s Services
- created a Family Support team for Children With Complex Needs
- launched a pilot fostering support service for CWCN and their families

Access to good education, employment and training opportunities

We have

- co-produced our Education Strategy
- strengthened our relationships with schools

- reviewed and strengthened the schools causing concern protocols
- introduced electronic Personal Education Plans for cared for children and provided training for schools and social workers

Pride and Listening to children and young people

We have

- refreshed the Consultation & Engagement Framework
- increased the number of Participation Officers
- built on the MAD group and Youth Ambassadors
- created a young people’s room within our Children Services department



Next We Will

Stable Workforce

We will

- step up our recruitment activity to reduce the number of Social Worker vacancies
- develop our managers
- develop the wider Children's workforce to better support children and their families
- continue to recruit to our Social Work Academy
- maintain a relentless focus on practice improvement
- create pathways of CPD for the workforce using our SW Academy

Being a Good Corporate Parent

We will

- work with partners to deliver our Children's Improvement Plan
- embed the seven principles for Corporate Parenting and refresh our Corporate Parenting Strategy
- ensure elected members receive additional training and support to ensure that they know how to effectively discharge their duties
- take action to help cared for children and care experienced young people to access opportunities and support

Tackling Child Poverty

We will

- deliver the Child Poverty Action Plan by working with partners, parents and carers
- lobby for further investment in Sefton children and their families

Good Information & Advice and Early Help

We will

- develop our Early Help offer to better meet the needs of children and their families offering support to access the right help at the right time
- support children with special educational needs and disabilities and support parent/carers, and ensure equality of access to our universal services

Access to good education, employment and training opportunities

We aim to

- raise aspiration for all our children and young people
- reduce educational inequalities

We will

- deliver our Education Strategy Action Plan and SEND Improvement Plan
- work with early years providers and schools to improve access and attainment
- work with our partners to improve education and training opportunities for young people

Pride and Listening to children and young people

We aim to

- help build tolerant communities that value all children and young people giving them opportunities to positively contribute to their neighbourhood

We will

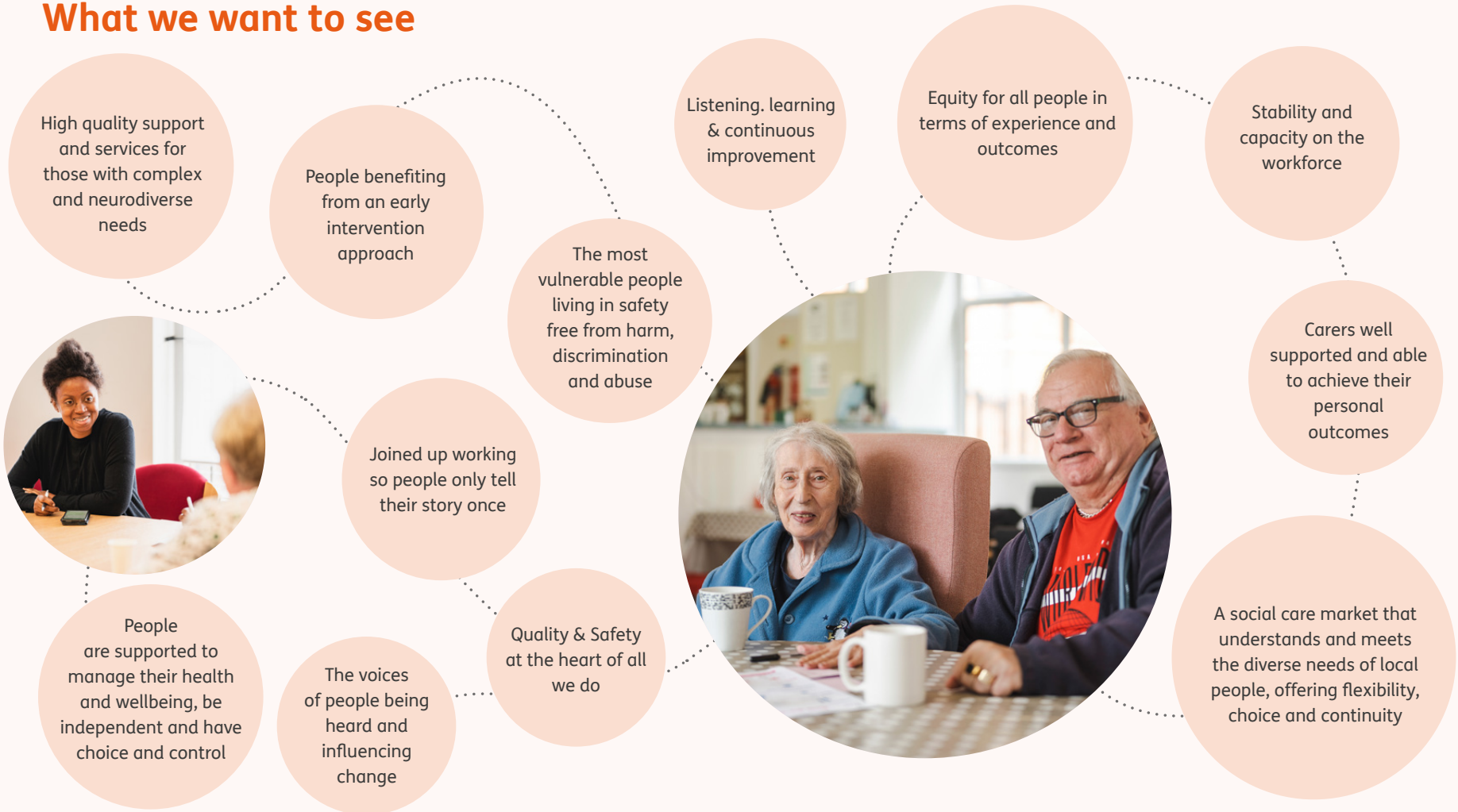
- listen to children and young people by ensuring that barriers to participation and progress are addressed using multiple techniques and methods so we can hear the voice of the child
- work closely with partners and key youth groups to ask questions, clarify understanding and give them the opportunities to be engaged in decision making processes and have as much influence as possible
- refresh the Children & Young People's Plan
- co-produce a Belonging Strategy



Adult Social Care

Vision for Adult Social Care – we want to offer care and support that empowers people to live an independent life, exercise choice and control, and be fully informed.

What we want to see





So Far We Have



Leadership and workforce

We have

- strengthened our leadership capacity
- collaborated with health colleagues to develop a Sefton Leadership Programme
- sought to strengthen front line recruitment including “growing local talent” through apprenticeships
- strengthened our governance and oversight arrangements
- worked with Providers to develop and implement Partnership groups and forums

Early intervention

We have

- developed our digital strategy
- worked collaboratively with our health and care colleagues to strengthen our rapid response offer, intermediate care and home first services
- introduced a Mental Health Recovery Team
- adopted a strength - based approach to supporting people and carers

Integrated working

We have

- worked with partners to create a Sefton Partnership Board
- introduced Integrated Care Teams with our colleagues from Health and Primary Care
- moved to ensure that Health and Social Care commissioners are now co-located

Social Care Market

We have

- refreshed our market position statement and market sustainability plan
- worked with care providers to provide additional support regarding the recruitment and retention of the workforce.

- engaged with local people to review our day opportunities and make plans to transform services
- focused on increasing the availability of domiciliary care and care at home
- supported local providers through our single handed care programme and occupational therapy support
- improved our offer to better support wellbeing and independence at home

Quality

We have

- started to prepare for the new national assurance framework for Adult Social Care
- invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Peer Review of our services
- introduced a new quality assurance framework and professional practice forum
- maintained strong links with regional colleagues

Safeguarding

We have

- strengthened our Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (SSAPB) and appointed an Independent Chair
- developed a Communication Plan and increased the use of social media to promote local, regional and national focus on adult safeguarding
- created detailed Work Plans for SSAPB with focus on communication, quality and process along with wellbeing and learning.
- continued to ensure high quality training is available for all practitioners undertaking adult safeguarding work.
- worked closely with partners and providers to identify learning opportunities through lived experience resulting in the creation of learning materials for use by professionals and communities alike and improved service delivery.

Next We Will

Leadership and workforce

We will

- develop an integrated workforce strategy with Sefton Place Colleagues.
- support the wider workforce market working with regional partners to develop a Care Academy.
- focus on inclusive leadership to develop greater awareness and planning for Sefton's diverse communities.
- continue to grow our own and develop careers progression opportunities.
- develop our approach across services and our market place, to early help and prevention
- codesign with people and partners our Annual Assessment Quality Assurance Framework

Early intervention

We will

- develop and codesign with people and partners our earlier help and prevention strategy
- introduce more support options through the provision of extra care housing
- improve the accessibility of our information and advice
- Increase the availability of reablement services and enhance our Home First Service

Integrated working

We will

- engage with local people and carers to codesign opportunities
- engage further with people who access and use our services to develop a strength based approach
- review and redesign our support arrangements for people with complex and neuro diverse needs
- better align with Health Commissioning to offer integrated joined up service offers
- focus on integrated teams, including co-location, digital records and renewed vision and priorities.

- codesign with young people and families our approach to children's transitions to adulthood

Social Care Market

We will

- work with Providers to support them to adapt their services
- put in place new arrangements for Care at Home services
- work in partnership across the health and care system in Sefton

Quality

We will

- implement a communication, engagement, codesign and consult programme.
- further develop and deliver an integrated quality framework
- develop a strength - focused charter kite mark with our market place
- strengthen how we learn from adverse events and provider failure
- continue to ensure that our commissioning activity has a key focus on providing high quality services that are focused on meeting peoples desired outcomes
- codesign with people/ partners and communities our inclusion and diversity approach

Safeguarding

We will

- continue to work with people to understand what safe means to them
- review our pathways, processes and ways of working.
- continue to deliver quality learning opportunities.
- further support the work and influence of the Sefton Safeguarding Adults Board

Health & Wellbeing

What we want to see



People connected across generations

As people grow older, they can access support, tailored to their needs which respects their dignity and individual preferences.

Sefton is a place where it is easy to be healthy and happy



Our communities and the built environment meeting the needs of people as they get older, through age and disability friendly towns, communities, services, housing and transport

Every child and young person having a successful transition to adulthood

Older people staying active, connected, involved and valued in their communities

Health, care and wellbeing services across the wider system working together to support individuals, carers, families, and communities

Everyone having a fulfilling role which can support their needs, with opportunities to contribute, learn and progress

Every child achieving the best start in their first 1001 days



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



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Agenda Item 4

So Far We Have

Start Well

We have

- refreshed the Mental Health Toolkit for schools
- developed a renewed 0-19 service
- developed integrated models for key worker, gateway reviews and implemented regional improvements to Mental Health Services

Live Well

We have

- delivered integrated Mental Health reablement offers
- delivered Crisis cafes to deliver community based responses to mental health needs
- delivered community based diagnostic hubs and health on the high street model
- improved our self assessment process and access to adaptations
- delivered increased number of technology enabled care and embedded this in Social Work practice

Age Well

We have

- increased our Domiciliary Care market and redesigned our offer
- delivered a new 2 hour and rapid response service to meet discharge and hospital avoidance demand,
- supported the Care Home Market with training and development offers, market sustainability funding and enhanced care from GP's and Community health teams

All Age

We have

- delivered a new integrated advocacy service
- worked with the Carers centre to plan and deliver a new integrated Cares service

Integration

We have

- delivered a mature Sefton Partnership to bring Health and Care Partners together to take key decisions on the delivery and transformation of Health and Care in Sefton
- established joint accountability through shared leadership, a single Place Director for health and social care, aligned teams and an medium term plan for expanded joint budgets

Voice

We have

- delivered co-produced consultations on Day Opportunities and Supported living
- developed a co-production standard



Next We Will

Start Well

We will

- promote partnership working including joint commissioning so we can invest in children and young people's futures
- update our Cared For Sufficiency Strategy

Live Well

We will

- develop the Adult Social Care Strategy and Action Plan
- deliver a new offer for Day Opportunities and Supported Living

Age Well

We will

- deliver a new Domiciliary Care offer
- deliver a Market Sustainability plan and work with the Care Market to deliver a fair cost of care and remodelled market for older people
- continue to deliver our Technology Enabled Care Strategy supporting more people to benefit from digital and technology enable care offers.

All Age

We will

- encourage all ages and abilities to get involved with physical activity
- promote tech enabled care
- deliver against our end of life strategy
- remodel our Carer offer

Integration

We will

- deliver a Place Delivery Plan
- further align teams
- develop our Integrated Care Teams including co locating and shared care records

Voice

We will

- ensure the voice of those that use and deliver services can be heard and become a key part of service improvements and development as standard





Sefton's Health & Wellbeing Across the Lifecourse

Current Population 279,231

52,998 Under 18s 161,467 18-64 64,766 65+



KEY

Statistical significance to England:
 Green circle: Better
 Yellow circle: No different
 Red circle: Worse

Direction of travel:
 Green arrow up: Improved since last period
 Yellow arrow right: Similar to last period
 Red arrow down: Worse than last period
 Black square: No comparator

Based on a template from Halton Public Health Intelligence Team and work produced by Centre for Public Health, Liverpool John Moores University. Icons made by Flaticon and available here: www.flaticon.com

Working for Our Communities Every Day

Our vision for every day services – our work contributes to people feeling happy and safe in their neighbourhood.

What we want to see





So Far We Have

Help & support

We have

- continued to support local people experiencing severe hardship, a disaster or emergency.
- worked with our partners to create warm hubs where people feel welcome and safe
- invested in our digital infrastructure and skills to reduce digital exclusion
- ensured our libraries, leisure the Atkinson and family well being centres are the community footprint for help and advice and encourage healthy lifestyles

Good, affordable housing

We have

- agreed a new Housing Strategy
- agreed a new Selective Licensing and Additional (HMO) Licensing Schemes
- launched our own housing company
- developed a Homeless and Rough Sleeping Action Plan

Safe, Connected Neighbourhoods

We have

- secured funding for improvements to highways, public transport and more, the £3.8 million funding from developers will also help boost primary school provision and improved health facilities.
- agreed our partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy & Action Plan
- agreed our partnership Community Safety Strategy
- started preparing for Environment Act implementation

Climate Change

We have

- progressed our Climate Emergency Action Plan
- started to install energy efficient street lighting
- accessed government funding for public building decarbonisation

Spaces for everyone to enjoy

We have

- protected our coast for all to enjoy
- increased the facilities for visitors to our coast
- worked with friends of groups to make our green spaces enjoyable for everyone

Pride & Voice

We have

- refreshed our partnership Consultation & Engagement Framework
- created new diverse staff groups
- celebrated our local heroes and diverse communities
- supported local projects through Sefton Crowd



Next We Will

Help & support

We will

- work with our partners and local people to minimise the impact of food and fuel poverty
- continue to support the diverse needs of communities through early help

Good, affordable housing

We will

- deliver the Local Plan
- continue our work with partners to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping

Safe, Connected Neighbourhoods

We will

- work with our partners and local people to minimise the impact digital exclusion
- work with partners to deliver the Domestic Abuse Action Plan
- work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver our community safety priorities set out in our plan
- implement the Highways Capital Programme, to maintain and improve transport infrastructure and connectivity

Climate Change

We will

- continue to reduced the Council’s carbon footprint
- continue the installation of energy efficient street lighting
- encourage active travel and improvements in air quality



Spaces for everyone to enjoy

We will

- help build tolerant communities that value all everyone as members and give them positive opportunities to contribute
- deliver everyday services to the best possible standards
- encourage biodiversity, recycling and responsible waste disposable
- deliver the Community Safety Strategy Action Plan

Pride & Voice

We aim to

- help build tolerant communities that value all children and young people giving them opportunities to positively contribute to their neighbourhood

We will

- celebrate and champion diversity, local pride, our amazing volunteers and culture
- work with our communities to strengthen community voice
- lobby for a fair funding settlement for Sefton



Growth

What we want to see



Regenerated Places



People enjoy visiting Sefton



The voices of local businesses are heard and influence change



Inclusive Growth



People have support to access employment opportunities





So Far We Have

Inclusive Growth

We have

- refreshed the Sefton Economic Strategy
- agreed the Social Value Policy including the incorporation of our new Caring Business Charter
- embedded key social value objectives and outcomes into procurement activities, lease and other contractual agreements
- secured the second largest Town Deal for a single town in the country for Southport – including for the £73m Marine Lake Events Centre
- delivered affordable quality homes across the borough via Sandway Homes

Access to Employment

We have

- are delivering the Restart contract, engaging with local employers across the borough
- have delivered quality employment and career opportunities via Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited

Regenerated Places

We have regenerated

- Southport Market, a new food and drink offer that has galvanised footfall and investment in that part of the town centre
- Lake House, Waterloo, supporting elevation of our brand proposition for visitors and offering quality employment and career opportunities for local people
- Cambridge Road, enhancing underused assets to deliver positive social outcomes in our communities
- Bootle Canalside, bringing a more diverse range of uses and events to the town centre, driving increased footfall in the Strand and beyond

Visiting Sefton

We have

- proactively marketed Sefton as a visitor destination

- created a programme of high-quality events of regional significant, driving up visitor numbers
- procured ASM the world’s leading venue management company and producer of live experiences as the preferred operating partner for the Marine Lake Events Centre project

Voice

We have

- the Economic Forum to engage with the business community
- the Growth Hub Marketplace where businesses can see what help and support is available across the Liverpool City Region.
- Southport Town Deal board, plus a Shadow Board comprising young people from across the town
- Local Partnership Groups in place in Southport and Bootle
- Shadow Boards in Southport and Bootle to capture youth voice on strategies and projects



Next We Will

Inclusive Growth

We will

- deliver the repurposing of the Strand shopping centre in Bootle
- support small and medium-sized business growth across the borough
- continue to collaborate with key stakeholders and groups to design and develop projects with inclusivity at front of mind throughout

Access to Employment

We will

- build on SHOL's successful start to deliver business growth and create further quality career opportunities with the company
- promote greater inclusivity in employment across the borough
- widen implementation of the Caring Business Charter, securing employment and work experienced opportunities for young people with care experience across the borough.

Regenerated Places

We will

- progress the regeneration of Bootle Canalside, Southport Pier, Les Transformations de Southport and Crosby village centre and library
- proactively bid for funding from government and from the Combined Authority
- stimulate inward investment via delivery of catalytic projects
- work collaboratively with current and prospective partners to secure new investment across the borough

Visiting Sefton

We will

- continue our work to deliver the Marine Lake Events Centre project
- develop the Bootle Canalside "Salt and Tar" site and events programme, and continue to progress our ambitious vision for the future of Bootle town centre
- progress our works on Southport Pier
- align with the regional visitor proposition and major events elsewhere in the region

Voice

We will

- proactively engage with all stakeholders to ensure we capture breadth and diversity of perspectives
- learn and develop to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of our consultation and engagement activities
- continue to capture the voice of children and young people at strategy and project level across our growth and strategic investment programme



Key Documents

Health & Wellbeing Strategy

Child Poverty Strategy

Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2022-2025

Digital Inclusion Strategy-2022

Accessible-communications-policy-2020.pdf (sefton.gov.uk)

New Realities 2021 (sefton.gov.uk)

Economic Strategy Update

Children's Improvement Plan

Children & Young People's Plan

Sefton Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2028









Sefton Council 

'A Confident and Connected Borough'

Workforce Plan 2022-2026

Sefton
2030

Ready for the future

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Foreword by Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive



Dwayne Johnson
Chief Executive

In Sefton, we recognise that our people are our greatest asset and understand that we need to engage with employees and support them to promote and maintain stability in the workplace, which in turn benefits the work we do.

We are committed to getting the best out of our employees and know that this is easier if they are happy coming into work; feel valued, supported, and heard. We want all employees in Sefton to have opportunities to develop and to be able to achieve a good work life balance. It is important for me to highlight that diversity and difference will not prevent anyone from achieving great things in Sefton. Everybody deserves opportunities in the workplace.

During recent years, the way we work has changed significantly with increased use of technology; the need for new skills and continuous learning to keep abreast of change. Agile working has increased, and we have become more focused on our health and wellbeing ensuring we strike the right work life balance and provide safe working conditions for our people whether they be working directly with our residents or children and young people or most vulnerable, working from home or in our office bases or interfacing with the business community and local people.

Moving forward more efficiencies and savings are required and income generation opportunities need to be maximised. Despite the challenges, we are heading into exciting times, this workforce plan will provide a platform to extend our transformation journey, whilst prioritising key actions we will need to focus on as an organisation.

This Workforce Strategy will be supported by a programme that ensures all plans and actions are prioritised, coordinated, and embedded in all areas of the Council. Our commitment to Sefton's 2030 vision and our Core Purpose will continue to be our priority.

Foreword by Councillor Paulette Lappin



Councillor Paulette Lappin
Cabinet Member for Regulatory,
Compliance and Corporate
Services

I have been the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services since May 2015 and it has given me great satisfaction to see the improvements we continue to make in the Council. The aim of the Workforce Strategy is to enable the Council to achieve real and lasting change and to plan for the challenges ahead. I will ensure, where we can, that we work collectively to achieve the maximum benefits and efficiencies for Sefton, our partners, and communities.

My intention is that this Workforce Strategy becomes a “living” document and is widely owned in the Council, both by my Elected Member colleagues and employees at all levels of the organisation.

As the portfolio member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, I will take an active role in the implementation of the strategy and will report to Cabinet the key achievements that result from the action plan.

The Council has embraced the challenge of implementing a workforce plan that will take us on a journey to continue improving the organisation and I am proud to have responsibility for this work as part of my portfolio.

Welcome to the Council's Workforce Plan. This plan provides an essential framework to help us to efficiently and effectively utilise our workforce to help us deliver Sefton's 2030 vision.

Workforce Plan 2022–2026

Our Workforce Plan outlines the vision for the Council, our values and behaviours, and the priorities we will focus on to achieve our vision. These priorities are then further developed in directorates and services to set the focus for each area within the council. These strategies help us understand and plan for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Our Core Purpose outlines the Council's priorities and the actions we will focus on to achieve our partnership Vision 2030. Our Core Purpose describes how we intend to achieve our aims and objectives based on the feedback from partners who took part in the Imagine Sefton 2030 consultation process.

When read together with the Core Purpose, our Workforce Plan describes how we will develop our workforce. Together they describe the priorities the Council will pursue, the resources available to achieve these, and the shape, culture, and processes which the Council's workforce will adopt to meet the challenges of the future.

We recognise that we are on an improvement journey with our Children Services and because of our circumstances we will provide more focus within the service, and we have already published our [Children's Social Care People Strategy](#) to demonstrate our commitment to children services.

Our Vision for Sefton:

“To be a confident and connected borough”

We are proud of our exciting vision for the future of Sefton, which we developed and agreed with our communities and partners in November 2016 – it underpins everything we do. Our Imagine 2030 consultation engaged thousands of people, local businesses, visitors and potential investors to create a vision that collectively promotes shared prosperity, coordinated public investment, and a healthy environment and population.

Core Purpose

The Council's Core Purpose document summarises how we intend to achieve the aims and objectives based on the feedback from everyone that took part in the Imagine Sefton 2030 consultation. These include the following:

- **Protect the most vulnerable:** i.e., those children and adults who have complex care needs with no capacity to care for themselves and no other networks to support them. For those who are the most vulnerable we will have a helping role to play, we will challenge others to ensure we all protect the most vulnerable children and adults and where we need to we will intervene to help improve lives.
 - **Facilitate confident and resilient communities:** the Council will be less about doing things to and for residents and communities and more about creating the capacity and motivation for people to get involved, do it for themselves and help one another. We will create an environment in which residents are less reliant
 - **Commission, broker and provide core services:** the Council will directly deliver fewer services but will act as a broker and commissioner of services which meet the defined needs of communities, are person-centred and localised where possible.
 - **Place-leadership and influencer:** making sure what we and what others do are in the best interests of Sefton and its residents and has a contributing role to the 2030 vision of the borough. The Council will use data and feedback from our communities, children and young people in shaping plans. The Council will demonstrate strong leadership and influence partner organisations to:
 - work towards common goals
 - deliver the best opportunities and outcomes for the children in young people in and leaving our care by being good Corporate Parents
 - deliver the best opportunities and outcomes for residents and every child in Sefton
 - ensure Sefton is a child, older person and disability friendly place
 - and build pride in the borough.
 - **Drivers of change and reform:** the Council will play a key role in leading change and reform to improve outcomes for Sefton residents, every child's future and continuously improve the borough.
 - **Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:** that is, people having the level of money they need to take care of themselves and their family; creating the conditions where relatively low unemployment and high income prevail, leading to high purchasing power; opportunities for future generations and having enough money to invest in infrastructure.
 - **Generate income for social reinvestment:** the Council will develop a commercial nature and look to what it can do either by itself or with others to generate income and profit that can be reinvested into delivering social purpose and preparing for the future.
- Cleaner and Greener: the Council will work with others to act as guardians and protect and maintain Sefton's natural beauty and ensure that its many assets can be enjoyed by everyone and future generations and provide a contribution to Sefton's economy, peoples wellbeing and the achievement of the 2030 Vision.

Our 'One Council' Values

Our One Council Values are important because they guide our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours in the workplace. One Council values include:

- Put people at the heart of what we do
- Listen, value and respect each other's views
- Develop a culture of challenge, ownership, innovation, and improvement
- Be ambassadors for Sefton
- Be responsive and efficient
- Be clear about what we can and cannot do.



Our Behaviours

Our behaviours are the practical application of our values - translating them into day-to-day actions. Behaviours describe in more detail what we expect our people to do. Behaviours which live the One Council values need to be reinforced whilst those that contradict them need to be challenged.

Our behaviours include:

<p>I do...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach my work with passion and try to be the best I can be ■ Believe in the borough and be an ambassador for the Council ■ Treat people in the way I would like to be treated ■ I do act in an honest, reliable and trustworthy manner ■ Take responsibility for my own engagement and development ■ Recognise the things I do well and other people's achievements. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Be Confident</p> <div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>...and proud about what you do.</p> </div>	<p>I don't...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Limit my opportunities to develop, grow and thrive ■ Respond badly to constructive feedback and criticism ■ Speak negatively about the borough ■ Encourage or join in with negative thinking ■ Lack energy and determination in helping the organisation achieve its objectives ■ Give up, even in challenging times.
<p>I do...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Take ownership and responsibility for what I do ■ My best to consistently deliver a quality service that puts customers at the heart of what we do ■ Work collaboratively with others using a One Council approach to seek out opportunities for innovation and improvement ■ Take the initiative to find out information for myself ■ Ask for help and support from others when I need it ■ Think about how my behaviours and actions affect others. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Be Responsible</p> <div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>...for making a difference.</p> </div>	<p>I don't...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seek to apportion blame on others ■ Over promise and under deliver ■ Ignore how my behaviours impact on others ■ Forgot how important clearly and timely communication is ■ Forget to say thank you to others for their contribution ■ Work in silo's and reject the contribution of colleagues and partners.
<p>I do...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Challenge the status quo and I am prepared to have a different conversation ■ Ensure I am clear about what I can and cannot do ■ Listen, value and respect each other's views and their contributions ■ Aspire to be the best and go that extra mile to find the right solutions ■ Learn from success and mistakes ■ Embrace positive thinking. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Be Brave</p> <div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>...and don't be afraid to try new things.</p> </div>	<p>I don't...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ignore new ways of working ■ Make assumptions about people ■ Forget to listen to the opinion of others ■ Automatically reject innovative ideas and solutions ■ Dismiss the contribution of colleagues and partners ■ Like change and new ways of working.









Agenda Item 4



The Role of Sefton Council

We are responsible for many of the key services that are important to local communities such as – Adult and Children’s Services, waste disposal and recycling, maintenance of roads and pavements, parks and greenspaces, libraries and consumer protection, ensuring we deliver financial sustainability and supporting growth in the economy.

We will reshape the Council and change the way we operate to meet the needs of the people of Sefton. By way of illustration the Council:

 <p>Arranges home care support for over 2,750 older people and Care Home placements for received for over 1,880 older people</p>	 <p>We are the Corporate Parent for cared for children and care experienced young people</p>	 <p>Works with 103 schools to support over 40,300 children</p>	 <p>Provides 13 Family Wellbeing Centres</p>	 <p>Provides access to almost 189,000 library books, publications and public access computers</p>
 <p>Maintains approximately 587 miles (944km) of road, and 32,223 streetlights</p>	 <p>Registers over 2,800 births per year</p>	 <p>Collects and processes over 107 Tonnes of household waste</p>	 <p>Commissions all school nurses and health visitors.</p>	 <p>Manages a gross budget of £561.5 million pounds per year. The figure includes maintained schools.</p>

Where are we now?

Our People

Sefton is not a borough of demographics and statistics! Sefton is a confident, connected borough because of its people. People enjoy living in Sefton, with 80% of residents saying that they are either very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live. We have been identified as one of the happiest places to live in the UK.

Sefton is diverse, residents have a wide range of income, needs and expectations. The Council must balance the limited resources available to meet the complex range of requirements that exist now and in the future. To do this the Council has to be flexible and able to innovate, providing services that work best for each area whilst maximising economies of scale.

Our customers include a wide range of people and organisations including: residents, service users, families, children, young people, parents, carers, colleagues, members, schools, the voluntary, community and faith sector, health, the police and other statutory agencies.

Our Place

Sefton is named after the village and parish of Sefton, near Maghull, which had formerly served as the seat of the Molyneux family; and the watermill located there was the inspiration for Sefton Council’s distinctive crest.

Made up of five townships, Southport, Maghull, Formby, Crosby and Bootle, we have everything from beautiful coast and countryside to pretty villages, industrial areas and the docks.

The distinctiveness of Sefton's towns and villages is integral to our uniqueness; however, it is the people that create the distinct and diverse communities that make it a vibrant place to live, work, visit and invest in.

Leadership of place

Leadership of place requires the Council to make sure that what we and others do is in the best interests of Sefton and our residents through true collaboration, mutual trust and rigorous prioritisation. This requires strong and effective leadership and influencing skills that enable us to bring together partner organisations to raise aspiration, work towards common goals and build a sense of pride and belonging in the borough. It also means that we must carefully assess and balance the benefits and opportunities of economic growth with the impact some of the associated changes may have on our communities.

Our Delivery

We deliver a wide range of statutory, regulatory and discretionary services for our customers. These include libraries, highways, transport, social care and waste management. These services are provided in many ways, some by the Council and some commissioned services. We communicate with our residents using a variety of methods including online, through social media, by phone and face to face.

Overall, our ability to deliver on our ambitions is strong, with a good mix of influential leadership, a committed workforce, collaborative partnerships and closer working with communities to build capacity further. The significant reduction in senior management

over recent years has impacted on our strategic capacity, however we have introduced several changes to strengthen it.

Our Executive and Assistant Director roles ensure we have flexible strategic capacity, supported by the management structures within the Council, to take forward our key priorities and achieve the required changes and outcomes needed through clear, strategic leadership.

Sickness absence can at times be a risk to our capacity to deliver. We ensure employees are well supported and balance this with robust procedures to deal effectively with the monitoring and management of sickness absence. Our Personnel Team, including the Health Unit, work closely with managers, providing advice and appropriate levels of support, advising on informal processes and assisting with the more formal levels of sickness absence management.

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

The Council has developed an EDI Strategy that seeks to outline the Council's prioritisation of EDI and its approach to making Sefton a borough of opportunity for all. The EDI strategy, along with this workforce plan are fully aligned to the Council's vision, values, and behaviours, which is to build a more inclusive organisation which serves our people and our communities with honesty, integrity, and objectivity. This includes a zero tolerance to discrimination and a commitment to the nine protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010, ensuring everyone is always treated fairly, with respect and are free from all forms of discrimination. The nine protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The EDI strategy includes a robust strategy, delivery plan, and sets out 7 key objectives which have been developed in partnership with our various staff networks and alongside our other strategies, to ensure it speaks honestly to the needs of the Council, is realistic and fit for purpose. The strategy has also been mapped out against the EDI drivers (Workforce Race Equality Standard, Workforce Disability Equality Standard, Gender Pay Gap).

The 7 key objectives include:

- **Objective 1:** Increased awareness and engagement across the whole organisation - Creating an active awareness surrounding the issues facing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across Sefton and the wider community allows staff to understand the various needs of our service users and better target resources.
- **Objective 2:** Increased engagement with our partners and communities – Being influencers and leaders in our community, promoting the strengths and positive nature of diversity, equality, and inclusivity, whilst further encouraging others to recognise the issues individuals and communities face in Sefton and indeed nationwide.
- **Objective 3:** Consistent and targeted training and development - To continue working collaboratively with our staff to shape the future of work in our borough, requiring increased awareness of EDI issues and better training to address changing landscapes.
- **Objective 4:** Strengthened support for staff – This includes support from line managers and facilitating both the personal

development of staff and the development of the organisation.

- **Objective 5:** Maximise effectiveness and inclusivity in HR processes and procedures - Ensuring that our HR processes and procedures promote equality, diversity, and inclusivity, making sure all candidates have the same opportunities and that we develop a transparent process.
- **Objective 6:** Improved monitoring and measurement of progress – To consistently review our success against the EDI strategy, measured against several expectations. This includes reviewing ourselves against internal expectations and other employers.
- **Objective 7:** Establish and strengthen monitoring and governance structures - Improving internal processes and adapt to changing landscapes, establishing, and strengthening monitoring and governance structures allows us to review our progress and strive for better.

A key theme throughout the EDI strategy is a commitment to continuous improvement. The actions within the EDI strategy remain flexible and can be refreshed, with a plan to review them annually and to implement any new learning.

[A copy of Sefton's EDI Strategy is available here.](#)

How will the future look?

The Council needs to continually develop and evolve to meet the needs of residents, communities, businesses and indeed its workforce. That pace of change has been in place for many years now and was further impacted during the pandemic when what the Council delivered and how, changed fundamentally. This once again demonstrated the value, skills and flexibility of our workforce.

The next few years will present a different set of challenges and opportunities for Sefton and its workforce, and the Council is ready to respond.

The Challenges

- Economic challenges that will affect local people and businesses, this includes the cost of living and the impact of the UK economy.
- Financial sustainability of the Council
- Demand for our services
- Delivering the Children's Services Improvement Plan
- Adult Social Care reform
- Workforce challenges including a smaller external pool of talent to draw from and the current age demographic of our current workforce.
- Environmental assets management e.g., parks, spaces, infrastructure.

The Opportunities

- A clear understanding of the needs to residents, communities and businesses that can shape service delivery
- A Growth programme, including the Town Deal funding
- Integration with Health
- Partnership working e.g., Liverpool City

Region Combined Authority and our voluntary sector

- Delivery of the Council's Climate emergency plan.

Our Workforce

- The overall size of our workforce has decreased within the last two years from: **3,708** employees on 1st April 2020 to **3,666** employees on 1st April 2022. **As of 1st April 2022:**
- **44.44%** of our employees work part time.
- **65.90%** are female; **34.10%** are male.
- **37.40%** of our workforce are over 55 years and **6.41%** of our workforce are under 25 years.
- Many of our key frontline services operate **24 hours a day, 365 days a year** and there is a drive to ensure all services are delivered when people wish to access them. We have a wide variety of jobs at the council ranging from frontline care workers to solicitors.

Our Workforce Vision

We will develop a healthy and committed workforce that is flexible, agile and suitably skilled, working as one team to meet the future needs of the local communities we serve.

Our Workforce Priorities

We will aspire to develop to change the way we operate as a Council and become more efficient. We will:

- **Support** the Council's workforce to ensure it has the right skills to drive and implement the Council's Transformation Programme Agenda.
- Develop a learning **culture** that

demonstrates and encourages individual and organisational learning, where gaining and sharing knowledge is valued by all.

- Simplify our **policies**, systems and processes.
- **Work even closer** with our partners, communities, and businesses to deliver high quality services
- Use **technology** to enable people to work more flexibly, supporting the concept of a more **agile** workforce.
- Work **flexibly** and effectively across the borough from fit-for-purpose buildings.
- Offer a wide range of Apprenticeship Standards to support **succession planning** and **talent management**.
- **Valuing the benefits** that our staff who are out working in our communities bring to the borough, including their feedback on potential improvements to our services.

To make this change happen we will:

- **Develop our workforce** skills and competencies to build the workforce of the future.
- **Develop people** through our Corporate Apprenticeship Programme.
- Utilise and **develop the skills and talents** of all elected members.
- **Celebrate** our successes.
- Put **staff health and wellbeing** at the heart of our workforce planning.
- Be more **Innovative and Creative**; balancing risks and opportunities.

Our workforce plan sets out how we will make this happen.....





Sefton@Work

Sefton Council's job brokerage service is

PROUD

to provide free advice & guidance on
employment and training to our LGBTQ+
clients and employers

**For more information call
0151 934 2610**



The Themes

This Workforce Plan reflects and supports the Council plan by setting out six themes which are explored in more detail over the following pages.

Many actions are now underway to help us achieve these aims. These include:

Leadership and Management

“We will develop the skills of our leaders and managers to face the challenges ahead”.

The modern workplace is dynamic and challenging. For any organisation to be truly successful, it requires managers who can plan, organise and coordinate its staff, and leaders who can motivate and inspire them to achieve the best possible outcome. Developing the skills of our workforce to respond to a rapidly changing environment is essential to our success.

We use public money to fund our services and we are accountable for every penny we spend. This is very important to us, and we want to improve our ability to respond to the changing needs of the residents and communities we serve.

To do this we will develop our business awareness and knowledge, so we make the best use of our resources and funding. We will strengthen leadership capability through partnership working and joint funding opportunities with the recently established Liverpool City Region (LCR) OD Network. This approach will ensure our leaders and managers have the skills to develop and motivate high performing teams and individuals.

We will support our current and future leaders and managers to develop the necessary skills,

attributes, and values by accessing a range of leadership, management and coaching apprenticeship programmes from levels 3 – 7, including the Level 7 Senior Leaders Degree Apprenticeship.

We will develop our workforce to engage and communicate more effectively with their teams and colleagues, working collaboratively to identify innovative solutions to the challenges we face.

We have already:

- Developed an eLearning Management Development Programme for aspiring and frontline managers.
- Between 2018 – September 2022, we have progressed 46 managers through the following apprenticeship programmes:
 - Level 3 Team Leader Apprenticeship
 - Level 5 Operational Manager Apprenticeship
 - Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship
- Developed Senior Leadership Board work programme sessions which included focused analysis on the important issues facing the Council, and to encourage cross pollination of learning and skills to address current and future challenges.
- Worked with Liverpool John Moores University and the Senior Leadership Board to set up a mentoring support programme for managers enrolled on the Senior Leadership Apprenticeship Degree (MBA).



- Worked with the Directors of Adult Social Services Network to set up a bespoke mentoring support programme for those managers working across Adult Social Care enrolled on the Senior Leadership Apprenticeship Degree (MBA). Managers were buddied up with a mentor who had expertise in their area(s) across the system.
- Developed the My Sefton My Space Performance Development Review Process to support managers to have a more in-depth and enhanced conversation with staff about the previous 12 months, future aspirations, performance and development requirements for the following year. This includes the development of a behaviour framework to ensure we are living the One Council values.
- Maximised and ensured knowledge transfer of learning and training opportunities, delivered by external consultants/contractors.
- Developed an external training application process to enable leaders and managers to access leadership and management development opportunities to support succession planning and talent management.
- Implemented a quarterly Senior Management Conference to ensure key messages regarding the council's key priorities and challenges are communicated and shared with our teams.
- Implemented an aspiring manager's programme and action learning sets for the Children's Social Care workforce.
- Worked in partnership with the Place-Based Partnership (PBP) as part of the integration agenda to identify leadership and management development opportunities for the Adult Social care workforce.
- Engaged in the LGA Peer review, demonstrating real ambition for Sefton including a strong track record of partnership working and place leadership.

What we will do:

- Continue to embed and strengthen the PDR process, our One Council values and the behaviour framework.
- Develop coaching and mentoring skills within our leaders and managers by offering the Level 5 Coaching and Mentoring Apprenticeship across the organisation.
- Develop a network of coaches and mentors to support the wider workforce in conjunction with the LCR OD network.
- Continue offering Levels 3 and 5 Leadership and Management apprenticeships.
- To work with the LCR OD Network on the following priorities: quarterly network events for strategic leaders, development of an LCR leadership programme, development of a series of masterclasses and exploring the opportunity to implement an LCR coaching and mentoring network.
- Commission a leadership and management programme called 'Insights Leadership' for the Children's Services workforce.
- Identify learning and development opportunities for our Senior Leadership and Executive Leadership Team.
- Ensure the Adult and Children's services workforce are included in any leadership and management opportunities offered by the Place Based Partnership.

Engagement

"We will create an environment which increases employee involvement and encourages employees to develop to their full potential and be able to respond to the needs of the local communities".

We recognise that when employees are engaged and motivated in the work they do, productivity, together with the experience and outcomes for Sefton residents improves.

Through improved employee engagement and a focus upon workforce development we will ensure that we better understand their needs and help them to feel valued at work.

We will encourage a culture where employees understand and feel able to deliver the priorities set by the Council. We will continue to create an environment where employees are motivated to connect their work and feel proud to work for the Council.

We will work to make employees feel valued. We will listen to the views of our employees and trade unions and build upon our commitment to our priorities by communicating in a clear and consistent way.

We have already:

- Increased the number of channels to provide information to staff. This includes regular One Council Briefing Newsletters and monthly Yammer hour online virtual sessions with the Chief Executive, to keep the workforce informed on important headlines and the key issues that matter most.
- All service areas have dedicated Communications support.

- Encouraged cross organisational working via the One Council and ICT Champions Networks to share knowledge and expertise within different services across the Council.
- Developed a One Council 'Z card' to describe how the role of the One Council Champion proactively supports the Core Purpose and 2030 vision, acting as ambassadors for Sefton Council.
- We have a positive relationship with the Joint Trade Unions recognising their critical role in supporting the workforce.
- Launched the Innovation, Change and Improvement (ICI) initiative to give staff the opportunity to suggest ideas about how we could do things better for our customers and residents.
- Launched Corporate Induction eLearning to engage new starters with the landscape and people of Sefton, the Council and its services and access to information to support wellbeing.
- Engaged senior leaders and senior managers to understand what our current workplace culture looks and feels like, to produce a baseline of where we are now.
- Engaged the Children's Services workforce to adopt the Leeds Family Valued Model, which will give us new ways of Working with Children, Young People and Families in Sefton.
- Co-located Children's Services Senior Leaders with frontline staff so their ideas about service improvement can be shared by those who directly influence decisions about service delivery.
- Co-located the Place Based Partnership (the former CCG), in Magdalen House, Bootle which includes Adult Services frontline staff, to encourage and promote shared learning and best practice.

What we will do:

- Relaunch the STAR Awards to ensure we continue recognising and celebrating individuals and teams who have lived up to the vision and values of the Council.
- Encourage more innovation: balancing risks and opportunities.
- Foster an environment which promotes a culture of trust and creative thinking through effective line management.
- Continue cascading the workplace culture sessions to include frontline managers and frontline staff.
- Engage with staff and managers at all levels to reflect the new operating model of flexible and agile working.
- Ensure service areas/teams are having regular team meetings and individual supervisions/one to ones to discuss operational and any other issues that are impacting on their day to day work.
- Continue to support managers and staff to engage in the PDR process and to identify learning and development opportunities to support growth and development.
- Develop a staff survey with the aim of further improving and developing Sefton Council as a fantastic place to work.
- Develop an approach that utilises existing communications channels e.g., Dwayne's hour that enables our people to provide regular feedback to leadership.
- Continue to roll out the Leeds Family Valued training programme to reach all children's services frontline workers and leaders.
- Increase our range of workforce communications to ensure that we reach all of our staff (eg toolbox talks)

Health and Wellbeing

“We will promote workforce health and wellbeing, recognising that a healthy, committed workforce is also a productive workforce”.

We recognise that healthy and committed employees are also productive employees who deliver great services and therefore we will make the promotion of health and wellbeing a key objective.

We will ensure that employees are treated fairly and with respect both through Council policy and procedures, and through management structures.

We will develop and equip our managers with the information and skills to recognise the issues

facing the workforce and understand how to address them in an effective and timely way.

We will constantly review our workforce systems and environment to ensure we provide a safe and healthy place to work and ensure we have support in place to keep employees healthy and improve their wellbeing.

We will put workforce health and wellbeing at the heart of our Workforce Plan, not just through promotion campaigns but within the way we design jobs and recruit, support and manage employees.



We have already:

- Developed a health and wellbeing Toolkit, providing practical suggestions for working in the office, in the community and at home, and looking after your health and wellbeing.
- Developed 5 Staff Networks which provide confidential and safe environments to support, respect and encourage members to share experiences and discuss issues that affect them. Networks include:
 - Sefton Council Christian Workplace Group
 - Sefton's Black and Ethnically Diverse Staff Group
 - Sefton LGBT+ Staff Network
 - Sefton Disability Staff Network
 - Sefton Women's Network
- A supportive Occupational Health Provision – this includes access to Counselling, Health Promotion, Physiotherapy and Psychotherapy.
- Launched a two day fully accredited Level 3 Award in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) in the Workplace. The aim of the course is to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to actively promote positive mental health in the workplace.
- Complied with Health and Safety Legislation to support flexible working arrangements and protect staff from health risks.
- Continued to work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the constituent Local Authorities to listen and take onboard any learning that supports agile working and the health and wellbeing of staff.
- Developed a range of policies on wellbeing issues, flexible working, alcohol and substance abuse, assaults upon employees, sickness absence and managing stress at work.

- Launched a stress survey for staff to help identify and reduce the impact of workplace stress on employee wellbeing.
- An Active Workforce programme that supports staff with their Health and Wellbeing. This includes classes, activities, events, and courses to help staff be active and healthy with the aim of reducing absence through sickness and poor health.
- Continued to evolve and to stay relevant, innovative, and competitive during difficult and challenging times.
- Developed a Menopause workplace policy setting out the organisation's approach to members of staff experiencing menopausal symptoms. And what support those employees can expect to receive during this time.

What we will do:

- Implement the workplace wellbeing charter to ensure we have a healthier and happier workforce.
- Promote healthy lifestyles and other opportunities to improve health and wellbeing through our Communications team.
- Undertake culture-based sessions to begin to drive forward changes
- Ensure staff receive regular supervision/ one to ones which includes a focus on staff wellbeing and keeping in touch.
- Review how we manage change within the organisation and how the health and wellbeing of staff is supported through this process.
- Take a proactive approach to health and wellbeing strategies and practices to support staff. This includes proactive conversations with staff to support them in the workplace.

Flexible and Agile workforce

“We will develop and support our staff to work agile and flexibly across the borough working effectively with communities and the voluntary, community and faith sector”.

Serving a population with such a variety of needs requires a workforce that is flexible and adaptable to change and can be scaled and shaped to meet local requirements.

We will develop our employees’ skills and knowledge to meet service requirements, enhance their performance and increase organisational mobility.

There are opportunities for the Council to work more closely with other public and third sector organisations, so that people receive a seamless service.

We are committed to providing the best possible services for the people of Sefton within our available resources and believe that by working together with others we can strengthen our resilience and increase productivity, helping to create local services for the future.

We have already:

- Developed a range of Family friendly policies and practices to encourage flexible working arrangements, and which cover maternity and paternity leave, parental and shared parental leave, adoption leave and the option to take a career break.
- Changed the working model of our workforce through the comprehensive review of the ICT strategy and the roll out of ICT kit to staff.
- Changed the shape and layout out of our offices and buildings to ensure they are fit for an agile workforce.

- Shared OneNote YouTube videos on Yammer to provide staff with a basic introduction to OneNote and how to share your OneNote content with others.
- Women’s Network has been established to reflect the 70% of females working across the organisation
- Adapted our ways of working to support staff to work in a way that works mutually for them and the organisation.
- Empowered staff to work with their manager to support individual and business need.
- Established a Social Work Academy to support the development of key social worker skills within Children’s Services.

What we will do:

- Develop detailed departmental training plans.
- Develop and further embed cultural changes to reinforce positive trusting relationships
- Continually horizon scan to explore and utilise best practice from other organisations and systems
- Increase the current pace of change to ensure consistency across the workforce
- Adapt to aspirations, needs and expectations of future generations who will have different expectations of the workplace
- Develop a training programme to support the roll out of SharePoint, OneDrive and MS Teams.

Recruitment and Retention

“We will build an engaging workforce who connect and contribute to building thriving communities and an inclusive economy”.

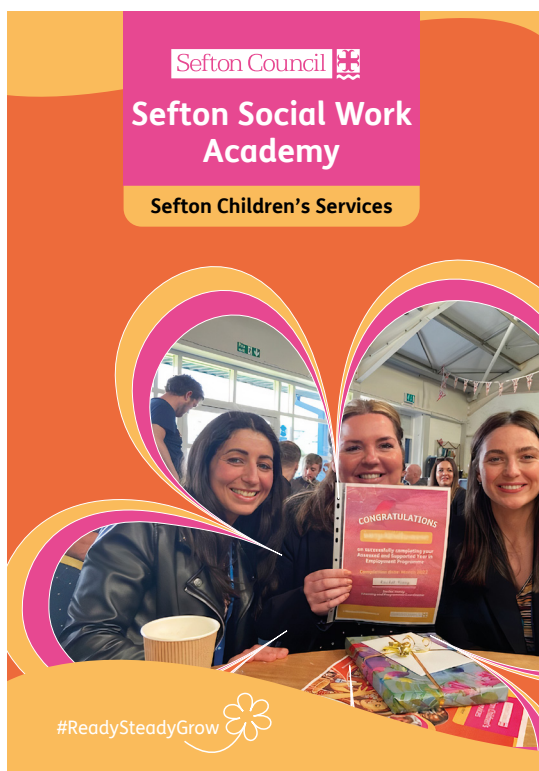
Employees understand how they contribute to the delivery of the council’s core purpose, are supported in their role and recognised and rewarded for their contribution. Staff wellbeing is seen as a priority.

The Council embraces modern and agile working practices, is clear about its ambitions and attracts its staff from a wide and diverse pool of candidates with best practice recruitment techniques and onboarding practices. We will review and enhance our recruitment processes, to broaden the diversity of who we need to attract and build supply of the skills we need.

We have already:

- Recognised that staff are the Council’s most valuable asset.

- Established a high-class apprenticeship programme that has supported x employees commence employment between 2018 – 2022. This includes 152 newly recruited apprentices and 292 existing staff. A total of 444 apprenticeships were completed during this period.
- Launched recruitment and selection training as part of our Corporate Mandatory Training Programme for new starters.
- Recruited high calibre candidates into key strategic and operational roles from across the country.
- Developed a Performance Development Review (PDR) eLearning programme to support staff and managers to have a more in-depth and enhanced conversation about the previous 12 months, future aspirations and performance and development requirements.
- Conducted a review of the culture of the Council that was led by staff, the findings of which have been reviewed and acted upon



- Established a Children's Social Worker Academy
- Continually benchmarked salaries for jobs to ensure salaries are competitive
- Adopted a flexible and agile approach to working to support work life balance
- Implemented a range of wellbeing support programmes for staff
- Implemented its ICT strategy to move the Council to upper quartile in order to support staff at all levels in performing their job to the highest standard
- A proud and loyal workforce
- Undertaken a succession management programme that has led to a number of staff completing various leadership and management training programmes, including a first cohort who have completed an MBA.
- Collaborated with other LCR authorities to work together to both recruit high quality new employees and retain our best staff

What we will do:

- We will continue to invest in leadership and management training and development to equip are managers of the present time and the future to ensure that a motivated workforce is in place.
- We will continue to develop flexible working policies and practices that provide the basis for meeting the needs of residents and communities through a skilled and motivated workforce.
- There will be a focus on ensuring that an appropriate work life balance for staff is maintained through effective leadership, management and supervision
- The wellbeing of our staff will remain a priority – this will cover both physical and mental wellbeing and will be supported through the implementation of the appropriate policies and effective leadership and management.
- We recognise that attracting the right skilled and experienced staff is difficult in the current labour market, in addition to 'growing our own' we will identify workforce opportunities, capacity and expertise from outside the traditional catchment process.
- A critical part of our recruitment and retention approach will be to pay attention to feedback provided by our workforce and act upon it. We will continually communicate with our workforce both formally and informally in order to gain an understanding of how the Council is operating and continually seek to improve the experience of staff in Sefton.
- With the Council continually investing in training and development of all staff, it will set out pathways and opportunities to support talent management and give the best chance for staff to successfully develop their career in Sefton via internal promotions
- The Council will develop a formal coaching programme to support staff in reaching their full potential – This will be identified via the PDR process and support may be provided internally and external to the Council e.g., for example the LCR OD Network.
- The Council will continually review its terms and conditions, within the context of the Green Book and in consultation with the Trade Unions, to ensure that they support staff in meeting the objectives of their role and staff retention
- Care experienced young people - The Council through its charter will work closely with its services, council owned companies, commissioned services and local businesses to identify a work experience and mentoring opportunities for every care experienced young person

- The Council recognises the current challenges that exist in recruiting social care staff- as a result it will continually focus on how to recruit these staff and how the process can be as streamlined as possible with the right onboarding and induction processes being in place.

Empowering and Proactive Organisation

“We will empower our people to be proactive and to make decisions that lead to a positive impact on Sefton’s communities and the local economy”.

We are an ambitious council that strives to provide excellent services to its residents and communities. We face significant change over the coming years, we will continually improve the way that we deliver these services so that they are more accessible and efficient to the people of Sefton.

We will continue to provide services to residents that reflect our 2030 vision and the Council’s Core Purpose. This also includes short, medium and long term workforce planning across the council in order to support the delivery of the corporate plan within the resources available to the Council.

Being proactive at work is at the heart of this theme and involves improving or enhancing organisational and operational effectiveness.

We have already:

- Through the Council’s Core Purpose, have clarity on the objectives of the Council that will support the delivery of the 2030 vision.
- Proven that the Council can continually refine its operating model to meet the needs of residents, businesses and support stakeholders and partners through its framework for change programme.

- Identified technology as a key enabler for staff.
- Approved a digital inclusion strategy that will support residents and businesses
- have a robust process for workforce planning, talent management and succession planning.
- Ensured that it sets robust and sustainable annual budgets and delivers annual underspends.
- Proven that we will be ambitious in our plans for our communities
- Proven that we will deliver new ways of working that support career development and progression of staff
- Embraced the new Integrated Care programme that will lead to a transformation approach to health care in the borough.
- Developed the One Council Network which is a network of enthusiastic and approachable Champions that proactively support our Core Purpose and 2030 Vision and act as ambassadors for the Council.
- Developed and launched 5 employee led staff networks to influence and shape local policies, procedures and future ways of working.
- Achieved the Navajo Merseyside & Cheshire LGBTIQA+ Equality Charter Mark following a reassessment in July 2022.
- Developed an ambitious growth programme that will stimulate and enable economic growth across the borough

What we will do:

- The Council will continue to provide services to residents that reflect the Sefton 2030 Vision and the Council’s Core Purpose.

- Following development, public consultation and approval by members, the Council’s Corporate Plan will be introduced, and this will set out the Council’s strategic approach to service delivery, the action that will be required and how these will be performance managed and evaluated.
- The Council will prioritise and deliver its services, ensuring that financial sustainability is maintained, and that this reflects best practice within the sector.
- The Council will listen to its workforce and seek out best practice from across the sector in order that a cycle of service improvement exists and can be demonstrated in order to continually improve services provided and support recruitment and retention of staff
- As part of service improvement, the Council will continually seek to improve and simplify its systems and processes and will enable and embed New Ways of Working, with a focus on digital development and maximising ICT.
- The Council will continue to develop its approach to manager self-service in order to improve the efficiency of management processes and to support the effectiveness of decision making across the Council.
- Short, medium and long term workforce planning will take place across the council in order to support the delivery of the corporate plan within the resources available to the Council.
- The Council will embed across all staff the behaviours that are set out in the PDR process.
- The Council will work in partnership with all external stakeholders for sefton residents with a view to delivering the best possible services and maximising the resources that are available within the Borough.
- How are Council employees perceived by local residents? Something about how we engage with residents for the very first time and making a good impression.

The how comes in the action plan!





Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

A Borough for Everyone





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Foreword – Cllr Trish Hardy, Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing



I am delighted to have the opportunity to introduce Sefton Council's new strategy for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion. As the Cabinet Member responsible for this area, I know that colleagues across the Cabinet and Council share my passion for ensuring inclusivity, supporting diversity, and ensuring that we address the challenges and opportunities that our organisation and our borough face in this respect.

In Sefton, we believe that our local communities will be stronger and prosper if individuals and groups are treated fairly, with respect and given support to access the services they need. The Sefton 2030 Vision sets out our commitment to see all our communities thrive in the future.

Our aim is to provide opportunities to Sefton residents, businesses and organisations to fully engage in the community and we know that for this to be achieved

everyone must understand and support equality and diversity. We will ensure that people and partners are involved in making our activities, information and services more accessible and the Council will be guided by a number of core principles to promote equality and diversity.

There is real strength in our diverse local communities where people are proud to say they live, work and take part in community life together. By placing fairness at the centre of what we do, by promoting equality of opportunity and by celebrating diversity and community cohesion, we can help to build a fairer future for all.

This document sets out the Council's approach and commitment to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in line with the Equality Act 2010, and details how we have performed against our Public Sector Equality Duty objectives.

The Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is further reinforced by our recent recognition of care experience as a protected characteristic as well.

This strategy comes at a hugely important time, as we continue to see inequalities and discrimination exist in different parts of the world, different parts of the UK, and on occasions in our borough as well. The evidence that underpins this strategy demonstrates that society has much to do in this respect, and this strategy is integral to ensuring that Sefton Council does everything it can to be a safe, diverse and inclusive place to live in, work in, and visit.

Sefton is a borough for everyone, and our vision and core values permeate through this entire strategy, and our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion will remain embedded within our vision and core values.

Our 2030 Vision and Core Purpose

The Sefton 2030 Vision, which was co-produced following consultation with over 3500 people, sets out the following themes

- Together a stronger community.
- A borough for everyone.
- Living, working and having fun.
- A clean, green, beautiful borough.
- Visit, explore and enjoy.
- On the move.
- Open for business.
- Ready for the future.

Sefton Council's Core Purpose provides an outline of how the Council will contribute to achieving the ambitions set out in the Vision 2030:

- Protect the most vulnerable.
- Facilitate confident and resilient communities.
- Commission, broker and provide core services.
- Place-leadership and influencer.
- Drivers of change and reform.
- Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity.
- Generate income for social reinvestment.
- Cleaner and Greener.

The Council will work within its Core Purpose to build better partnerships and help others to make a difference in Sefton.

This strategy is bold and ambitious, as Sefton Council always is, and it includes a wide range of challenging action areas. However, the delivery of these actions is not enough. The principle underpinning this version, and future iterations, of the strategy is one of continuous improvement. We will share our good practice and lessons learned in this area and capture it from elsewhere as widely and frequently as we can, through external benchmarking, consultation and engagement and collaborative partnership working. This work will never be "finished" – our commitment to continuous improvement in this respect will be ongoing, year on year and day by day.

I would like to thank all Council officers and stakeholders who have been involved in the development of the strategy, and consultation

on this important subject area. Notwithstanding the breadth of engagement on this strategy in advance of its publication, we believe this is an ongoing conversation and would welcome the opportunity for ongoing engagement with stakeholders and communities across the borough as we work together to make this an ever-fairer, more diverse and more inclusive place to be.



Cllr Trish Hardy
Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, Sefton Council

Foreword – Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive, Sefton Council



This is a hugely important strategy for our organisation and our borough. Not only does Sefton Council have an important role to play as a place leader in the area of equality, diversity and inclusion, but also as both an employer and as a commissioner of goods and services. In addition, as Corporate parents for our children in the Borough we need to ensure that we recognise their equality rights and where appropriate take account of their diversity.

While this strategy includes focus on borough-wide challenges and opportunities, and on objectives and outcomes that relate to the whole of Sefton and all of our communities, it does include an important commitment to ensuring that we meet our own high standards and expectations as an inclusive employer with a diverse workforce, that supports all employees and ensures the attraction, development and retention of a diverse and talented team that exemplifies everything to which we aspire, as articulated within this strategy.

This strategy relates to all areas of our organisation, and to everything we do. This includes, for example, adult social care, which is critical in supporting vulnerable people and also providing much-needed support to carers.

Moreover, through the procurement of goods and services across the organisation, we will engage with partner organisations on the subject of equality, diversity and inclusion – not only to reinforce the importance of these subjects, but to share best practice where we can, and of course to learn from others wherever there is opportunity to do so.

I am proud of the work and progress our organisation has made in this respect, and of the culture of inclusivity and collaboration that exists across the Council. However, we unquestionably have opportunities to get better, and I share the Cabinet Member's passionate commitment to ongoing and continuous improvement in this respect.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dwayne Johnson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dwayne Johnson
Chief Executive, Sefton Council

Executive Summary

This strategy is intended to demonstrate that Sefton Council as an organisation, and Sefton as a place in which to live, work and visit, continues to make good progress in respect of equalities, diversity and inclusion, in accordance with the Council’s vision and core purpose and in alignment with other strategies and policies. However, there remains much area of opportunity for improvement, not least in the context of wider economic, social and cultural issues that are affecting the whole country and the whole world. Regardless, this strategy and action plan will form part of an ongoing journey of continuous improvement that will constantly be refreshed and updated – as is evident in many organisations and similar strategies across many and varied sectors, it is not expected that this work will ever be “finished”.

Sefton Council’s Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027 is intended to reinforce the importance of these challenges and opportunities as already demonstrated by the Council, including through such approved Council motions as the Race Equality Declaration of Intent in April 2022, and the recognition of care experience as a

protected characteristic in January 2023, but also through the ongoing operations and wide range of strategy and policy areas across the organisation. It aims to build on this determination for continuous improvement, and to outline areas of opportunity and action in this respect.

This strategy focuses on each of the Council’s roles:

- As an employer
- As a provider of services
- As a commissioner of goods and services
- As a place leader

In accordance with feedback from employees across Sefton Council, via the Corporate Equalities Group, this strategy includes particular focus on the Council’s role as an employer. While the strategy and action plans include deliverables against the other three roles identified above, the intent is to ensure that the Council is demonstrating continuous improvement in all areas as a priority.



Agenda Item 4

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

The strategy is structured around seven key objective areas, identified through widespread consultation and engagement across the organisation:

Objective 1: Increased awareness and engagement across the whole organisation - Creating an active awareness surrounding the issues facing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across Sefton and the wider community allows staff to understand the various needs of our service users and better target resources.

Objective 2: Increased engagement with our partners and communities – Being influencers and leaders in our community, promoting the strengths and positive nature of diversity, equality, and inclusivity, whilst further encouraging others to recognise the issues individuals and communities face in Sefton and indeed nationwide.

Objective 3: Consistent and targeted training and development - To continue working collaboratively with our staff to shape the future of work in our borough, requiring increased awareness of EDI issues and better training to address changing landscapes.

Objective 4: Strengthened support for staff – This includes support from line managers and facilitating both the personal development of staff and the development of the organisation.

Objective 5: Maximise effectiveness and inclusivity in HR processes and procedures - Ensuring that our HR processes and procedures promote equality, diversity, and inclusivity, making sure all candidates have the same opportunities and that we develop a transparent process.

Objective 6: Improved monitoring and measurement of progress – To consistently review our success against the EDI strategy, measured against several expectations. This includes reviewing ourselves against internal expectations and other employers.

Objective 7: Establish and strengthen monitoring and governance structures - Improving internal processes and adapt to changing landscapes, establishing, and strengthening monitoring and governance structures allows us to review our progress and strive for better.

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

This is intended to be an action-oriented strategy, with action plans included in each objective area, and internal mechanisms being sustained and strengthened to support monitoring, review, measurement of success and continuous improvement.

Notwithstanding the primacy of the Council's role as an employer in this strategy, there is also intended focus on external partnerships, particularly ensuring the capture and sharing of good practice and lessons learned from other organisations and sectors, and from accreditation bodies where available and applicable.

This includes particular partnership working with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and collaborative focus on a range of areas, including but not limited to the Socioeconomic Duty.

Measurement of success will in some areas be quantifiable, but the strategy proposes focus on both outputs and outcomes - also ensuring measurement of delivery of the action areas identified herein, as the Council continues to work towards the shared objective of Sefton being a borough for everyone.



Introduction

As part of the Liverpool City Region, Sefton has a diverse population. There are significant inconsistencies and variances in terms of socioeconomic status, health and education outcomes across the places within the borough, and while all areas of the Council continue to make progress against the 2030 Vision, there remains much to do.

In 2016 Sefton Council worked closely alongside its residents, partners, businesses, private sector organisations, the voluntary, community, and faith sector to shape the future of the Borough over the next 15 years. The result of this commission was the Vision for Sefton 2030, a set of guidelines mapping out the Council’s culture and goals for the future. Since the introduction of this ‘Vision’, we have made great strides to protect the most vulnerable. We have become a place leader and influencer, driving change and reform. So far in Sefton, we have:



- Been awarded the Navajo Charter Mark for displaying good practice and commitment towards its LGBTQIA+ staff and community. Sefton became the first local authority to receive the charter mark in 2018 (with renewals including most recently in 2022), marking its commitment to LGBTQIA+ people across the Borough.
- Committed ourselves as Disability-Confident employers, and have signed up to the Disability Impact Pledge.
- Set up a range of active forums (both formal and informal) to give people the opportunity to have their voices heard.
- Via our Consultation and Engagement Panel, ensure that decisions are taken based on sufficient information..
- Continued to increase the number of staff and volunteers across Sefton who have undertaken Equality and Diversity training and Hate Crime Awareness training.
- Developed a Sefton Hate Crime Joint Agency Group (JAG). JAG is a multi-agency group which aims to take a strategic approach to tackling hate crime in Sefton, deal with referrals from partner agencies, and build cooperation between different agencies across Sefton and Merseyside.
- Created an Improving Information Group and Accessible Information Advocate programme to make sure that the information we put out is understandable to all.

Yet global and national challenges – austerity, recession and the Cost-of-Living crisis, Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic- have exacerbated poverty and inequality across our borough. Many are accessing council resources for the first time, as services continue to be stretched and budgets are cut. With this, the most vulnerable are put at risk.

The recent increase in poverty in the borough is only one part of the inequalities that residents face daily. As the Black Lives Matter Campaign has shown, society is still based on systems and structures that have historically discriminated against others. Recent reports published by the Home Office have shown that hate crime reporting is up by 26% in England and Wales, most notably race-based crimes and crimes against the LGBTQIA+ community. Health inequalities and other injustices that relate to higher levels of poverty have also become clear after the COVID-19 pandemic. The structures we rely on require reshaping, remodelling and creative new solutions to address the gap between the “haves” and “have nots”.

We are determined to confront these issues head-on. This strategy therefore seeks to outline the Council’s prioritisation of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and its approach to making Sefton a borough of opportunity for all. The Council hopes to continue to work with residents and partners to shape the borough into a model for others. This document sets out the approach we will take, in many cases prioritising internal actions within the organisation: **as an employer, as a place leader, as a provider of services, and as a commissioner of goods and services, our aim is to be best in class in this respect – and that includes ensuring our organisation is consistently meeting its own high standards, and working to do so on an ongoing basis.**



Our Legal Duty

Sefton Council also has a legal duty to protect its residents. The Equality Act 2010 is the legal framework that was put in place to protect individuals' rights and advance equality of opportunity. This Act provides the prime legislative basis under which this strategy operates.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the term "protected characteristics" to refer to groups that are protected under the Act. Protected characteristics are legally defined as:

- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Religion or Belief
- Maternity & Paternity.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (created under the Equality Act 2010) is also important and came into force on the 5th of April 2011. It requires those carrying out public functions to adopt the duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunities and promote good relations between different communities. Compliance with the equality duty allows us to provide services to meet the diverse needs of our users and improve how we carry out our core business.

In addition to the above, Sefton Council passed a motion in January 2023 to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic as well.



Challenges and Impacts

The impact of the challenges we face because of structural inequalities can already be seen across the borough. Political and economic uncertainty, strengthened by underlying structures of inequality have intensified anxieties across the borough.

Our Borough at a glance:

- 1 in 5 Sefton residents live in the most deprived 10% of England Lower Super Output Areas (approximately 54,500 residents)
- According to an ONS study on local income deprivation, **out of 316 local authorities, Sefton has the 2nd most clustered distribution of wealth and poverty in England.**
- 1 in 10 (or 3 in every classroom) will need support or treatment for a diagnosable mental health problem.
- 26% of Sefton children are living in poverty after housing costs.
- Sefton's most deprived populations spend, on average, 18 years less in good health than those in the most affluent areas.
- Life expectancy is 11 years lower for men and 9 years lower for women in the most deprived ward of Sefton than in the least deprived ward.
- Between January and December 2021 there were approximately 14,900 workless households, which equates to 18% of all households within Sefton, higher than Liverpool City Region, the Northwest and England.
- When looking at the average full-time employment gross weekly pay in 2022, males in Sefton were paid 15% more than females (£651.40 compared to £553.50).
- The average hourly pay for males in 2022 was £15.41, with females receiving on average £14.67.
- 3.7% (6,190) of Sefton residents aged between 16 and 64 were claiming out-of-work benefits in January 2023, the same as seen in England and lower than Liverpool City Region and the North West.
- There were 8,124 households claiming Housing Benefits as of November 2022, 6% of all Sefton rateable households.
- In 2020/21, 9,501 of the Local Authority's children are living in relative low-income families making up 16% of those aged 0 to 19. A 12% increase when comparing counts in Sefton from 2020/21 to 2014/15.
- In August 2022, there were 700 young people with Education, Health, Care plans – Young people with a Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)- aged between 16 and 24. Of these 15% are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) this is 105 young people. Sefton has the lowest NEET & Not Known at 15% which is the best in the LCR and significantly better than North West at 38.9% and the England rate of 48.3%.
- Our NEET rate for 16 and 17 year olds has maintained at less than 4% throughout 2022 of those who are NEET 39% are in a vulnerable group.
- In February 2023, we had 92 young people between 16 and 18 who were cared for or care experienced. Of these 40% are NEET ie 37 young people.
- We have 251 young people aged between 19 and 21 who have care experience, of whom 50% or 127 are classed as NEET. Some of those (34%) who are NEET have illness or disability or are teenage parents and are not immediately available to return to study or work.
- On 31st March 2019, Sefton had a higher rate than that seen regionally and

nationally for those aged 19 to 21 who were NEET after leaving care. Rates in the Borough between 2019 and 2016 have seen fluctuations ranging from 44% to 55%.

- In a recent survey, 57% of LGBTQ+ Sefton respondents stated that they “know some LGBT+ people that live, work or study in Sefton but don’t feel that there is a community there”
- 87% of LGBTQ+ respondents disagree that there are lots of places in Sefton where they can socialise and meet people like themselves (i.e. other LGBT+ people).

Our Workplace at a glance:

As of December 2022:

- Sefton has an ageing workforce, with 56.43% of employees over 50 (53.43% in 19/20) and 20.57% aged between 40-49 (23.07% in 19/20). In contrast, only 9.24% of employees are less than 30 (9.28% in 19/20), of which only 0.66% are under 20.
- 66.56% of Sefton staff are female.
- In respect of ethnicity, the monitoring shows that the overall percentage of employees declaring that they are from minority ethnic communities is 2.42% (2.40% in 2020/21). A lot of staff did not respond to this question.
- The percentage of employees declaring they are disabled (using the definition of disability stated in the Equality Act 2010) is 3.22% (3.28% in 19/20). 20.48% of employees have declared they are not disabled. Most staff did not respond to this question.
- 1.02% of the workforce identifies as non-heterosexual (gay, lesbian and bisexual) (53.3% did not answer the question and 3.79% of participants preferred not to say).

Reflecting inward has shown that there is not a wide awareness of the make-up of the population or staff group, particularly when it comes to Black,

Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals. Though recent data was collected from staff through surveys, large numbers of staff did not answer and did not engage with the questions (or did so selectively). Demographic understanding is vital when trying to provide services to best serve our residents and to foster a workplace culture of inclusivity. What the above has proven is that we require more focused research and clarity to understand the best actions to take.

One of the challenges we face is therefore not only making up for a lack of workforce data through research but needing to educate our staff on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. This is to make sure they are better equipped to provide quality services. This includes on issues of injustice and adjusting to changing landscapes as more data is collected in newer research areas, including individuals with neuro-diversities.

Financial Challenges

We face multiple challenges that have influenced our objectives for this strategy. The pandemic has intensified the financial challenges of reduced government funding. We are seeing increasing inflation, rising hardship and financial inequality, a greater focus on racial inequality and its impact on life outcomes and changes in inward and outward migration.

The financial outlook for all local government is challenging, in the context of a tough economic climate. As a result of the Government’s austerity program, the Council’s core grant funding was reduced every year over a ten-year period between 2010/2011 and 2019/20. By 2019/2020 core Government grant funding had reduced by more than 50%. We now also face the impacts of the pandemic on the local economy and Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council itself, which continue to be extremely challenging.

The Pandemic

The effects of the pandemic have not been felt equally across all population groups. The latest government reporting shows that those

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

of Black and Asian heritage, and those from poorer backgrounds, suffered significant health inequalities and higher mortality rates. Research from the Institute of Fiscal Studies in 2021 showed that the pandemic had also caused more income inequality and more inequalities in education and skills.

Our strategy aims to ask, and start to answer, the following questions:

- How can we maintain focus on making Sefton a borough of opportunity for all?
- What actions are we going to take in the future to learn from our communities and adapt to current hardships and challenges?
- What framework will guide us when creating future policy to ensure the impact of change is fully understood when it comes to the welfare of residents?
- How can we improve structures within the organisation to become a better employer?



Guiding Policy

Purpose

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027 is ambitious and aims to develop a Sefton we can take pride in. A Sefton that is transparent, celebrates its diversities, understands the value of equal opportunities and empowers inclusivity. We will continue to build a more inclusive organisation to deliver for all of our people. Maintaining a focus on actions rather than words and striving to be proactive rather than reactive will help the successful delivery of our corporate objectives.

This strategy is essential to deliver on our ambition of becoming a leading modern council where our values are to serve our communities with integrity and objectivity. Whilst seeking to be innovative and ambitious, we prioritise protecting the most vulnerable and welcoming those from all backgrounds, facilitating confident and resilient communities and driving reform to ensure that Sefton is equipped for the future.

We seek to create a Sefton Council that:

- Is transparent.
- Understands and recognises the communities it serves, drawing from lived-experience.
- Welcomes talent from all backgrounds.
- Is accessible and engages with staff, partners and residents.
- Is supportive, advocating for inclusion, diversity and innovation.



Our Approach

To realise our ambitions, we will take an evidence-led and delivery-focused approach. This strategy frames an approach where equality, diversity and inclusion are not only just ends in themselves, but integral means of delivering better outcomes for and enhancing our organisation.

We have therefore identified some fundamental principles that will shape our approach and strategic priorities: We seek to create a Sefton Council that:

- We embrace and encourage the diversity of teams
- We endeavour to create an inclusive working environment, where differences are recognised and valued.
- We stand up to and challenge inequality
- We make sure no one is left behind. Everyone in Sefton must play a role in challenging the status quo and calling out discrimination and injustice, however uncomfortable it may feel.
- We embrace change and innovation
- We embrace the opportunities that the increased use of digital and flexible working has brought us. We collaborate, test new ideas and take risks, both as an organisation and as individuals.
- We invest in our staff
- We provide accessible and universal training courses to encourage staff personal development and learning.
- We tackle bullying, harassment and discrimination
- We will continue to set up accessible reporting processes, with specific actions for departments to take in continuing to address bullying, harassment and discrimination
- We test our policies and refine them on the basis of our learning
- We will remain adaptable, maintaining evidenced-based approaches and consistent reviewing and monitoring processes.

As we prioritise getting our own house in order, we are prioritising our role as an employer, but with focus on our wider role as well:

Sefton Council as an Employer	Sefton Council as a provider of services	Sefton Council as a Commissioner	Sefton Council as a Place Leader
Leading by example as an employer of choice, attracting and retaining a diverse and talented workforce that delivers positive outcomes for all across the borough	Engagement and collaboration with service users, increasing awareness and improving dialogue, supporting enhanced outcomes for customers and maximising support for our staff providing these services	Strengthening dialogue and relationships on the subject of equalities, diversity and inclusion with partners, incorporating actions and outcomes into commissioning and procurement processes where practicable	Proactive engagement and collaboration with partners, stakeholders and communities to increase awareness, improve dialogue, and support enhanced outcomes for all communities in our borough for everyone

Agenda Item 4

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

Sefton Council as an Employer	Sefton Council as a provider of services	Sefton Council as a Commissioner	Sefton Council as a Place Leader
Example Projects			
A proactive training and development programme focused on all staff, increasing awareness and engagement at all levels across all areas	Partnership working with external groups to maximise input into place-based project development and delivery from an inclusivity perspective	Collaborative working with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on the £2.2m Race Equality Hub, focusing on training, employment support and business assistance	Broadening Sefton’s events calendar for 2023 and beyond, to support widening and strengthening of awareness and engagement across Sefton with all communities and stakeholders

Strategy

To deliver our policy, we need a strong strategy and delivery plan. Our seven objective areas have been developed in partnership with our various staff networks and alongside our other strategies to ensure it speaks honestly to the needs of the Council, is fit for purpose, and is realistic.

Staff networks that were consulted include the Council’s Corporate Equalities Group and range of sub-groups, as well as management across the organisation. Our actions remain flexible and can be refreshed, with a plan to review them annually.

Our seven objective areas comprise:

Objective 1: Increased awareness and engagement

Objective 2: Increased engagement with our partners and communities

Objective 3: Consistent and targeted training and development

Objective 4: Strengthened support for staff

Objective 5: Maximise effectiveness and inclusivity in HR processes and procedures

Objective 6: Improved monitoring and measurement of progress

Objective 7: Establish and strengthen monitoring and governance structures

Objective 1:

Increased awareness and engagement across the whole organisation

Creating an active awareness surrounding the issues facing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across Sefton and the wider community allows staff to understand the various needs of our service users and better target resources. We want to consistently foster an organisational culture in which all staff and residents feel welcome background and feel represented and heard across all levels of the Council. Feedback from others and the establishment of open dialogue are essential as we navigate changing landscapes.

What we will do:

- Ensure our internal and external communications are reflective and supportive of the prioritisation of this strategy in terms of quality and frequency.
- Ensure all staff are able to dedicate the necessary time to participation and engagement in the Corporate Equalities Group, training and development, and other activities emerging from this strategy and action plan.
- Further strengthen the breadth and depth of training and learning opportunities on these subjects.
- Ensure our culture and HR-oriented processes are supportive for all staff with protected characteristics, and reflect the policy of zero tolerance of abuse or discrimination against our employees.
- Strengthen our understanding of, and focus on, micro-aggressions and unconscious bias across the organisation.
- Maximise engagement and collaboration internally in delivery of this strategy and action plan, ensuring application in all areas of strategy, policy and projects.

Actions

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| <p>1.1 Develop and implement a calendar of monthly themes and focus areas, incorporating specific actions where applicable. This will be used to support internal and external communications plans and training programmes, alongside other necessary areas.</p> <p>1.2 Reaffirm the importance to all management of engagement in the subject and the prioritisation of time for Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) using internal communications, using both email streams and staff social network 'Yammer'.</p> | <p>1.3 Encourage others to join CEG and fill any gaps in the organisation's representation, creating positive role models and not relying on those in protected characteristics as 'educators'.</p> <p>1.4 Sustain a programme of Organisation-Wide Inclusivity Events, ensuring continued input and engagement, with challenge and perspectives from partner organisations and guest speakers.</p> |
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- 1.5 Curate a “Book Club”/collation of useful resources (literature and videos) for staff to access free of charge. This will include a Shared Reading programme.
- 1.6 Use more inclusive language and change our terminologies to facilitate a culture change. We will respect and be guided by the views of individuals and groups when it comes to terminology.
- 1.7 Organise regular community engagement events on the subject.
- 1.8 Facilitate anonymous reporting and signposting in the organisation, making it clear where staff can find resources.
- 1.9 Develop internal webpages (the intranet) to promote EDI support, training and activities.
- 1.10 Undertake a full communications audit on the subject, identifying opportunities for improvement in our internal and external communications and engagement activity.

Case Study: Sefton Corporate Equalities Group (CEG)

Sefton has a Corporate Equalities Group made up of representatives from across the organisation. The Group, which is chaired by a member of our Senior Leadership team, supports the Council in making sure equality and diversity is at the top of our agenda, internally and externally.

Feeding back into Sefton’s Corporate Equalities Group, members offer solutions and recommendations about the issues that affect them and the organisation. This includes improving employee progression and empowerment through training and development opportunities, as well as consulting in new or existing policies, practices, procedures and strategies in areas such as Employment and Human Resources. The group continues to grow to best represent the organisation.

Key Opportunity: Book Club

Sharing resources and learning are two of the most important things when it comes to making culture changes within wider organisations. As inspired by structures in the Liverpool Women’s Hospital, an opportunity for the future is the creation of a book club specifically on the topic of equality, diversity and inclusion. Resources shared will be screened to make sure that they are accessible for all and will include a mix of written communication and video education. This will be available for all staff wanting to learn more.

Objective 2:

Increased engagement with our partners and communities

Delivering our ambitions to continue to improve life in Sefton requires more than organisational reform. We need to also raise the profile of these issues with our partners and communities to drive change. We want to be influencers and leaders in our community, promoting the strengths and positive nature of diversity, equality and inclusivity, whilst further encouraging others to recognise the issues individuals and communities face in Sefton and indeed nationwide. Whilst setting strategic priorities, as per the Equalities Act (2010), we will therefore consider how our decisions will help to reduce inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Our priority is to serve our people.

What we will do:

- Increase proactivity, consistency and frequency of our communications and engagement work regarding Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Formalise partnerships with external organisations to share and capture good practice and lessons learned from elsewhere.
- Establish a Race Equality Monitoring Group, focused on ensuring oversight and effective consultation and engagement.
- Build on the positive start made with the Caring Business Charter, helping provide employment and skills opportunities for young people with care experience.
- Using the Charter as a platform to widen business and other external engagement on the subject of other protected characteristics, via existing forums and on a relationship-by-relationship basis as well.
- Explore and implement external learning and engagement opportunities.

Actions

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| <p>2.1 Revitalise the website to ensure our inclusivity in related areas is explicit, for example, our Navajo feedback.</p> <p>2.2 Continue with our commitment to the Equalities Act (2010) and review further areas such as the Socioeconomic Duty (SED) to deliver better outcomes for those who experience disadvantage.</p> <p>2.3 Establish an external communications programme, linked to the monthly themes stipulated in objective area 1.</p> <p>2.4 Ensure continued full engagement in Liverpool City Region working groups.</p> | <p>2.5 Incorporate related discussions into informal partner engagement, building on Caring Business Charter. This includes establishing what we can share and what we can learn.</p> <p>2.6 Work with partners to improve employment rates, number of people recruited from our most deprived areas, quality of employment, and tackle insecure employment on a postcode basis via Sefton@Work.</p> <p>2.7 To provide high quality community learning opportunities for second chance learners over aged 19 through Sefton Community Learning Service.</p> |
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- 2.8 Make supporting businesses led by minorities a priority for InvestSefton.
- 2.9 Engage with partners and their EDI strategies to ensure that they align with Sefton's values and are creating a fair and equal environment for their staff.
- 2.10 Work with partners to improve employment rates, number of people recruited from our most deprived areas, quality of employment, and tackle insecure employment on a postcode basis.
- 2.11 Develop more support groups to serve the community, including baby loss groups and supporting Children's Services.
- 2.12 Promote the use of flexi-hours to have an impact on service delivery.
- 2.13 Continue to prioritise accessibility when considering 'Place' and future developments in Sefton.
- 2.14 Work with stakeholders to improve the prospects of people with offending backgrounds who experience barriers and discrimination in seeking skills, work or housing.
- 2.15 Reach out to veterans groups to ensure that ex-service people are able to thrive in all aspects of civilian life such as employment and training

Case Study: Regeneration

The Sefton 2030 Vision outlines that Sefton is "accessible for everyone", including those with disabilities. Sefton Council are committed to making Sefton a safe and accessible place for everyone. This includes, for example, working with blind and partially sighted people to make the built environment, streets and public spaces safer and more inclusive. We continue to work to make all Council buildings accessible to all.

Sefton Council worked with independent groups for people with disabilities and charities such as Thomas Pocklington Trust to deliver visual impairment awareness sessions for Council staff and elected members. This training raised awareness of the barriers faced by blind and partially sighted people, and what actions are needed to improve access and safety.

Key Opportunity: Procurement

Through the commissioning and procurement of goods and services across all areas of the Council, there is opportunity to strengthen and widen engagement with partner organisations. This is regarding the borough's and the organisation's challenges and opportunities in respect of equalities. This may include the incorporation of measured deliverables from providers as part of procurement processes, to provide a platform for collaboration with partners who share the vision and values of the organisation. This is already underway with the incorporation of the Caring Business Charter into our Social Value Policy (with its signature a requirement for bidding organisations who wish to work with Sefton Council), and can be widened further.

Objective 3:

Consistent and targeted training and development

To succeed in all of our priority areas and achieve our ambition of a fairer future for everyone in the face of such massive challenges, we must pull together and work as a solid team across every service area and at every level in the Council. We will continue to work collaboratively with our staff to shape the future of work in our borough, requiring increased awareness of EDI issues and better training to address changing landscapes.

What we will do:

- Undertake an audit of all EDI training to ensure it is fully accessible, and delivering against all objective and action areas within this strategy.
- Increase the breadth and depth of training and education on EDI and the subject areas therein.
- Widen discussion on the subjects via a Shared Reading programme – including internal sessions and via an external programme.
- Explore related mentoring opportunities for managers and leaders on EDI.
- Maximise the shared learning opportunity from external partner organisations.

Actions

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| <p>3.1 Continue to promote mandatory online training. This includes scrutinising current operations and systems to drive the completion rate and sustain it.</p> <p>3.2 Deliver the same training via other means. This includes reviewing options for those not working online, including formal and informal training methods and small classes.</p> <p>3.3 Finalise and implement a training module, with a specific focus on middle management, facilitated by Equaliteach.</p> <p>3.4 Offer and encourage EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) training to all Cabinet Report authors.</p> | <p>3.5 “The next level” – agree on focus and approach to further training, linked to strategy, Council motions, and key themes identified above.</p> <p>3.6 Include elected members in training.</p> <p>3.7 Open training up to community groups.</p> <p>3.8 Offer bespoke learning offers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bystander culture (Being an active bystander means being aware of when someone’s behaviour is inappropriate or threatening and choosing to challenge it). • Allyship (An ally is someone who is not a member of a marginalised group but wants to support and take action to help others in that group). |
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- Psychological safety (Psychological safety is the ability to share one's thoughts and feelings without risk of damaging one's reputation or standing).
- 3.9 Return to face-to-face training where possible, encouraging and allowing for debate, challenge, and questioning.
- 3.10 Develop and implement a Shared Reading programme available to all staff members, particularly managers and leaders.
- 3.11 Undertake an audit of all training offers to ensure accessibility, consistency and effectiveness.
- 3.12 Develop and implement a reciprocal mentoring programme between our organisation's leaders and managers, and people with one or more protected characteristics, ensuring the development and maintenance of mutually-beneficial learning relationships.
- 3.13 Facilitate Restorative Supervision meetings to support enhanced dialogue between managers and staff.

Case Study: Equality and Diversity Awareness

All Sefton Council employees are required to complete mandatory Equality and Diversity Awareness eLearning. The course is core to the Council's Mandatory Training programme.

Compliance at the beginning of January 2022 was less than 10% across all service areas, this had increased to 67% by the end December 2022. This represents a significant increase in the number of staff completing their mandatory Equality and Diversity Awareness eLearning and we expect this trend to continue. Managers are also required to complete Equality and Diversity for Managers mandatory eLearning and we are also seeing an upward trend for this course.

Key Opportunity: EqualITeach Training

Representatives from the Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) have been working with neighbouring authorities since late Autumn 2021 to commission a training provider called EqualITeach, and to work with local stakeholders to develop a high-quality bespoke race equality training product, with the aim of building a collective level of racial literacy and inclusivity.

Two, 3-hour, face-to-face pilot sessions took place during October to help shape the content and this included representation and attendance from our Senior Leadership Board. Both pilots were very well received and the feedback will inform the on-going design, development and delivery of the programme.

Objective 4:

Strengthened support for staff

Creating a fairer, more equal and inclusive borough starts with doing work within. Strengthening support staff and making Sefton Council a better place to work not only helps us with recruitment and retention but facilitates both the personal development of staff and the development of the organisation. Making people feel empowered when working is a priority.

What we will do:

- Establish a targeted mentoring programme for staff members with protected characteristics.
- Embed process relating to reasonable adjustment passports.
- Undertake a process review across HR to identify areas of opportunity for improvement and increased inclusivity (with particular focus on recruitment, and such opportunities as diverse interview panels, blind applications, an approach of “we want to hear from you anyway” to job advertisements that ensures openness to all).

Actions

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| <p>4.1 Draft and establish a policy of zero tolerance on staff abuse. This policy is to be displayed at all public-facing locations.</p> <p>4.2 Review and strengthen processes in case of incidents.</p> <p>4.3 Review and strengthen incident reporting mechanisms.</p> <p>4.4 Create and encourage new staff groups, including a neurodiversity group and a menopause support group.</p> <p>4.5 Make clear to staff that EDI policy is not just a tick-box exercise, but endeavour to celebrate inclusion from the top down.</p> | <p>4.6 Develop a programme of nominated support staff to approach for a ‘safe discussion’, a ‘Guardians of Support’ group.</p> <p>4.7 Undertake a HR process review to ensure capture and implementation of best practice as an inclusive recruiter and employer.</p> <p>4.8 Develop and implement a targeted mentoring programme for staff members with protected characteristics.</p> <p>4.9 Supportive employment - aspiring to be a good employer with flexible arrangements for support for people with caring responsibilities including childcare and eldercare</p> |
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Case Study: Staff Groups

Sefton Council is committed to supporting the diverse needs of all employees and the communities we serve. In line with our One Council values of listening, valuing and respecting each other's views, as well as developing a culture of challenge, ownership, innovation and improvement, the Council has established a number of staff networks for colleagues to join.

These staff networks seek to provide confidential and safe environments to support, respect and encourage members to share experiences and discuss issues that affect them.

The current staff networks are:

- Sefton Council Christian Workplace Group.
- Sefton's Black and Ethnically Diverse Staff Group.
- Sefton LGBT+ Staff Network (set up in 2022).
- Sefton Disability Staff Network (set up in 2022).
- Sefton Women's Network.

Key Opportunity: Zero Tolerance Policy

To become an employer of choice, and to attract a diverse workforce, we will strengthen our processes and culture to ensure absolute support of the highest standards for all of our employees. We will establish and embed a policy of zero tolerance of discrimination or abuse by any service user to any member of our staff. This is through pursuing police and legal action, and also ensuring provision of support for those affected. On top of this we will ensure training and development for all managers to facilitate the ability to provide this support. This action reflects staff feedback on the subject and identifies an area where greater consistency and continuous improvement will be beneficial.

Objective 5:

Maximise effectiveness and inclusivity in HR processes and procedures

We want to be proactive rather than reactive in ensuring that our HR processes and procedures promote equality, diversity and inclusivity, making sure all candidates have the same opportunities and that we develop a transparent process.

What we will do:

- Capture good practice and lessons learned from elsewhere, to ensure we are an employer of choice for current and potential employees (as per the action areas identified under objective 4).

Actions

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| <p>5.1 Ensure explicit inclusivity and avoidance of unconscious bias to improve quality and consistency in recruitment advertising.</p> <p>5.2 Ensure we use blind applications and interview panels - finalise process points as previously identified.</p> <p>5.3 Enhance induction processes, with input from the CEG.</p> <p>5.4 Continue to commit ourselves as a disability-confident employer.</p> <p>5.5 Increase accessibility for interviews with the option of face-to-face or online meetings.</p> | <p>5.6 Simplify language in job adverts and take away complicated recruitment processes.</p> <p>5.7 Work with Sefton@work to provide accessible employment routeways where this can encourage a more diverse workforce.</p> <p>5.8 Clarify our policy on how we utilise DBS clearances, which roles these apply to and our decision making processes</p> <p>5.9 Implement necessary changes to recruitment equalities monitoring to reflect Care Experience as a protected characteristic and identify mechanism for monitoring this</p> |
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Case Study: Changing Recruitment Processes

The Council is a Disability Confident Employer which means that it is committed to removing barriers for disabled people and those with long term health conditions in employment. As part of this scheme candidates are able to apply for all non-schools vacancies under a guaranteed interview scheme. The logo is displayed on all job adverts.

So far, Sefton has been awarded Level 2 as a Disability Confident Employer and are encouraging suppliers to also become Disability Confident Employers, demonstrating leadership.

Key Opportunity: Implementing Good Practice to Increase Inclusivity

We are evaluating the use of workplace adjustment passports. A workplace adjustment passport is a live record of agreed adjustments between an employee and their manager to support the employee at work due to a health condition, impairment or disability. This is something that the LCR Combined Authority use and have used successfully. They are recommending them to other LCR authorities. This was also suggested by our disability staff group and various unions as a step in the right direction to increase inclusivity.

Blind applications are also something the council wants to progress. A procurement exercise will be conducted prior to this to seek a supplier, ensuring unconscious bias plays no role in job application processes.

Objective 6:

Improved monitoring and measurement of progress

To evaluate the effectiveness of our strategies and the actions we intend to take, we need to consistently review their success, measured against several expectations. We need to review ourselves against internal expectations and other employers. We want to be known as an inclusive company and are flexible to make necessary changes as landscapes change.

What we will do:

- Maximise our engagement with, and learning from, external bodies such as (but not limited to) Inclusive Companies.
- Establish peer review processes to capture perspective, challenge and learning in all areas of the organisation.
- Strengthen reporting mechanisms on EDI to enable evidencing of progress against this strategy and these objectives.
- Ensure focus on both outputs and outcomes (leading indicators and lagging indicators).
- Update our approach to Equality Impact Assessments, ensuring completion and review for all strategies, policies and projects, to a standard that is recognised as best in class.

Actions

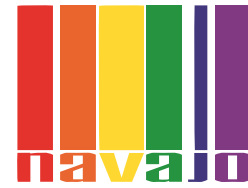
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| 6.1 | Review Navajo assessment feedback and develop an appropriate action plan. | 6.5 | Support staff to have the skills to produce Council information in accessible formats, to meet the needs of the diversity of the workforce and communities and use the outcomes in the Accessible Communications Policy. |
| 6.2 | Build on 'Inclusive Companies' membership and review other potential schemes to support challenges and improvement. | 6.6 | Measure impact on workforce and communities. |
| 6.3 | Develop detailed action plan from this strategy, and review potential strategy updates and future reviews. | 6.7 | Produce a breakdown of statistics regarding the workforce. This would aid in identifying areas of support requirements. |
| 6.4 | Continue reporting at SLB, and beyond – review opportunities to widen and strengthen visibility of progress and measurement of success. | 6.8 | Gather feedback regularly from network/support groups. |

Case Study: The Navajo Chartermark

The Navajo Merseyside & Cheshire LGBTIQA+ Charter Mark is an equality mark sponsored by In-Trust Merseyside and supported by the LGBTIQA+ Community networks across Merseyside- a signifier of good practice, commitment and knowledge of the specific needs, issues and barriers facing LGBTIQA+ people in Merseyside.

In 2018, Sefton became the first local authority to receive the charter mark recognising its commitment to LGBT+ people across the Borough.

Sefton Council was again awarded the Navajo Charter Mark for displaying good practice and commitment towards its LGBT+ staff and community at the annual Navajo Awards Ceremony, held at The City of Liverpool College on Thursday 6th October 2022.



Inclusive Companies

Inclusive Companies exists to challenge the lack of diverse representation within UK based organisations. It seeks to assist employers in fostering a truly inclusive environment where they recognise and value the differences of each employee.

Members benefit from accessing a host of outstanding resources which allow you to connect, share best practice and ultimately improve organisational performance. As Sefton continues to improve and review its processes, membership of Inclusive Companies is an advantage, learning from others and bettering out processes.

Objective 7:

Establish and strengthen monitoring and governance structures

Improving internal processes as we continue to develop as a council is a priority. As EDI becomes more important and we adapt to changing landscapes, establishing and strengthening monitoring and governance structures allows us to review our progress and strive for better.

What we will do:

- Update our Equality Impact Assessments approach, including with training and review mechanisms, ensuring that these considerations are part of the earliest stages of strategy, policy and project development, and that progress against the issues identified in each EIA are measured.
- Finalise approach to the Socioeconomic Duty, with partners across the Liverpool City Region, and embedding required actions and opportunities into this strategic action planning process.
- Establish a Race Equality Monitoring Group to support strengthened governance and monitoring.

Actions

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| <p>7.1 Establish Race Equality Monitoring Group (REMG), as per recommendations of the Council’s Race Equality Declaration of Intent Motion 2022.</p> <p>7.2 Review and update (where required) CEG Terms of Reference in the context of REMG and other groups.</p> <p>7.3 Launch LGBTQIA+ group and Disability group as part of Staff Networks.</p> | <p>7.4 EIAs – establish monitoring processes to ensure in place for all Cabinet decisions.</p> <p>7.5 Leadership to emphasise the responsibility of all staff to recognise inequalities and act in the right way, using the support available.</p> <p>7.6 Continue review of Socioeconomic Duty with partners across the LCR, and (subject to progress and deliverability) request Cabinet approval for signing up to the Duty.</p> |
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Case Study: Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment is to ensure that services, functions, policies and products that are affected by the decision do not directly, indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against our stakeholders or employees. Where any adverse impact is found we develop objectives that tackle the impact through the development and implementation of equality action plans.

The Equality Act 2010 superseded the previous legislation and does not require EIAs. However, the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Act still requires organisations such as Sefton Council to assess the impact of policies and decisions. Evidence that this has been done has been required by case law. Sefton Council have decided to continue to use EIAs as they are an effective tool for achieving this.

Key Opportunity: Race Equality Monitoring Group

Sefton Council is working with the Combined Authority and the other Liverpool City Region (LCR) Councils to develop and deliver a Race Equality Programme that seeks to meet the shared vision of “tackling systemic injustice and inequality and driving forward positive change for our DEBs (Diverse and Ethnic Background) employees and residents - influencing the partners we work with to do the same”. Sefton Council is committed to achieve the Sefton Council Strategy vision of A Confident and Connected Borough.

The recommendation is therefore to set up a Race Equality Monitoring Group. The group will develop a Borough-wide strategy in line with the Liverpool City Regions targets of 2025/2026. It will also recommend ways we can maximise the voice of the DEBs staff group, improve retention, and promote progression into Senior leadership roles.

The Future of Sefton

This strategy has aimed to demonstrate that equality, diversity and inclusion are priorities for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. However, it is important to recognise that this is not where our efforts stop. This strategy is a guide for future steps we will take to make Sefton a better place, as we continue to learn from our communities. Striving for better is a journey and is one we are committed to taking.

We will remain committed to standing with our communities across the borough, guaranteeing that all residents, regardless of their background, have a good quality of life. We will continue to work collaboratively with our partners and the wider city region towards common goals, sharing good practice and learning from one another's research. We are committed to speaking and working with our residents to understand lived experience and will adapt and innovate accordingly.

There has been significant economic and social improvement over the past 15 years across the region, yet approximately 88,000 Sefton residents live in the most deprived 10% of England. The Combined Authority has taken the decision that socio-economic status is considered alongside protected characteristics following stakeholder consultation and on the recommendation of the Social Mobility Commission. In voluntarily adopting the socio-economic duty, prioritising the well-being of our residents is essential and we will make strides to mitigate socio-economic disadvantage.



Agenda Item 4

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

Education and skills are critical for people to make the most of economic opportunities, but children from low-income backgrounds achieve worse results at every stage of their education compared to those from better off homes. This deprives the region and employers of talent. It also reduces people's earning potential, reduces the tax take and increases the risk that poverty will be passed from one generation to the next. We will therefore explore strengthening and expanding work in the Liverpool City Region, undertaking activities specifically designed to tackle socio-economic disadvantage, acting in the spirit of the duty.

This includes working with partners to:

- improve employment rates.
- number of people recruited from our most deprived areas.
- quality of employment.
- tackle insecure employment on a postcode basis.



Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

Measuring Sefton’s socio-economic background is therefore a future priority, in which recommendations from the EDG will be considered. As per the action plans herein, Sefton Council will also collaborate with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and agencies across the region, working towards agreement to sign up to the Socioeconomic Duty.

The Council will also support delivery against the approved motion to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic. This includes building on the early success of the Caring Business Charter, through which more than 50 organisations (at February 2023) have signed up to the commitment to provide employment, training, apprenticeship, work experience or mentoring opportunities to care-experienced young people in Sefton. This exemplifies and evidences the importance of, and opportunity for, partnership working in the achievement of the objectives identified herein. The Council will also consider actions and opportunities to support informal carers.

Caring Business Charter

The Sovini Group | **Sefton Council**

Caring Business Charter

This Charter reflects the shared commitment of the business and Sefton Council to helping care experienced and other vulnerable young people prepare for and access the world of work, and reflects the shared commitment to supporting the communities in which we live and work.

Sovini 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 this Caring Business is making to its community.

Name: **Stephen Watson**
 Title: **Executive Director of Place**
 Business: **Sefton Council**
 Signed: *[Signature]*

The approach outlined in our strategy will lead us in our work over the next few years. It will be subject to an annual review as we continue to learn more about the issues our residents face and how we can best drive reform to improve quality of life. We will assess progress regularly as the landscape evolves in the borough and we come up against new challenges.

We will use this document to:

- Serve as the first port of call for more detailed plans in the future, which we will continue to visit and reshape with our partners and communities.
- Inform clear communications and engagement opportunities with local people and communities to bring people on board with our vision and approach so we can work together to achieve common goals.
- Inform colleagues of expectations when working for the Council, highlighting our goal to shape good practice.

Measurement of success will be through not only quantifiable changes and improvements, but also outputs as well as outcomes, with the review mechanisms identified and strengthened within this strategy ensuring that the Council maintains focus on these important areas of challenge and opportunity.



Agenda Item 4



Agenda Item 5

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 th April 2023
Subject:	Determination of Proposal to Expand the Age Range at Waterloo Primary School		
Report of:	Executive Director for Children's Social Care and Education	Wards Affected:	Church and Victoria
Cabinet Portfolio:	Education		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The purpose of the report is to seek a determination on the proposal to expand the age range at Waterloo Primary School.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is requested to approve the proposal as detailed in the statutory notice to change the age range from 4 to 11 to 2 to 11 at Waterloo Primary School with effect from July 2023, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

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: (including any Risk Implications)

Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare places to enable parents to work. These childcare places need to be accessible, affordable, and delivered flexibly in high quality settings. Local authorities must ensure that the needs of children and families in each local area are met, by influencing and shaping provision through local partnerships, and by identifying gaps and developing the market.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

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

(B) Capital Costs

N/A

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Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
The school are exploring TUPE arrangements for existing staff taking advice from Sefton Council.	
Legal Implications:	
The reorganisation of school provision, as proposed at Waterloo Primary School, is a statutory change and therefore subject to a formal legal process. This process is set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations.	
Equality Implications: See body of report section 6	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	Yes
Have a neutral impact	No
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:
The proposal will provide additional school places and ensure that pupils will not have to travel to other areas to attend school.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services:
The proposal will provide additional school places in an area where demand for places is growing due to additional housebuilding.
Place – leadership and influencer: N/A
Drivers of change and reform: N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener: N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7186/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5386/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Consultation has been conducted with parents, governors and staff at the school and Head teachers at other Sefton schools. The nursery staff have also been consulted. Notices were published on Sefton Council website in accordance with current legislation, on 14th February 2023 and this was followed immediately by a four-week representation period which ended on 14th March 2023.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Council meeting.

Contact Officer:	Tracy McKeating
Telephone Number:	07837 863075
Email Address:	Tracy.McKeating@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix A - Public Notice and Proposal for Waterloo Primary School

Appendix B – Response to Sefton Council from Parent

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1. Approval was given by Cabinet Members for Education on 3rd February 2023 to the publication of a statutory public notice to change the age range at Waterloo Primary School from ages 4 to 11, to 2 to 11.
- 1.2. In December 2022, the Head teacher and Governing body wrote to the Assistant Director for Education seeking approval to expand the school to include nursery provision that would be led under the direction of the governing body, current head teacher and staff at Waterloo Primary School.
- 1.3. The current provision is on the site and managed by a private early year's provider. This proposal provides an opportunity for the school to re-configure how early years provision is delivered to enable it to meet the needs of local parents and improve the quality of education.
- 1.4. Another factor influencing the governing body proposal to manage the nursery provision was in February 2022, the school Ofsted inspection confirmed that Early Years was good. This would enable the good practice identified to be extended into the school Nursery.

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- 1.5. The proposal includes having a teacher led nursery with leadership responsibility and management oversight from the Deputy Headteacher who is an early year's practitioner. Having this role being responsible for the delivery of the early years provision would increase educational standards.
- 1.6. Being responsible for the management of the nursery provision would ensure early identification of children with specific special educational needs. In addition to this the school have a service level agreement in place with Sefton Council to deliver the early help offer through the Family Wellbeing Centre.
- 1.7. Parents are increasingly seeking more flexibility from nursery places, to support them with work commitments. The existing private provision operates 8am until 5pm five days a week for thirty-eight weeks a year. A maximum of forty children attending each session. The current provision closes at 3.15p.m. on a Friday.
- 1.8. By increasing the wrap around offer this would almost certainly increase the number of pupils accessing the provision, as working parents who need more hours than are currently offered, would have the school setting as an option rather than having to travel further afield. This would also apply to working parents of existing pupils who may not previously have been able to use the provision for younger siblings due to the restricted hours on offer.

2. Process

- 2.1. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, and associated statutory guidance, sets out the process to be followed in relation to changes to school organisation, and the factors that must be considered by decision makers.
- 2.2. In respect of changes involving a community school, such as alteration of the age range, the LA is both the proposer and the decision maker of the proposal. Whilst the Governing Body have requested that this proposal be developed, the LA must publish and consult on the proposal. If the Authority fails to decide the proposal within two months from the end of the consultation period, the proposal and any representations about the proposal must be passed to the Schools Adjudicator for a decision.
- 2.3. Upon publication of a statutory notice setting out the proposal, representations can be made to the LA by any person within a four-week period.
- 2.4. The statutory guidance states that the LA as decision-maker will need to be satisfied that the appropriate, fair and open consultation has been carried out, and that the proposer has given full consideration to all the responses received.

- 2.5. The decision-maker must consider the views of those affected by a proposal or who have an interest in it and should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view. Instead, they should give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most directly affected by a proposal – especially parents of children at the affected school.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. Prior to the publication of a proposal, there is a strong expectation that interested parties will be consulted in developing the proposal prior to publication, taking into account all relevant considerations. The head teacher and governing body wrote to the local authority in December 2022 to seek approval to start the consultation process in relation to the prescribed alterations to Waterloo Primary School.
- 3.2. The school has carried out other consultations with parents and staff and the private nursery that is currently in operation.
- 3.3. The school has carried out consultation with the staff and families that would be affected by this proposal. Following this, the LA was requested to publish the statutory proposal.
- 3.4. The statutory guidance states that the LA as decision-maker will need to be satisfied that the appropriate, fair and open consultation has been carried out, and that the proposer has given full consideration to all the responses received.
- 3.5. The proposal was published on 14th February 2023, setting out arrangements for those affected by the proposal to make their views known. The closing date for receipt of comments was 14th March 2023.
- 3.6. Other head teachers in the local area were written to on 22nd February 2023 to inform them of the proposed prescribed alterations to Waterloo Primary School the statutory process required.

4. Response to the consultation

Several replies were received. A telephone call from a parent received shortly after the letter was sent out - "***I am shocked and disappointed that you are kicking the nursery out. We've only just had notification from the nursery and now you have sent this letter. I think it is disgusting that you are kicking them out.***"

A few passing comments from parents who have asked to place their children's name down for the school nursery once this opens:

A copy of a response from a parent is set out in Appendix B to the report.

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There have had three completed Expression of Interest forms received for places in September 2023. Three parents have asked if the school would be creating any job opportunities.

There has been no response to the consultation from other schools in the local area in the local area.

5. The Decision-Making Process

Cabinet is the Decision Maker for the proposal which must be determined by the Local Authority. The Decision Maker must consider the four key issues below before judging the respective factors and merits of the proposal.

- **Is any information missing?** All necessary information is included in this report and the statutory process in making prescribed alterations has been followed.
- **Does the published notice comply with statutory requirements?** The published notices have been compiled in accordance with the statutory guidelines and advice from the DfE on the wording to be used. An example is attached at Annex A.
- **Has the consultation been carried out prior to the publication of the notice?** The consultation process was reported to the Cabinet Member for Education on 3rd February 2023.
- **Are the proposals “related” to other published proposals?** The individual proposal is not related to any other published proposals.

6. Equality Implications

6.1 The Equality Act 2010 says public authorities must comply with the public sector equality duty. In carrying out their functions, they need to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race

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- Religion and Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

- 6.2** In Sefton, a motion was approved by Council, at its meeting on 19th January 2023 to include Care Experience, as a protected characteristic. This decision is recognised in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- 6.3** Young people are a protected characteristic by age, but they may also have other protected characteristics too, for example they may also have a disability or are care experienced.
- 6.4** According to the Census 2021 there are 71, 404 children and young people aged 0 – 24. In Sefton there are also currently over 600 cared for children and over 2500 children and young people who have an Education, Health, and Care plan.
- 6.5** This proposal will positively impact on the number of school places for children of preschool age and thereby increasing opportunities for parental choice, in line with DfE guidance. In addition, the school has a SEND resource base which will enable the pre-school provision to access expert advice and support in the early identification of special educational needs

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Appendix A

Public Notice and Proposal for Waterloo Primary School

Notice is given in accordance with Regulations 4 and 5 of the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 that Sefton Council intends to make a prescribed alteration to Waterloo Primary School from July 2023.

This consultation is being undertaken to advise you of proposals concerning Waterloo Primary School and to invite you to tell us what you think of the proposals. This is part of a statutory consultation process that Sefton Council is managing in partnership with the school's Governing Body.

The proposal is:

- To change the age range at Waterloo primary School from 4 - 11 to 2 - 11 from July 2023. The published admission number (PAN) for the main school will not be affected by these proposals. The nursery provision will be offered in a more flexible way, according to parental demand.
- To run all nursery provision for 2-3 year under the direction of the School Governors from July 2023

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from the School Organisation Team, School Support Services, Sefton Council, **3rd Floor, Magdalen House, Trinity Road, Bootle, L20 3NJ** www.sefton.gov.uk/schools-learning/school-organisation

Within four weeks from the date of publication of these proposals, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to the School Organisation Team, School Support Services, Sefton Council, **3rd Floor, Magdalen House Trinity Road, Bootle, L20 3NJ** or by email to: school.organisation@sefton.gov.uk

Signed: D Johnson, Chief Executive and Authorised Officer of Sefton Metropolitan Council

Publication Date: 14 February 2023

Introduction

This consultation is being undertaken to advise you of proposals concerning Waterloo Primary School and to invite you to tell us what you think of the proposals. This is part of a statutory consultation process that Sefton Council is managing in partnership with the school's Governing Body. The proposal is:

- To change the age range at Waterloo primary School from 4 - 11 to 2 - 11 from July 2023. The published admission number (PAN) for the main school will not be affected by these proposals. The nursery provision will be offered in a more flexible way, according to parental demand.
- To run all nursery provision for 2-3 year under the direction of the School Governors from July 2023

Why Change?

Parents are increasingly seeking more flexibility from nursery places, to support them with work commitments.

The existing provision operates 8 – 5 p.m for 5 days a week for 38 weeks a year – with a maximum of 40 children attending each session. The Nursery closes currently at 3.15 p.m on a Friday.

By offering a School Nursery with the existing Nursery staff from the current private provider there would be consistency of location, provision, quality and care with the added robustness and requirements of a school-based nursery rather than a PVI setting. In February 2022 the school Ofsted inspection confirmed the evaluation of the school that Early Years was good. This practice would be extended into the school Nursery.

A Nursery at Waterloo Primary would be teacher led with leadership responsibility and oversight from the Deputy Headteacher who is an early year's practitioner thus increasing educational standards. The Deputy Headteacher started her NPQ in Early Years in January 2023 and is also ready working with the LA on the SSTEWS project with the support of Sefton Council Service Manager for Early Years.

By ultimately increasing the wrap around offer this would almost certainly increase the number of pupils accessing the provision, as working parents who need more hours than are currently offered would have the school setting as an option rather than having to travel further afield. This would also be the same situation for working parents of existing pupils who may not previously have been able to use the provision for younger siblings due to the restricted hours on offer.

In order to ensure early identification of specific SEND it would be our intention to offer specific resource places over a period of time which would support smooth transition into the school resourced bases for pupils with ASD.

The school runs a Family Wellbeing Centre commissioned by the Local Authority and it would be the schools intention to extend the links between Nursery and the Centre to ensure targeted early help considering the needs of the whole family and support for all with access to universal and targeted services at the point of identified need.

Building consequences

There will be no changes to the accommodation, and early years children will continue to attend their sessions.

What is the proposed timetable?

3rd February 2023: The Council Portfolio Holder for Education gave approval for the proposal to go out for consultation.

10th February 2023 – : Consultation with parents and the local community to take into account the views expressed regarding the proposals to change the age range.

If Cabinet agree to the proposals, the decision will begin to be implemented from June 2023 with the new arrangements beginning in July 2023.

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Appendix B

Response to Sefton Council from Parent

Hello,

I was notified today from both Next Steps Nursery and Waterloo Primary school that the intention is to kick Next Steps out of the premises and replace it with a Nursery.

I have children currently in Waterloo Primary School and Next Steps (all have attended Next Steps). I am beyond heartbroken at this decision and cried upon reading the notifications.

Next Steps has been operational for almost (over?) two decades now and is a home away from home - they are family run and have always advocated for the children that attend their setting. They have built a business on their amazing ability to bring children out of their shell and their love and care for the children in their care.

Ruth knows every child and every parent and is always available for a chat, regardless of whether it is work based or personal.

In the letter we received below was noted:

"There will be no changes to the accommodation, and early years children will continue to attend their sessions."

It is beyond unfair that Sefton Council feels that it is able to take away someone's successful business and then state that the children that attend will continue to attend their sessions - you're not only taking away Next Steps business, you're also looking to steal their revenue streams and clients. Not surprising though, at least all government establishments keep to the same script.

In the letter we received there was also this comment:

"A major benefit of a school based Nursery is that it must be led by qualified teachers."

I think this comment is disgusting - it insinuates that the staff at Next Steps are inadequate at their job because they are not qualified teachers. Qualified teachers are trained to tick boxes and from my experience with teachers over the last couple of years, they will always put school policy over the well-being of a child. I don't think the comment above is a major benefit at all.

Our government require children to attend educational establishments once they are 5 - and from there they are conditioned to sit down, and follow rules. My older children panic over reading at home because if they don't their lunch breaks are reduced because they have to attend reading club. They no longer read for enjoyment, but instead out of fear.

So I have a few questions:

What support are you offering the current owners of Next Steps Nursery for taking away their building and also intending on taking their business/ customers?

Can you confirm that being in a qualified teacher led nursery that the children will allow to be children and that structured education will not be forced on them at 2?

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Can you also confirm that the school will be able to budget accordingly? And are you able to share the budget plans and how this will financially benefit the school?

At present schools around the country are incredibly under funded - I'm struggling with how it makes sense to remove a constant revenue stream to take on additional costs, staffing, and supplies?

I understand you will be able to charge for breakfast club and afterschool clubs; but you already do that. I'm incredibly cautious that the current Nursery will be replaced by one that will be subject to extreme budget pressure and teacher strikes.

I am heartbroken; and my intentional will be to move my youngest to wherever Ruth and her team move too - Next Steps was a Nursery that I chose for my children to attend because I loved it.

Thank you,

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6th April 2023
Subject:	High Needs Funding 2022-23 Quarterly Monitoring Update		
Report of:	Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Education		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To inform Cabinet of:

1. The monitoring position of the High Needs budget position on the 1st of February 2023 as per previous agreement to provide regular updates.
 - The forecast expenditure to year end based on current / anticipated SEND support required during 2022/23.
 - Provisional High Need budget forecast for the 2023/24 financial year based on announced funding levels and estimated High Needs demands.
2. Update on the current SEN Review / Sufficiency Programme aimed at bringing High Needs expenditure pressures back into a more manageable financial position in the future.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet is requested to:

DSG – High Needs Budget

- 1) Note the current forecast position relating to the 2022/23 High Needs Budget.
- 2) Note the forecast accumulative deficit position of the High Needs Budget.
- 3) Note the provisional potential deficit position facing the 2023/24 High Needs Budget

Update on the 2022/23 SEN Review / Sufficiency Programme

- 4) Note the continuing work being undertaken through the SEN Review/ Sufficiency Programme and:
- 5) Note the capital projects raised in Section 5.4

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

- 1) To provide an updated on the 2022/23 High Needs budget financial position.
- 2) To provide Members with a provisional update of the potential deficit budget forecast against the High Needs budget in 2023/24

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- 3) To ensure that the SEND Review / Sufficiency programme can progress to provide sustainable and effective SEND support for Sefton pupils within the available resources allocated through the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block.

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

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The options considered in this report are investments in order to save higher expenditure in the future. This may, by necessity, lead to large increases to the High Needs accumulated deficit, already forecast to be in excess of £24m by the end of 2023/24. There are considerable risks posed by this which are further considered in the report.

(B) Capital Costs

All financial implications are contained within the current High Needs capital programme for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): All implications are detailed in the report.	
Legal Implications:	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Impact on Children and Young People: Yes All implications are detailed in the report with regards to the impact and risks associated.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: allows a Sefton wide focus on educational support for children with SEND
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Proposals allow greater localised control and focus on the SEND requirements of the borough of Sefton in the review and delivery of SEND Specialist Education Placements and Support Services
Commission, broker and provide core services: Proposals strengthen the role of Strategic SEN Commissioning at a Sefton borough level and encourages greater collaboration with in-house SEND Settings for better outcomes for children
Place – leadership and influencer: Proposals set out the road map for greater local control of SEN demand / provision by the Council
Drivers of change and reform: Proposals allow for a Sefton wide focus on educational inequalities in provision for children with SEND
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Proposals allow for a broader financial focus on the borough of Sefton for education SEN support
Greater income for social investment: Proposals allow for a broader financial focus on the borough of Sefton for education SEN support
Cleaner Greener: The creation of more local in-house SEN provision should reduce SEND home to children's transport journeys and so reduce carbon emissions

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7195/23) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD5395/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer:	Tricia Davies
Telephone Number:	0151 934 3428
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Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

Council Report - High Needs Funding Update January 2022

High Needs Funding 2022-23 Quarterly Monitoring Update February 2022

High Need Monitoring Report – July 2022

High needs Monitoring Report – November 2022

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the continuing work in relation to the High Needs Funding Budget. It will cover the current and forecasted deficits and the work that is already underway and further work that is required to address this situation and bring expenditure back into line with the resources available. This will include further details in relation to support being provided to schools and the sufficiency plans for the Local Authority to ensure that there are an appropriate number of maintained specialist placements available to meet demand. This includes approved Capital investment agreed through the 2022/23 and 2023/24 High Needs Capital Programme. It will also provide an update in relation to progress with Sefton Council's participation in the Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme and the next steps to be taken.
- 1.2 Through the current High Needs review, a key feature already underway, was to develop a new funding model for High Needs (HN) placements that was transparent, right-sized Special School budgets and provided stability for in-house placements. In January 2022, Council approved the implementation of new High Needs funding model from April 2022.
- 1.3 Although the new funding model addressed the key actions required within the review, the cost of implementing a new funding mechanism increased the cost pressure on the HN Block by up £2m per year from 2022/23.
- 1.4 With a net deficit on High Needs already reaching towards £12m at January 2022 (2021/22), such a decision to invest at further cost to High Needs, was not taken lightly. However, the risk of not right-sizing the funding of the in-house Special schools; Resourced Units and AP may have led to these schools failing, with an inability to adequately continue to meet the growing demand in the Borough for SEN places. Such a failure would almost certainly lead to more SEN pupils being placed out of Borough at huge expense compared to an in-house placement. The decision was therefore considered to offer good value for money, with the added bonus for the SEN Team, of being able to work with the in-house provision to help expand these schools over time, as required. and as part of the HN review, whilst

also retaining their very good reputation.

- 15 The HN review also agreed the development of more in-house placements for children with EHCPs with more forward planning for sufficiency of places in order to reduce reliance on external placements. This is discussed later in the report. In addition, the last 12 months has been an expansion of group funding approaches across many schools. Such agreements also offer value for money by reducing the number of children requiring individual 1:1 support and by supporting SEN children through working in small, dedicated groups. As an example, the High Needs Funding would provide for the cost of a teacher whilst the school pays for a TA(s), which is cheaper than paying for each 1:1 requirement. This also saves the school having to meet the first £6k of each 1:1 child. This initiative has seen an increased take-up in 2022/23 with further mainstream schools engaging with the process. This report is also to provide Members with the current forecast year-end financial position for the High Needs budget for the 2022/23 financial year as of 1st February 2023 and to provide an early overview of the likely financial position on the High Needs in 2023/24, in the light of the funding allocations announced in December, although this starting position is still being reviewed and further updates will be provided to Members through the quarterly budget monitoring reports in 2023/24.
- 16 This report needs to be read in the context of the Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV) Programme. Sefton is in tranche 2 of the Programme and has joined in January 2023. The DBV programme is intended to support Local Authorities having a significant deficit against their High Needs Budgets to be as effective and efficient as they can, to reduce spending to more manageable levels, and to get back within budget, through an approved action plan, over a 2–3-year period with support offered throughout from DfE and financial Advisors. Further information regarding the programme was provided to members in earlier monitoring reports and an update provided later in this report.
- 17 This report should also be read in the context of the SEND Green Paper Consultation, which proposed the concept of a national banding and funding framework to ensure consistency of placement costs across the entire country. The DfE has now published its response to the consultation feedback and has set out its intended approach in the document ‘Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan - Right Support, Right Place, Right Time’ This describes further the concept of developing the national banding and funding framework and delivering a sustainable funding model for Local Authorities. There is an initial intended timeframe around delivery of this and other objectives by 2025.
- 18 In this situation, the Council has 2 key objectives:
 - i) To provide a first-class service in accordance with best practice and government advice and support those who need it; and

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- ii) To ensure that this service is financially sustainable, with the Council's annual expenditure being within government funding that is allocated and in addition repays the deficit owing.

2. Sefton's High Needs Funding / Budget position 2022/23

- 2.1 Despite the increased level of High Needs funding in 2022/23 (£4.3m) it has not been enough to meet continued demand and the additional cost pressures on High Needs this year. In fact, similar to the previous 4 years, Sefton's HN funding has largely played catch-up to service expenditure in a lagged fashion, and 2023/24 is also no exception.

The number of children being assessed and requiring support through an EHC continues to increase and during 2022/23 the number of EHC has increased by 19.95%. During 2022 an extra 532 children have been assessed as requiring an Education Health and Care Plan across the Borough.

- 2.2 The level of HN funding offered by the Government in recent years, despite adding extra supplementary grant towards cost pressures such as Pay and Inflation in 2022/23 and 2023/24, still does not offer sufficient resource to meet local growing demand for High Needs provision. In fact, much of the High Needs national formula allocations continues to be based on 'historic' demand data from 2018/19. Even those areas of the formula which do change for things like the 0-18 years population shifts and for other local health factors etc make little real difference to the funding level reflective of true demand. Thus, the funding allocations are not responsive to the larger increases in demand and no doubt, are driven by the amount of national funding available.
- 2.3 For Sefton, the funding shortfall each year is compounded on several fronts, not least by the increased reliance on out of Borough placements, where either the in house provision is not available to meet the needs of a child; where schools are not quite as inclusive as they might be to take a child- this may be a funding issue; or where there is a shortage of places; or in some instances, caused through parental pressure. Coupled with the investment referred to above to right size the Council's In-House provision in 2022/23, plus increasing inflationary pressures in the year; the development of group funding and with the increases in the number of EHCs, the updated forecast for the 2022/23 budget is currently a projected deficit of -£6 million. The situation also remains fluid, as more EHCP assessments are being agreed through the year, based on a significant number of outstanding cases now being agreed; along with new funding agreements, such as the development of group funding in schools, made between the SEN team and the schools concerned. Whilst these agreements represent cost avoidance in comparison to costs that would be in place had the pupils instead received 1:1 funding or independent placements, they still represent an increase on the burden of the High Needs Budget.
- 2.4 The above deficit forecast does not take account of any further increase in the number of pupils requiring SEND support in the last month of the current financial year, so £6m may be slightly exceeded by the end of March 2023.
- 2.5 An accumulative deficit position on the High Needs budget of £18.5m would

be reached should this position materialise. However, in mitigation to some degree, and in summary, the Council has, this year, embarked on a course of action to not only support the stability of its maintained special provision for future growth of in house places through an agreed £2m investment as mentioned above; but it has also been working actively with schools in developing small group funding SEN support, which is being widely welcomed; It has also been developing new SEN places in its Resourced Units and Special schools over the last 6 months, but there is more to do. It will continue to try to expand in house provision wherever possible over the next 2 to 3 years to try to reduce/ stem the need for expensive out of borough places, though this will take time to develop and start to make a difference; It has also actively increased classroom size for extra places across three schools by use of mobile units.

- 2.6 The SEN team and officers have continued to roll out the actions above, over this past 12 months, alongside supporting and challenging mainstream schools to be as inclusive as they can be, with the aim of reducing the need for as many specialist placement for children. These existing mitigations will be thoroughly analysed by the DBV Programme team to understand their long-term effects on forecasting. In response to initial feedback to the DBV team part of their focus is to look at short term 'quick wins' on financial spending as well as long term system change and their findings, through the examination of a range of statistical data and benchmarking supplied to them by Finance and the SEN team, along with their good practice case-studies, will help to inform and shape the longer-term actions required.

3. 2023/24 High Needs Budget – provisional estimated financial deficit

- 3.1 The Dedicated Schools Funding Allocations for 2023/24 as announced in December 2022 included a net increase of just £2.74m to the High Needs Block (following ESFA deductions for Independent Schools) increasing the High Needs budget for 2023/23 to £42,803,102 to meet high needs demand in the new financial year.

- 3.2 However, the Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement, that there would be additional support to the Education sector (including High Needs) through a Supplementary Grant in 2023/24. This funding to be known as 'Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG)' was additional to the DSG announcements and was given, similar to an amount in 2022/23, to support increased cost pressures the sector was facing in the 2022/23 academic year due to current pay awards and price increases.

- 3.3 The overall 2023/24 MSAG Funding for Sefton is £8.643m and is split on an 80/20 basis between Schools and High Needs and so Sefton receives £6.817m for schools and £1.826m for High Needs increasing the overall funding to support High Needs in 2023/24 to £44,629,609. However, there are prescriptive requirements placed by the DfE around the use of the additional funding in 2023/24, and so it cannot be looked on as additional funding to support the existing deficit position on the High Needs Block. Much of it must be channelled to support special school provision.

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- 34 The table below provides Members with an initial estimate of the financial forecast for the High Needs Budget in 2023/24

<u>Forecast HN Budget Position 2023/24i</u>	
HN (Net) Budget 2022/23	£40,057,156
Estimated Expenditure 2022/23	£46,057,156
Estimated Deficit 2022/23	-£6,000,000
<u>2023/24 Forecasts</u>	
HN (Net) Budget 2023/24 (Increase in funding £2,745,946)	£42,803,102
Mainstream Schools Additional Grant 2023/24 High Needs element (**Gov requirements on use of this funding)	£1,826,507
Total HN Funding 2023/24	£44,629,609
Starting Position - Assume Same Expenditure level as forecast for 2022/23 (i.e with no increase / decrease in demand or taking account of full-year of any increases in 2022/23)	£46,057,156
Opening and immediate shortfall Deficit Position 2023/24	-£1,427,547
<u>Known Additional Pressures that must be met in 2023/2024</u>	
3.4% Supplementary HN Grant Passport - **Gov Requirement	£728,522
Special School price/pay uplifts 2023/24 - full-year cost of additional places in 2022/23 plus any agreed new places Sept 2023	£1,723,569
School Resource Units price/pay uplifts 2023/24 - full-year cost of additional places in 2022/23 plus any agreed new places Sept 2023	£363,399
AP Schools price/pay uplifts 2023/24 - full-year cost of additional places in 2022/23 plus any agreed new places Sept 2023	£81,982
Primary School 1:1 Top-up funding Pay uplift / adjustment to pay and conditions	£1,007,898
Secondary School 1:1 Top-up funding Pay uplift / adjustment to pay and conditions	£627,767
OOB / Independent Placements - price uplifts 2023/24 (based on average 6.8% uplift – some providers are seeking higher price increases)	£601,670
Additional increases in Cost Pressures 2023/24	£5,134,806
Estimated Deficit 2023/24	-£6,562,353

<u>The above estimates do not include:</u>	
<i>Any increased demand other than 10 Primary Places and 24 special School Places built into HN capital programme</i>	
<i>No increases / decreases in 1:1 Support or new EHCs</i>	
<i>No new OOB Placements</i>	
<i>No increases in Post 16 HN numbers or increases in costs of Post 16 placements</i>	

- 35 As may be seen above, the Authority starts 2023/24, in an unfavourable position, whereby the level of funding identified for the new Financial Year does not cover the current year forecast spending level, and this will be compounded by the continuing need to expand in house places and all the measures discussed above, the positive impact of which, may not be felt for several years.
- 36 There would appear to be no obvious reduction in demand for EHCPs and places, but measures are in place to try to stem spending through invest to save measures, and to have more internal reviews and policing of HN funding with a view for example, to cease funding awards where these are no longer necessary. Two further trends however appear to be taking shape in HNs. An increase in the numbers of Early Years children being assessed for EHCPs where previously these have been relatively small; and a growing number of young people with EHCPs moving on to post 16-25 Education. The Early Years element will in part be the impact of post-Covid recovery, where those children who did not attend nursery during the Covid-impacted years are now at the age of starting reception in school, without having had the formative years of socialisation and early learning that nursery settings provide, as well as increased early identification of needs. With post-16 pupils there is again a post-Covid impact where an increased number of pupils in high school have received EHC Plans post-Covid due to Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs, and these pupils are now filtering through into the Post-16 world. These are factors it is very difficult to control. However, through careful engagement with parents and carers it may be possible to take smaller interventions at an earlier age for young children; whilst encouraging young people to be more independent and moving into employment after leaving school.
- 37 Ongoing placements of children to out of Borough always creates additional cost where a child is not or cannot be accommodated in-house. Such placements should be occasional and not the norm, and this will require investment of work with parents and with mainstream schools to increase parental confidence in mainstream inclusion and to support the schools with appropriate training and resourcing to ensure children and young people stay in mainstream provision where this is appropriate and they are able to thrive. However, many mainstream schools themselves are finding it increasingly difficult to find the funding to manage the first £6k of cost for the growing numbers of SEN children referred to them and sometimes they have refused to take them, leaving an external placement out of Borough as being highly likely. Levels of inclusion also varies across the mainstream

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schools, with some schools having high levels of SEN in their cohort and other having significantly less. This requires further support and challenge as previously referred to.

- 38 Inflation is also playing its part to increasing cost pressures across HN with Pay costs running at an average 5.7% in 2022; and price Inflation at just over 10%. Funding cannot match these increases. The latter adversely affects the out of Borough placement costs, and careful procurement through the NW SEN framework is being sought.
- 39 Whilst every effort can and is being made to try to curtail HN spending in 2023/24, and ongoing, the Authority could well be faced with an unpalatable HN deficit of over £24m-£30m by the end 2023/24. This may continue to get worse if the situation cannot start to be contained and particularly with anticipated smaller DSG settlements from the Treasury forecasts in 2024/25, unless the Government's own findings and development of the Green Paper can find a way forward to start to plug the funding gap, which nationally, grows exponentially every year.
- 3.10 The work of the DBV Programme will be instrumental in determining whether Sefton's actions to curtail spending are appropriate and the right ones and whether further areas of focus should be included.
- 3.11 The seriousness of having such large levels of overspending on High Needs and the possibility of even higher levels of accumulated deficit balances should not be underestimated. The DLUHC, in conjunction with CIPFA, have recently extended the funding override rules governing the accountability for DSG deficits by three years, covering 2023/24 to 2025/26. Under these rules such balances remain only to be carried forward as unusable reserves, and to be reduced by the LA through necessary actions, without them falling directly against the LA's own resources.
- 3.12 At the end of 2021/22 there was accumulated deficits nationally on high needs budgets of £1.4bn. It is estimated that if other local authorities have similar issues to sefton this will increase substantially by 2026. The key risk to the council is what central government then decide to do in respect of these deficits. The statutory override cannot be maintained indefinitely, and it is doubtful that the sector has this funding in reserves that it can use to fund it. Within Sefton, this is also the case. The council does not have reserves at a level that could repay this deficit not at the end of 22/23 and certainly with annual increases of £5m+.
- 3.13 Similarly with such annual increases, additional budget provision cannot be realistically set aside. As a result, the council has always maintained that this is a DSG issue build up over the last decade and should always be treated as such and should never become an issue for the general fund. Any long-term funding solutions that reflect a new system that is fully funded based on actual demand, should be supported by either deficits being written off or funded by the DSG over the long term. This however is a major risk to the financial sustainability of this council as this level of deficit cannot be met should the direction be post 2026 that deficits should be met by the general fund.

4. Mainstream support – Current position

- 4.1 The planned implementation date for a new mainstream HNF model is from the start of the new academic year in September 2023. This area is part of the focus of analysis through the DBV Programme and will be considered before implementation takes effect. Further updates on the progress of this work will be provided in future quarterly reports to Cabinet.

5. Specialist Placements, sufficiency proposed and current projects

- 5.1 As described previous Quarterly Reports, part of the strains placed upon the High Needs Budget originate from the cost of Independent out of Borough specialist placements, the majority of which have been due to a lack of sufficient maintained places within Sefton special schools and resourced provisions. This lack of spaces has resulted from the significantly increased number of EHC Assessments and resulting EHC Plans that have been processed over the past 7 years since the Children and Families Act 2014 came into force.

- 5.2 In previous Quarterly Reports Cabinet have approved a number of Capital projects as part of the recommendations to address current and future placement sufficiency concerns for specialist and resourced school provision.

- 5.3 Progress on previously agreed elements is set out below:

Name of Setting	Area of Need	Update	Impact
Redgate Primary School	Complex Learning Difficulties (CLD)	Building work underway to be completed for Easter 2023	Additional class of 8 places created enabling pupils to be kept in LA provision. Annual cost of £110,574 in LA provision against at least £400,000 in Independent provision. Cost avoidance of £289,426.
Newfield	Social Emotional Mental Health	Work underway with former St Teresa's site.	Additional 28 places created. Based on average split of top

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	(SEMH)	Building to be ready for school to move pupils in from Sept 2023	2 banding levels annual cost of £676,942 in LA provision against at least £1.4 million in Independent provision. Cost avoidance of £723,058
Formby High	Cognition and Learning	School have submitted relevant planning permission application to Sefton Council for approval. Anticipated completion by September 2024 at latest.	Additional 40 places to be created. Annual cost of £552,870 in LA provision against at least £2 million in Independent provision. Cost avoidance of £1,447,130.

5.4 In response to sufficiency planning there are a number of new projects that will require Cabinet Member for Education approval to enable capital projects to take place between now and September 2023, as well as others that may extend beyond this. Details of these elements are available in the table below:

Date	Name of setting	Area of need	Number of places created	Purpose	Amount
Sept 2023	Waterloo Primary	ASD Base	8	Relocate toilets and extend ASD base into area to create additional class	£240,000
Sept 2023	Waterloo Primary	Mainstream	N/A	Basic skills classroom KS2 – enables the mainstream part of the school to be more inclusive, preventing further EHC Assessment requests	£50,000

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Sept 2023	Marshside Primary	Mainstream	N/A	New ASD Classroom – Marshside currently have group funding in place to support a small group of Reception aged pupils who would have required specialist provision without this. This cohort need a space to move into as a new cohort arrives into Reception in September.	£350,000
Sept 2023	Redgate Primary	Complex Learning Difficulties	N/A	Outdoor Play Area for Base provision. This is in need of improvement to ensure appropriate equipment to meet the children's needs	£55,000
Sept 2023	Bishop David Sheppard	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	16	Internal alterations and extension to create 2 base classes	TBC
Sept 2023	Lydiate Primary	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	TBC	Re-commission first floor classrooms to enable base provision	£25,000
Sept 2023	Thomas Grey	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	38	Mobile classroom and internal alteration to create 4 base classes	TBC
Sept 2023	Holy Family High	Cognition and Learning	40 (phased over 2 years)	Provision of a mobile classroom and internal alterations	TBC

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- 5.5 The above projects are planned to contribute to the sufficiency of High Needs in-house places to meet anticipated growth in local demand over the next few years. Most of the capital investment identified above, lies across a range of proven and very successful High Needs provision both at Primary and Secondary level offering an expansion of places across the Special schools and Resourced Units, with three new base units in primary coming on-stream at Bishop David Sheppard; Thomas Gray (offering an extra 54 places) and Lydiate Primary potentially offering a further 8 yet to be decided – so potentially an extra 62 places (subject to successful completion of works by September 2023). In addition, there is a planned increase in places at two long established Resourced Units, Waterloo and Redgate offering a further 16 places. This gives an overall potential increase in places available at Primary age of 78. In addition, the investment includes two areas of Mainstream provision, which attracts High Needs SEN Inclusion funding, namely extra classroom facilities at Waterloo and Marshside Primary schools. This will mean they will have the ability to operate group provision for children in the school. Group funding is a way to keep costs down for the school in meeting the first £6k per child to fund a teaching assistant and the LA in supporting the cost of a teacher is considerably cheaper than paying for expensive 1:1 support or specialist provision for every child. The extra classroom at Marshside will enable them to continue to provide support for a complex cohort of children with ASD that came to Reception this academic year and will require ongoing provision to enable them to continue there. The work at Waterloo will enable the school to maintain more pupils at the SEN Support stage rather than requiring them to request further EHC Plans for those children and thus avoid further demand on the EHC element.
- 5.6 Expansion across another site is also underway for Newfield special school through the re-purposing of the former St Teresa's school building, which closed in August 2021. This facility will provide 28 new places primarily for younger children who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health issues.
- 5.7 For Secondary provision, a new Resourced Unit is planned at Formby High Academy school, and this will be a 40 placed unit once established. This is unlikely to come on-stream before September 2024 due to seeking necessary planning permission. A similar base at Holy Family High will also produce a further 40 resourced places over the next 2 years.
- 5.8 As may be seen above, the capital investment in the expansion of new places is a key part of the long-term strategy to develop sufficiency across the Borough. On the basis that the number of new places is achieved from September this year a summary of potential costs to High Needs is identified below. The forecast shown above for 2023/24 includes anticipated part year costs already for 28 Special school places and 10 Primary places leaving potentially a further 142 places to be funded including 2 potential new group funding elements including new Resourced Units at Formby High School and Holy Family High School (part year 24/25).
- 5.9 The additional revenue costs to High Needs identified above, need to be tempered against the gradual reduction in the need for out of Borough

placements, keeping these to a minimum over the next few years and beyond. As the reliance on placements at these schools starts to fall, and as long-term pupils start to leave these schools costs should start to drop in this budget area, where current levels of overspending are exceeding £2.7m pa. In house places are considerably cheaper on average than external placements. Typically, an external placement can average £50k - £60k per child pa, whilst a typical placement in a Resourced Unit can be £13,821.75 Per child pa or in local Special provision between £15,835 and £27,225 p child pa. Similarly, the cost paying towards group funding for mainstream is cheaper than many 1:1 s for every child.

- 5.10 It is difficult to assess the effects on the HN spending, though this strategy is considered the right one, but any delays or inaction to the creation and expansion of in-house places could be considerably more expensive if not planned for and made available in advance of an upcoming Academic Year for placements. The effects of inflation and ongoing SEN support in schools will inevitably continue at a growing rate and coupled with smaller future DSG HN settlements from 2024/25 the HN deficit may continue to grow before levelling off when sufficiency is being met.

Further updates will be provided as projects proceed.

6. Future Project Planning and Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme

- 6.1 An external consultant has helped support the development of a sufficiency plan, and officers are in the process of discussions with several schools and with asset management to consider the better use of our current stock. It is proposed that further considerations for expanding special school places and resourced unit places will be implemented from 2024 and we will provide a further update on proposals at the next quarterly report (June 2023).
- 6.2 Sufficiency of affordable maintained places is a key driver in the Council's strategy to control High Needs spending and ensuring that every child with special needs who requires specialist provision is receiving the best possible education in facilities that are outstanding and fit for purpose.
- 6.3 The findings of the consultant thus far, adds weight to the direction of travel towards greater sufficiency of places, given the high quality of the provision that currently exists in Sefton and the chances of expanding this provision given a suitable capital injection of funding for the development of these schools across a range of available sites in the future.
- 6.4 It is considered that a reduction to the number of external placements in Independent schools is possible over time, and keeping these places to a minimum for the most exceptional cases, will be the way forward.

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- 6.5 The DBV Programme is now reaching the end of the first module of data analysis work, whereby the financial consultancy firm Newton Europe, have analysed the initial data provided to them by the Local Authority to enable them to create detailed unmitigated forecasts and to identify key areas of interest that will be examined in greater detail in Module 2 which examines root causes of trends. The timeframe placed around the DBV programme is an expectation that we will complete Module 3 and be in a position to submit an Implementation Plan to the DfE by June/July 2023. This Implementation Plan will be in response to the full findings of the detailed analysis carried out and will provide a clear plan to address sustainability for High Needs Funding. In response to feedback from the Local Authority at the initial briefing session, the DBV Team have been clear that they will be focussing on short term responses that will generate 'quick wins' as well as longer term system changes. As part of the submission of the Implementation Plan the Local Authority will submit a bid for up to £1 million of funding to enable delivery of the Implementation Plan. This cannot be spent on Capital work or directly used to offset part of the deficit, it must be seen to produce sustainability and must be spent within a 2-year period. It is intended to support the Local Authority through providing additionality during that period of change and implementation.
- 6.6 All current mitigations such as group funding, mainstream inclusion and specialist Capital works are all factored in to the DBV analytics as will the proposed plans for sufficiency moving forwards to ensure that all relevant factors are fully considered when creating the Implementation Plan. This will be shared with Cabinet in the appropriate future report.

7. Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 The progress in relation to sufficiency, mainstream inclusion and the impact on the High Needs Budget will be monitored through existing management reporting processes. Service Managers for SEND and Inclusion will report to the Assistant Director for Education who in turn will ensure regular reporting to ELT and Cabinet. A quarterly report to Cabinet is already agreed to be in place and will continue to provide a mechanism to ensure that the Leaders of the Council remain fully informed.
- 7.2 The Service Manager for SEND and the Assistant Director for Education meet on a weekly basis to review HNF requests over £20,000, mainly out of borough requests.
- 7.3 A clear governance structure will be established to ensure monitoring and review of the Implementation Plan that will result from the DBV Programme. This will ensure reporting to the appropriate Officers and Boards and hold that programme to account.
- 7.4 Given the high profile and clear significant risk attached to the SEND agenda, including the High Needs Funding Budget and the pending SEND

Local Area Ofsted Inspection, initial discussions are underway with the Interim Director of Children's Services for potential options, responding to the recommendations in the DfE document 'High needs budgets: effective management in local authorities' published in June 2022, which presents findings from the initial work nationally in relation to managing High Needs Funding Budget Deficits and makes 10 key recommendations for Local Authorities to consider, one of which is that 'Local authorities should invest properly in SEND leadership, with dedicated time for strategic functions to avoid constant distractions from operational pressures'.

8 What will success look like?

8.1 As previously stated in Section 1.11, in this situation the Council has 2 objectives:

- i) To provide a first-class service in accordance with best practice and government advice and support those who need it; and
- ii) To ensure that this service is financially sustainable, with the Council's annual expenditure being within government funding that is allocated and in addition repays the deficit owing.

8.2 To fulfil these objectives, success will look like as set out below:

- Children and young people are supported within their local area and good outcomes are demonstrated. Pupils are well supported within their local mainstream school where appropriate and there is a quality offer of support available for pupils and settings.
- The group funding model is utilised by an increasing number of schools to reduce the need for reliance on 1:1 support, thereby improving provision and outcomes for those children and as an additional success factor, reducing the overall burden on the High Needs Budget.
- As a result of increased inclusion within mainstream and the creation of further maintained specialist placements, Sefton Council will have enough maintained specialist SEN placements available that are appropriate to meet the demands for specialist provision based on current and forecasted numbers.
- Such placements will be appropriately resourced to enable children and young people to be successfully supported within Sefton's own schools and providers, reducing the demand for more expensive, independent out of borough provisions.
- There is a reduction of pressure on the High Needs Budget with the Council moving to a position of financial sustainability and being able to live within the set budget year on year. It should be noted that the move to financial sustainability will take a period to take effect. Increasing inclusive practice within mainstream settings will include changes to culture and practice which can take a period of years to take full effect for the difference to be felt in terms of the numbers

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remaining within mainstream and not requiring specialist placements.

- Initial investment into additional maintained special school places will also increase the pressure on the High Needs Budget in the short term. However, this increase will be much smaller than if those places had instead been allocated to independent settings.
- Similarly, when High Needs Funding becomes available before an EHC Plan, there will be an initial surge in mainstream schools applying for the funding as it becomes available and there will be an increase again in funding allocated to mainstreams pre-EHC Plan. However, over a period of 12-18 months there should then be a decrease in the amount of funding with EHC Plans in mainstream as more pupils had had their needs met at an earlier stage in the process. This should then also produce a plateau in the numbers of children requiring specialist provision rather than the year on year increases currently being seen.
- As increasing numbers of children remain within the maintained mainstream and specialist sectors over the years and the number moving to independent places reduces, then the pressure on the High Needs Budget will start to reduce, moving to a position of financial sustainability at the end of that cycle.

8.3 This paper and previous Quarterly Reports therefore sets out the strategic approach to meeting the sufficiency requirement and how these plans provide better value for money and are cheaper than external provision which would be the only option should these proposals not take place. Having provided members with visibility on these, this strategic approach has been shared with the Delivering Better Value Programme and any further proposals will be developed that can support the council's stated objectives as part of the Implementation Plan.

8.4 In addition, following this Programme, a detailed 5-year budget forecast will be developed that will outline the forecast annual position and impact on the high needs budget deficit and this will be reported in the next cycle. The aim of the Delivering Better Value Programme is to get to a break-even position in 3-5 years but with a focus on some shorter-term objectives as well. When the next report to Cabinet is submitted in July the Council will be in a position to provide a 3-year forecast of spend against assumed central government funding based on demand data, historical information, the interventions in this report and the outcomes from the Delivering Better Value Programme. This will provide a forecasted position up to and beyond 2026.

8.5 Members will recall through previous budget reports and reports on High Needs Funding that clarity has been sought from Central government over a number of years as to how High Needs Deficits should be treated by councils. The fact that deficits exist and that a number of councils are on the DFE Safety Valve project (for those councils with the highest deficits) and one third of councils in England are working with the Delivering Better Value Programme (for those with substantial deficits) reflects the scale of the financial problem. Firm guidance has yet to be provided as to how these

deficits should be treated and how they should be 'paid back' or 'met'.

- 8.6 The proposals contained within this report will further improve the system that impacts the High Needs Budget and over time will lead to financial sustainability. It has been agreed in late 2022 by Government Ministers, that Councils will continue to have protection from having to fund their DSG High Needs deficits out of their core balances for a further 3 financial years 2023/24 – 2025/26, but it is not expected to be extended beyond this period. Therefore, anything the Council can do to prevent High Needs spending from adding to the already substantial accumulated deficit (£18.5m forecast end of 22/23) must be considered.

9 Risk of taking no action

- 9.1 As part of this report, Cabinet is asked to note the approval of the capital schemes contained within the Table above at section 5.4. Should the decision be taken not to approve these schemes there are several risks which should be fully considered by Members.
- 9.2 The paramount risk to preventing an expansion of places through capital spending, is the loss of learning for children and young people. There are currently not enough spaces locally both within maintained and independent provision for pupils and this could result in a number of children out of school.
- 9.3 Having pupils either out of school or inappropriately placed could have a huge impact on the council's reputation with large amounts of tribunals, complaints and risk of press involvement.
- 9.4 If the recommendations to approve the Capital schemes is not approved there is also a risk of council services being unable to meet their own aims and objectives in relation to supporting children and young people in their local settings, and in being unable to meet the proposed aims and objectives set out in the SEND Green Paper.
- 9.5 Financially, the risk of no action means that children and young people will continue to require large numbers of places in specialist provision. If no maintained provision is created and if spaces are available in independent provision, then the LA would have no choice but to place children in these settings. A placement in an independent provision for 1 year can range from £27,500 to over £100,000, with the average currently approximately £53,000 per year. This would be at an additional cost of over £8 million per year given the number of anticipated new places required over the next 12-18 months. This would add to the annual budget deficit, in turn meaning that the Council will not reach a position of financial sustainability for its High Needs Budget. This in turn could compromise the overall financial management of the Council.

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10 Next Steps

- 10.1 The LA commenced engagement with the Delivering Better Value Programme team in January of 2023. Module 1 of this is now near to completion with feedback to all relevant stakeholders taking place over the next few weeks. Module 2 is due to commence in April to examine the root cause analysis of the financial trends that are identified from Module 1. Module 3 then commences in May to work to the development and submission of the Implementation Plan and bid for up to £1 million of funding to support delivery of the Plan. A further update will be provided in the June report.
- 10.2 The DBV Programme team consists of Newton Europe and CIPFA, commissioned by the DfE as experts in the field of High Needs and able to offer analysis of the LA s HNs data, both spending and case numbers, and to help identify where the pressure points exist from areas of growing EHCPs to support for SEN inclusion in mainstream; as well as examining the processes adopted by the LA in managing assessments ; review of cases and areas of weakness which can be improved through developing best practice. They will look for a whole view of the processes, including discussion with all stakeholders, and they will assess what the Authority has already done to make improvements and cost efficiencies and whether its current plans of action are in line with DfE expectations.
- 10.3 Their role will not be to dictate to the LA what it should be doing but they will be there to offer best practice and practical guidance, as necessary, to ensure the approach taken is the right one. Once the period of initial assessment is concluded and the LA s action plan is endorsed in line with requirements, the Programme team will allow the LA to continue uninterrupted, to develop and implement its plans with periodic feedback. The approach taken is not over-prescriptive, neither is it mandatory, unlike for those LA s who are enrolled onto the DfE's 'Safety-Valve' mechanism; and neither does it involve punitive action, should the Council's plans fail to provide the desired outcomes. Milestones may be included in the plans to keep them from straying and these will support the sustainability forecasts for growing SEN places over the next few years. For extra support through the Programme, a small fund of £55m is held by the DfE to enable LA s to bid for funding to help deliver its action plans and this would be considered. However, no funding is on offer towards reducing the overall level of HNs deficit balances.
- 10.4 The consultant that looked independently at Sefton's HNF suggested that any effect on reducing HN costs will possibly take many years, potentially 4 to 5 years as new places and practices are invested in, and come into play, and we may finally reach a peak to the demand for SEN places across all age groups. This time-period of 3-5 years was also discussed by the DBV Programme at the initial briefing session. However, the Council has requested that due to the scale and seriousness of the deficit that every option to reduce expenditure be explored and ambition increased in the

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timescales. As such the DBV programme will also be strongly considering all short-term and radical impact options in addition to its usual longer-term approach it is adopting with other Councils.

- 10.5 Data systems continue to be developed and a full quotation of costs from Capita team is imminent together with the expected implementation date. This development should facilitate better quality data across HNs which in turn should aid decision making.

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Report to:	Cabinet Council	Date of Meeting:	6 April 2023 20 April 2023
Subject:	Supplementary Revenue Report Domestic Abuse New Burdens Funding		
Report of:	Assistant Director of People (Communities)	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report sets out the supplementary revenue grant funding received by the Council from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in respect of Domestic Abuse New Burdens funding for the period of 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 to 31 March 2024.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet recommendation to Council:

- 1) To approve a supplementary revenue estimate of £1.832m which is fully funded by Domestic Abuse New Burdens funding; and
- 2) The Assistant Director of People (Communities) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing be granted delegated authority for the future acceptance of the same grant funding and the allocation of the funding in line with the grant conditions.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To approve updates to the 2023/24 Revenue programme so that the funding can be used by the Council to discharge its duty under part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

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

There are no alternative options to consider.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

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New Burdens funding of £619,418 has been allocated to Sefton for 2023/24. This brings the total allocation of new burdens funding to £1,832,284 since the additional duties were introduced.

(B) Capital Costs

None

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): The Domestic Abuse Act places additional duties on the Council which have resource implications, however the funding is partially intended for this purpose and will adequately cover those costs. The rest of the funding will be used to commission new Domestic Abuse services to further meet the Council's duty.								
Legal Implications:								
Equality Implications: The equality implications have been identified and mitigated.								
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will <table border="1"><tr><td>Have a positive impact</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>Have a neutral impact</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Have a negative impact</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td><td>Yes</td></tr></table> The proposals will not have either a positive or negative impact on climate.	Have a positive impact	No	Have a neutral impact	Yes	Have a negative impact	No	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
Have a positive impact	No							
Have a neutral impact	Yes							
Have a negative impact	No							
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes							

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The purpose of the New Burdens funding is to provide specialist Domestic Abuse support to victims/survivors living in safe accommodation in Sefton.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services: New Burdens funding will be used to commission new specialist Domestic Abuse support services to victims/survivors living in safe accommodation in Sefton.
Place – leadership and influencer:

Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7122/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5322/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

N/A

Contact Officer:	Steve Martlew
Telephone Number:	07973 988996
Email Address:	steven.martlew@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 The Domestic Abuse (DA) Act came into force in April 2021 and is the biggest piece of DA legislation ever. It introduced numerous new measures that can be broadly broken down into 3 categories:

- Governance;
- Support for victims/survivors, their children, and families; and
- Strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators.

1.2 The statutory responsibility placed on the LA by the Act are:

- Formation of Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (LDAPB). Sefton's LDAPB was formed in March 2021 with Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing as chair.

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- Conduct a Needs Assessment. An external consultant was appointed to complete this work and this was completed and signed off in September 2022.
- Develop & Publish a Strategy. Sefton has a published strategy and has done for several years. Cabinet recently received the refreshed DA Strategy for adoption.
- Give effect to the Strategy. Once adopted the New Burdens funding will be used to commission services to address the gaps in service provision for DA victims, their children, and their families.
- Monitor Strategy effectiveness. Sefton is developing a data dashboard to support the work of the board.
- Report back to government via the Domestic Abuse Commissioners Office. Local Authorities are required to submit an annual report to the Commissioner and engage with their regional office.

2. Part 4 Responsibilities

- 2.1 Part 4 of the Act places a duty on Local Authorities to provide DA support services to victims/survivors, their children and their families living in safe accommodation in their area. To support LAs to discharge their duty DLUHC have provided additional “New Burdens” funding.
- 2.2 New Burdens funding of £619,418 has been allocated to Sefton for 2023/24. This brings the total allocation of new burdens funding to £1,832,284 since the additional duties were introduced.
- 2.3 Confirmation has also been received that the Local Authority will receive further New Burdens Funding from DLUHC for 2024/25 of £631,105.
- 2.3 Following Councils approval of the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023-28 a programme of commissioning to address the gaps in service provision will be undertaken. All commissioning will be reported to the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.

3. Summary

- 3.1 The Council has been allocated additional revenue funding to the value of £1.83m up to 2023/24. The funding provided by DLUHC is to support LAs to discharge their duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 April 2023
	Council		20 April 2023
Subject:	Climate Emergency Phase 2 Update		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Resources		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

Sefton Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Council has a target to achieve net zero carbon by 2030 for Council operations and has set out a strategy to achieve this goal.

The Council are coming to the end of phase 1 delivery (2020 –2023) of the Climate Change Emergency strategy / action plan. As Phase 2 begins this document highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with the next stage of implementing this challenging commitment.

The Liverpool City Region climate emergency target, to reach net zero by 2040 for all sectors, requires input and collaboration on housing, energy, transport, land use and climate resilience.

Members are asked to note the scale of the challenge associated with meeting both the Sefton Council operational target and the Liverpool City Region multi sector target.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet:

Recommend to Council the approval of the Phase 2 implementation and note the interim targets and the work required to meet the committed net zero targets over the next three years (phase 2).

Council:

Approve the Phase 2 implementation and note the interim targets and the work required to meet the committed net zero targets over the next three years (phase 2).

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Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To meet the Council's net zero carbon commitment by 2030, significant action will be required. It is important that elected members are fully aware of the challenges of meeting that target. Supplementary reports will be brought to elected members for each of the specific actions, as well as annual reports on progress.

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

Not to take action on the climate emergency and net zero carbon targets, would be contrary to government policy direction and increase exposure and vulnerability to climate change impacts.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

Many elements of the action plan will involve a cost to the Council and not all activities will generate a financial payback. Four key activities associated with achieving the phase two carbon reduction are:

1. The purchase of 100% green electricity – the cost of which will be met from existing budgets and reviewed annually.
2. The decarbonisation of council buildings. The cost of this is substantial and an estimate for work to decarbonise heat from 18 buildings is £19M (2022 prices). External funding from sources such as the government "Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund" will be required, which necessitates a match funding contribution. There will also be a need for additional staff to deliver the building retrofits.
3. Reduce emissions from business travel / commuting e.g. investment in electric vehicle charging facilities. Estimated cost £1M (2022 prices). External funding would also be required from sources such as the governments "Workplace Charging Scheme" which provides 75% of the costs.
4. Energy efficiency measures – information and behaviour change to encourage a reduction in fuel use. Any reduction will have a positive impact on Council finances.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
N/a	
Legal Implications:	
N/a	
Equality Implications:	
There are no equality implications.	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	Yes

Have a neutral impact	No
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

Delivery of the Council's Climate emergency strategy would have a direct and positive impact.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: By enabling greater resilience to future climate events.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: By enabling greater resilience to future climate events and encouraging energy security measures
Commission, broker and provide core services: By training staff to consider climate impacts as part of service delivery
Place – leadership and influencer: By Sefton taking decisive action on its energy/carbon emissions
Drivers of change and reform: By Sefton taking decisive action on its energy/carbon emissions
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: By enabling greater resilience to future climate events.
Greater income for social investment: By Sefton taking decisive action on its energy/carbon emissions
Cleaner Greener By Sefton taking decisive action on its energy/carbon emissions

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7144/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5344/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

n/a

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Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the Council meeting.

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

Appendices:

“Sefton’s Climate Change Emergency Implementation Plan Phase 2 : 2023-2026”

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Sefton Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019. Following that declaration work has progressed within the council on the agreed actions that were contained and approved by Members. The climate emergency strategy and associated action plan was approved by Cabinet (28 May 2020) and Council (17 September 2020).
- 1.2 The strategy and delivery via the action plan is based on the following approach;
 - Approval of a strategy for the period to 2030
 - Establishing and refining a baseline position on council carbon emissions (carbon footprint)
 - The development of 3-year implementation plans
- 1.3 Both the strategy and action plan have seven key principles to guide work in this area – guided by the acronym C.L.I.M.A.T.E
 - Carbon Reduction
 - Leadership
 - Innovation
 - Mobilisation
 - Adaptation
 - Transformation
 - Engagement

2. Phase 1 Actions to date

- 2.1 Significant work has been undertaken in the first phase of action on the Climate Emergency. Staff have mapped out the route to net zero in 2030 and established the work required and costs involved. A full governance structure has been established and found to be effective when reviewed by Sefton’s internal audit team (2022). How the wider community can be involved has been an important

issue with a programme of work around Climate in 2021 COP26, in particular with young people, followed by a full community engagement survey in 2022, with a dedicated engagement action plan being delivered in 2023. This will improve communication channels and offer a route for greater involvement with Sefton residents, businesses and visitors.

- 2.2 An agreed strategy and implementation plan has provided the focus for dedicated activity which is regularly reported to members via a dedicated Member reference group and Cabinet/Council reports. Work to deliver the implantation plans included the roll out of an LED street lighting replacement programme, improving insulation and glazing at Southport and Bootle Town halls, encouraging the continuation of agile working leading to a reduction in the Council's Carbon footprint of 13% (end of 2021/22; the 22/23 figures being finalised).
- 2.3 In summary, Sefton Council is on track to be net zero carbon by 2030 with a 13% reduction in total emissions from the baseline, rising to 28% once projects started in phase 1 are complete.

3. Phase 2 Action Plan (2023-2026)

- 3.1 Phase 1 delivery has established an excellent foundation and phase 2 will build upon this. The attached implementation report outlines the challenges and opportunities associated with the next stage of implementing this challenging commitment.
- 3.2 The report outlines some of the key actions needed over the next three years as well as an estimate of potential cost to deliver, which include;
- Switch to green 100% renewable electricity which incurs an annual cost determined at market rates, estimated cost £200K (2022 prices) the cost of which will be met from existing budgets and reviewed annually.
 - decarbonisation of heat (through switching away from gas for space and water heating) with an estimated cost of £19M (2022 prices). External funding from sources such as the government "Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund" will be required, which necessitates a match funding contribution. There will also be a need for additional staff to undertake the building retrofits.
 - Action to reduce emissions from business travel / commuting – costs in phase 2 could include investment in electric vehicle charging facilities. Estimated cost £1M (2022 prices). External funding would also be required from sources such as the governments "Workplace Charging Scheme" which provides 75% of the costs.
- 3.3 The largest element of the Council's Carbon footprint is electricity. Electricity accounts for around a third of the Councils carbon footprint, and so switching to zero carbon electricity (100% renewable) will have a significant impact. Together with work from phase 1 (Agile working, Town Hall retrofit and LED Street lighting replacement), this action will reduce the Council's footprint by ~55%.
- 3.4 The other actions mentioned above will contribute +10% of the Council's carbon reduction target during phase 2 but will cost in excess of £20m - this is funding not in the MTFP or being provided at present as a direct grant from government,

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therefore, the council will need to work to identify and secure funding options and present to members for consideration / decision.

- 3.5 Work on community engagement will ramp up during phase 2, as a result of the Community engagement survey completed in late 2022. There will be increased provision of information and opportunities for the community to be more involved in the ongoing climate emergency work.
- 3.6 Council officers will continue to develop the Council's approach based on best practice and will work in partnership with the Liverpool City Region, NW net zero hub and other specific expert groups.
- 3.7 Previous work on carbon reduction has focused on energy reduction alone, which has an associated direct financial saving. Whilst this work, to reduce consumption, will continue through communications, reducing carbon emissions to zero will require investment that will not necessarily achieve a financial saving but will save carbon.
- 3.8 Additionally work will continue to engage with staff across all departments, train staff, assess operational risks and secure external funding. As well as the usual monitoring and reporting. This phase is very significant in laying the foundations for the final phase 3 activity.

4. **The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Net Zero Target 2040**

- 4.1 Initial work to support the delivery of the Liverpool City Region Strategy 'Pathway to net zero' strategy is referenced in the attached report. The strategy sets out an ambitious plan to reduce carbon emissions across the entire LCR to net zero by 2040.
- 4.2 Sefton officers are working with other LCR members to realise these aims. Actions will be needed across all sectors including business & industry, domestic properties, transport. Some of the key actions include:
 - Retrofit of housing stock (domestic emissions account for a third of LCR emissions)
 - Delivery of the Mersey tidal electricity generation project
 - Delivery of the Hynet hydrogen and carbon capture network
- 4.3 It is estimated that Liverpool City Region needs around £45bn investment over the next 20 years to deliver the carbon reductions needed, which will bring economic benefits (e.g. green jobs).
- 4.4 To reach the net zero carbon 2040 goal, the area needs to halve the amount of energy that is used from any source. All remaining energy will be from, renewable energy sources that don't produce any carbon emissions at all. This will require considerable early action across all sectors.

Sefton's Climate Change Emergency Implementation Plan

Phase 2 : 2023-2026

Sefton Council are coming to the end of phase 1 delivery (2020 –2023) of the Climate Change Emergency Plan. A huge amount of work has been undertaken during this phase to create the foundations for success in future stages and undertake initial work which has already resulted in significant carbon savings.

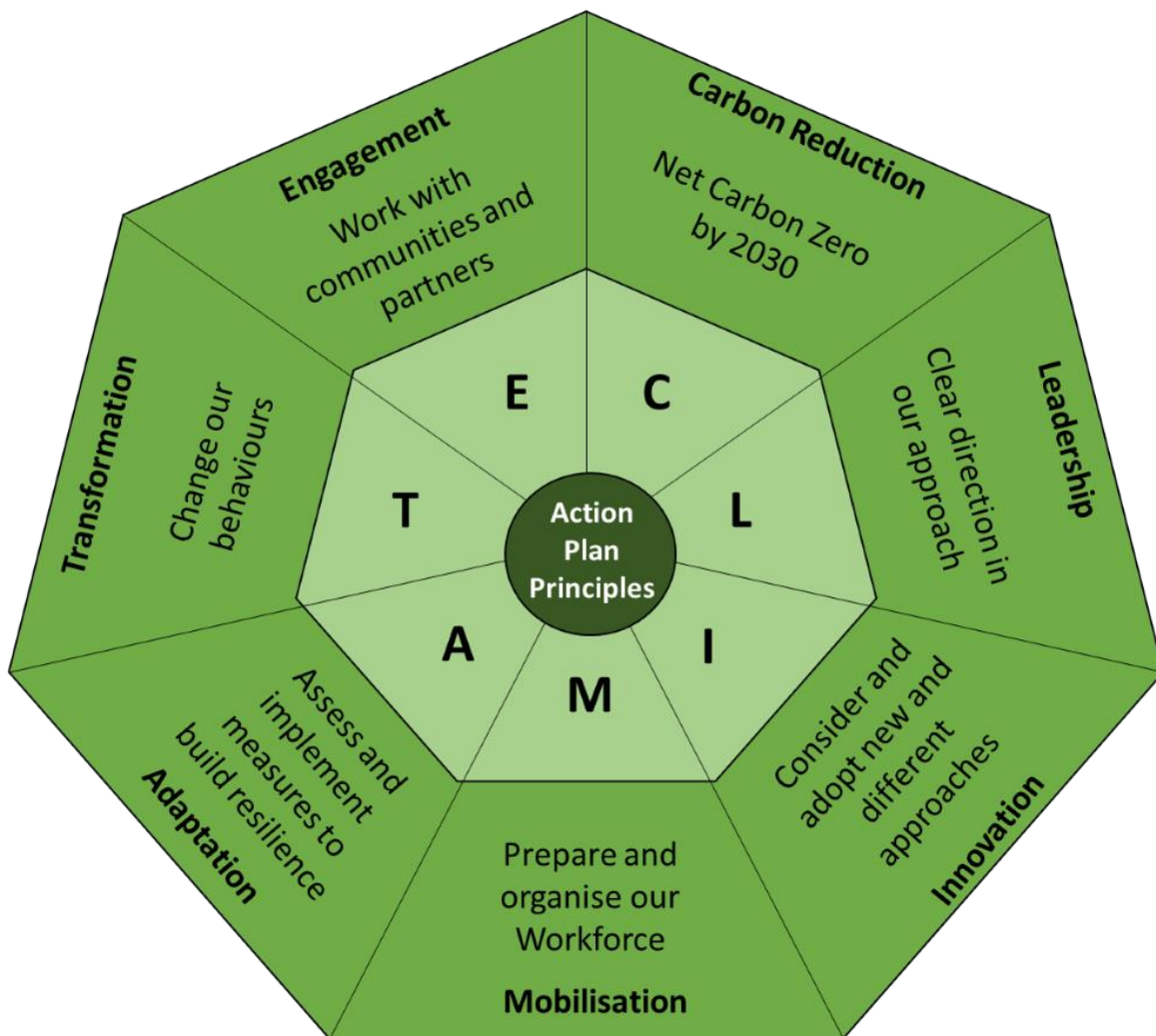
As Phase 2 is due to begin, this document highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with the next stage of work to ultimately reach net zero by 2030.

There is increasing commitment through government policy, law and voluntary commitment across the UK to a net zero carbon target. Sefton Council have an operational target of meeting net zero by 2030. However, as part of the Liverpool City Region, we have a target for the whole borough to be net zero by 2040, ten years ahead of the national target.

The work undertaken by the Council will be aligned to the delivery of the Sefton 2030 Vision and the Council's Core Purpose with the aim of making Sefton a great place to be.

We will achieve this by following the below principles as set out in our climate strategy:

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The Council's action plan includes both mitigation and adaptation measures. This recognises that some impacts of a changing climate cannot be changed in the short/medium term. Some impacts, such as future sea level rises and an increase in summer temperatures will pose risks and opportunities to how we live and work, so we must alter our approach via adaptation measures. Offsetting is included within mitigation and is the practice of increasing carbon capture to compensate for carbon release that cannot be avoided.

We have defined our organisation as, Council depots, leisure centers, libraries, fleet vehicles and office spaces. We have defined our emissions according to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. This will include the most direct emissions Scope 1 and Scope 2, with some additional emissions captured within Scope 3, namely business travel and commuting.

Phase 1 Summary

Phase 1 work included much of the groundwork for management, governance and monitoring of the Council's commitment. This included measuring carbon emissions, training staff, introducing climate assessments in decision making, reporting to a cross party elected Member Reference Group and engaging the community.

In this period the Council's carbon footprint has fallen 13% since 2019/20, based on the last review in 2021/2 with an additional fall expected for 2022/23 which is positive.

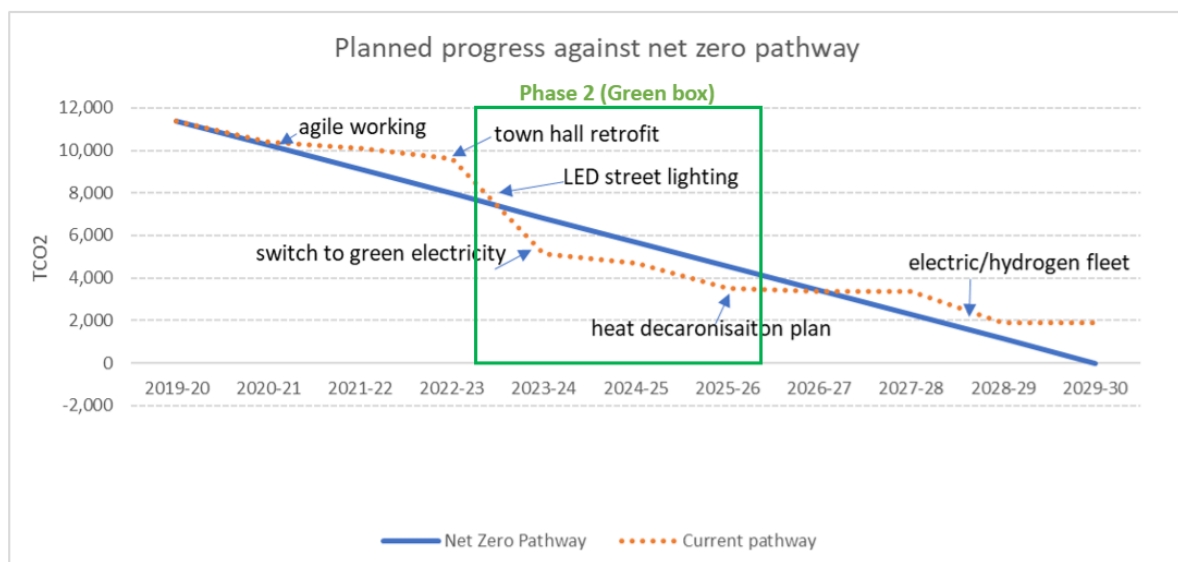
The reduction in emissions during this period was driven by

- the Council continuing with an agile working policy
- the continued roll out of energy efficient street lighting across the Borough
- improvements to the national energy mix (greener electricity coming through the grid).
- Upgrade of Bootle and Southport Town Halls (insulation and windows)

There has been significant work assessing and responding to a changing climate including adoption of a Flood Risk Strategy, updated surface water flood model maps and a coastline future prediction report has been produced and the potential impacts assessed.

There have been many significant challenges during this time including the Covid 19 pandemic and the recent extreme energy price rises which has made the need to reduce energy use more urgent but at the same time made funding the interventions more challenging.

Phase 2



The chart above shows the Council's planned progress to reach net zero in 2030. Phase 2 is highlighted as a period, by the green box. Sefton Council start this period on track with

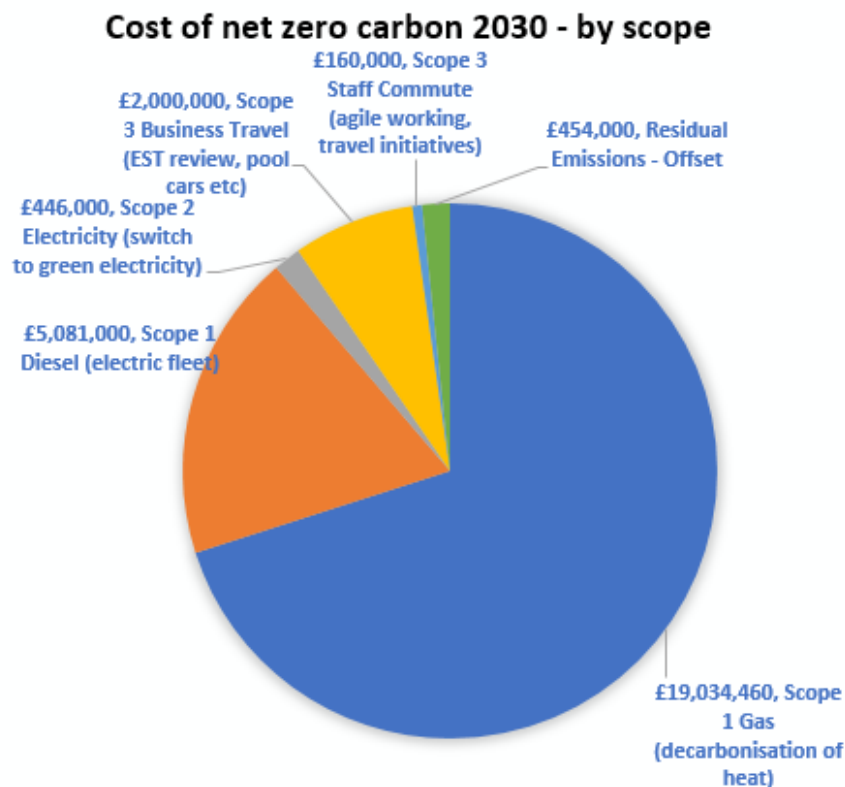
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above 13% reduction expected for 22/23, and an expected reduction in emissions of ~60% by the end of phase 2.

The chart overleaf demonstrates some of the key actions needed over the next three years which include;

- The switch to 'green' electricity (100% renewable or zero carbon electricity). Electricity accounts for around a third of the Councils carbon footprint, and so switching to zero carbon electricity will have a significant impact. As you can see from the chart below, the cost of this significant reduction represents value for money.
- The heat decarbonisation of buildings (reducing gas use). Gas usage is the second most significant element of Council emissions. If electricity emissions are removed, then this rises to around 40% of remaining emissions. However, there is no easy low carbon alternative to gas usage and a full change to building fabric and heating system will be required. Hence below the significant cost to reduce gas emissions.
- Ongoing reduction of transport commuting and home working costs. As Scope 3 emissions, the Council has less control of this area, however, travel accounts for around 10% of the carbon footprint.

This phase of activity will require significant investment which is shown in the chart below (using 2022 data).



During Phase 2 specifically includes action on

- decarbonisation of heat (through switching away from gas for space and water heating) with an estimated cost of £19M (2022 prices). The cost of this is substantial and an estimate for work to decarbonise heat from 18 buildings is £19M (2022 prices). External funding from sources such as the government “Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund” will be required, which necessitates a match funding contribution. It will also require additional staff to deliver the building retrofit works.
- Switch to green 100% renewable electricity which incurs an annual cost determined at market rates, estimated cost £200K (2022 prices) the cost of which will be met from existing budgets and reviewed annually.
- Action to reduce emissions from business travel / commuting – costs in phase 2 could include investment in electric vehicle charging facilities. Estimated cost £1M (2022 prices). External funding would also be required from sources such as the governments “Workplace Charging Scheme” which provides 75% of the costs.
- Energy efficiency measures – information and behaviour change to encourage a reduction in fuel use. Any reduction will have a positive impact on Council finances and costs can be met from within existing budgets.

Previous work on carbon reduction has focused on energy reduction alone, which has an associated direct financial saving. Whilst this work, to reduce consumption, will continue through communications, reducing carbon emissions to zero will require investment that will not necessarily achieve a financial saving but will save carbon.

Additionally work will continue to engage the public, train staff, assess operational risks and secure external funding. As well as the usual monitoring and reporting.

In order to achieve success during this phase, the Council will require support to be available from external funding sources such as the Public Sector decarbonisation fund and expertise to be made available through programmes such as the NW net Zero hub and LCR collaborative groups. If funding and other support is not available, the risk of not meeting net zero targets increases. Officers will continue to provide information to senior officers and elected members, MPs on opportunities and potential barriers to ensure external organisations such as central government are aware of the importance of this support.

The 2040 Liverpool City Region Target

The Liverpool City Region Strategy ‘Pathway to net zero’ sets out an ambitious plan to reduce carbon emissions across the entire LCR to net zero by 2040. Sefton officers are working with other LCR members to realise these aims.

Actions will be needed across all sectors including business & industry, domestic properties, transport. Some of the key actions include;

- Retrofit of housing stock (domestic emissions account for a third of LCR emissions)
- Delivery of the Mersey tidal electricity generation project
- Delivery of the Hynet hydrogen and carbon capture network

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It is estimated that Liverpool City Region needs around £45bn investment over the next 20 years to deliver the carbon reductions needed, which will bring economic benefits (e.g. green jobs).

To reach the net zero carbon 2040 goal, the area needs to halve the amount of energy that is used from any source. All remaining energy will be from, renewable energy sources that don't produce any carbon emissions at all. This will require considerable early action across all sectors.

Following our Climate Strategy principles C.L.I.M.A.T.E., our action plan outlines the key areas of work we will undertake over the next 3 phases of our journey to 2030. This is revised and updated each year in order to capture achievements, opportunities, technological developments and additional challenges, with quarterly reporting to senior officers and elected members.

Phase 2 activities are shaded below (Yellow highlight = new activity)

Local Commitment “We will..”	Local Action “by..”	Impact H/M/L	Phase
Carbon Reduction			
work towards becoming net carbon zero by 2030.	Maintain (and refine) the carbon baseline for Council emissions	High	Phase 1-3
	Identify all current/planned projects and evaluate their contribution/risk to the climate emergency agenda	High	Phase 1
	Explore options to improve thermal efficiency at council sites through retrofit.	High	Phase 1
	Reduce electricity and gas usage : no/low cost energy saving and reduction schemes e.g. Education and awareness campaigns	Low	Phase 1
	Reduce energy (and water) consumption: development of a utilities reduction strategy	Medium	Phase 2 -3
	Reduce electricity and gas usage : medium / high cost energy saving and reduction schemes e.g. Street lighting LED upgrade	High	Phase 1 & 2
	Explore the opportunities and feasibility for expanding sustainable transport networks and facilities such as cycle routes.	Medium	Phase 1 - 3
	Reduce fuel consumption through promoting ecodriving, and reduced travel via agile working etc.	Medium	Phase 1
	Move to low carbon fleet vehicles	Medium	Phase 3

achieve 100% clean energy by 2030	Investigate self-supply of Biogas (generation) - e.g. through use of municipal waste streams and agricultural waste stock.	High	Phase 2 -3
	Develop renewable energy (electricity) generation across Sefton – solar, on shore wind.	Medium	Phase 1 -2
	Supply of Biogas via Gas purchase agreement / renewable electricity - purchase REA & REGO certificates with a direct agreement between company generating and Sefton.	High	Phase 2 (elec.) Phase 3 (gas)
	Investigate Carbon offsetting options – local then global	Low	Phase 3
Leadership			
Provide clear direction in our approach	Lobby central government for increased funding for climate related projects	High	Phase 1 -3
	Review new policies and strategies, forthcoming budget proposals, Treasury Management Strategy and all cabinet and council decisions to ensure they have considered climate change adaptation and mitigation issues.	Medium	Phase 1
	Sharing expertise and advice with our community, providing details of the Council’s commitments and encouraging behaviour change in local homes, businesses and schools.	High	Phase 1 - 3
	Work with local partners across the LCR to a co-ordinated approach and to identify areas for collaboration and resource.	High	Phase 1 - 3
	Use our role as a large organisation to encourage change in the borough, by requiring large suppliers to report on climate impact of activities carried out on our behalf.	High	Phase 1 - 3
	Assess the impacts of local events and activities via the Southport Master Plan and seek to mitigate where necessary	High	Phase 1

	Use our role as a local authority to develop Community Energy and build upon the emerging wind turbine development (Southport Dunes/Ecocentre Feasibility Study)		
Innovation			
consider and adopt new & different approached	Explore options for investment in low carbon energy & innovative technology and seek innovative low carbon options for any new developments.	High	Phase 1 - 3
	Approach the climate emergency with a long term mindset, exploring 'spend to save' methods of climate action.	High	Phase 1 - 3
	Explore options for local offset via climate adaptation programmes and local landscape enhancement	Medium	Phase 1 - 3
	Identify and channel the existing enthusiasm for climate action in the workforce	High	Phase 1
	Continue to invest in Sustainable IT systems to allow for flexibility for agile and home working	Medium	Phase 1
	Develop a Green Sefton membership scheme for our communities to inspire them to take action and buy into the approach being taken by the Council	Medium	Phase 1
Mobilisation			
prepare and organize our workforce to support climate change action	Develop and deliver training & awareness raising for staff at all levels, to encourage low carbon and adaptation measures and informed decision making, among our workforce.	High	Phase 1
	Support departments to assign responsibility and actively contribute to the officers/members working group(s)	High	Phase 1
	Provide timely reporting to members (Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees) and staff on progress and other	High	Phase 1 - 3

	developments		
	Improve knowledge and understanding of how the Council is affected by extreme weather events in terms of providing its services and financial impacts.	High	Phase 1 - 3
Adaptation			
Access and implement measures to build resilience	Complete a full risk assessment of Climate Change impacts, identifying threats and how they can be managed as well as realising the opportunities (such as offsetting emissions and assessing carbon capture).	High	Phase 1 - 2
	Develop a place based strategy/framework for Sefton's landscape portfolio for the delivery of any carbon offsetting, adaptation and mitigation measures whilst working with natural processes.	Medium	Phase 1
	Identify and quantify opportunities for carbon offsetting, urban greening and improved site sustainability; through local landscape management	Medium	Phase 1
	Review impacts of measures on air quality outcomes.	Medium	Phase 1
	Work with the Planning Authority on developing guidance for development, that includes climate benefits, for the built and natural environment.	Medium	Phase 1
Transformation			
Change our behaviour	Align our climate work with the 2030 vision and other transforming principles.	High	Phase 1 - 3
	Utilise existing groups and tools internally to engage staff and raise awareness of low carbon & adaptation activities and encourage action.	Medium	Phase 1
	Reducing commuting and business travel impacts through the implementation of a council travel plan and associated policies.	High	Phase 1

	Embed responsibility for delivery this agenda at all levels. Support those people to fully understand the expectations of their position in relation to the climate emergency.	High	Phase 1
Engagement			
work with communities and partners	Ensure all information on our climate emergency is available in an easy read format and is accessible to all our residents	High	Phase 1
	Establish and engage with an expert panel and a diverse citizens panel (including youth)	High	Phase 1 -2
	Work with partners (Schools, New Directions, Businesses etc) to adopt low carbon & adaptation measures	High	Phase 1 - 3
	Engage our communities to raise awareness of the Council's commitments and encourage appropriate behaviour change	High	Phase 1 - 3

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 th April 2023
Subject:	Council Housing Business Plan		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing)	Wards Affected:	All
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No, however, the information contained in Appendix II is NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours the information being treated as exempt		

Summary: This paper outlines the draft Council Housing Programme Business Plan, a proposal that will see approximately 46 Council owned homes acquired over the next 5 years as part of a first phase of growth to re-establish Council Housing once again in Sefton.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to:

- (1) Note the contents of this report, and endorse the approach that is being taken to the Council Housing Programme
- (2) Approve the adoption of the Council Housing Business Plan
- (3) Note that further reports will be presented to Cabinet relating to the purchase of properties on each site

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is required to approve the Business Plan for the Council Housing Programme, Although further reports on each scheme will also be brought to Cabinet separately consideration of this paper is required to ensure that these scheme proposals are developed in line with an approved plan.

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

Do nothing

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Sefton could choose not to become a stock holding local authority and to rely solely on Registered Providers for the provision of new affordable housing in the borough. However, as outlined in the strategic business case for the provision of new Council Housing considered by Cabinet in January 2021, and reiterated in this paper, to adopt this approach would limit the availability of truly affordable social rent properties in the borough.

A Council Housing Programme would also allow the Council to make strategic decisions on the provision of housing based solely on the objective of meeting housing need in the borough. The proposal outlined in this paper will establish the programme through a first phase of growth of 'general needs' properties, and this will give the authority flexibility on managing this stock. Once the programme is established consideration can be given to developing more specialist housing to complement the delivery on existing Registered Providers in the borough.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

For the first phase of growth of the programme, as outlined in the proposed Business Plan, it is not anticipated that additional staff will be required over and above those already within the Strategic Housing Team.

As detailed within the report it may be necessary from time to time to employ specialist consultancy support in order to deliver the programme, and it is anticipated that this will either be contained within the existing Housing Budget or capitalised following formal project approval. Separate papers will be brought for approval to acquire properties on each site and will include detailed financial proposals.

(B) Capital Costs

The potential capital costs associated with this Business Plan are outlined in the body of this report. Total capital expenditure for the programme will be contained within the approximately £5m of available budget accrued through the Right to Buy Sharing Agreement with One Vision Housing and S106 Commuted Sum income.

The Business Plan considers all capital costs associated with this proposal including the acquisition of the properties, their management and maintenance costs.

As outlined above separate papers will be brought for approval to acquire properties on each site and will include detailed financial proposals.

Implications of the Proposals:

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

Financial resources are required to fund the acquisition of properties from Sandway Homes as a capital cost. Revenue resources are required to fund the housing management and maintenance service that the Council will offer to its tenants through an appointed Housing Management Agent, the cost of which will be fully funded by rental income received for the properties.

Specialist external advice is required to support in a number of areas to enable the operational activity in delivering council housing including legal and project management of the acquisition. The procurement and financing of external support was approved at Cabinet in January 2021.

There will be an asset implication resulting from the acquisition of properties, although the management and maintenance of which will be managed by a Managing Agent following a compliant procurement process.

Legal Implications:

A local authority may hold up to 199 homes outside of a Housing Revenue Account under a Government direction subject to writing to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government to apply to hold specific homes outside of an HRA. The proposal outlined in this paper will not exceed this number.

Sefton Council have registered as a Registered Provider of Social Housing with the Regulator of Social Housing based on the intention to provide social housing as is required under Section 114 of the Housing and Regeneration Act. The Council will be subject to regulatory and legislative requirements and compliance through its new landlord duties.

There would be a requirement to provide tenancy agreements for each property determined by the Housing Act 1985, Housing Act 1996, and Localism Act 2011. Standard tenancy agreements would need to be developed with the support of expert legal advice. Such agreements could then be utilised for any future council housing properties considered.

Section 27 of the Housing Act 1985 allows local authorities to enter into management agreements in relation to their housing stock. Under this Section 27, local authorities which are Registered Providers of social housing are required to seek the approval to these agreements from the Regulator of Social Housing. Further, the Council would need to enter into contract with the appointed Housing Management Agent.

The Council would need to enter into a new supply contract with Homes England to agree to the terms and conditions attached to any grant offer and ensure compliance with the AHP.

Equality Implications:

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken through development of the Business Case and no negative impacts have been identified. The EIA found that

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the provision of council housing and subsequent landlord service will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of age and disability. The EIA will be reviewed and updated at the relevant review point and as work continues with the operational requirements to enable the Council to provide council housing. A copy of the EIA is appended to this report at Appendix III.

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will

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

Building of new homes will have a negative impact on the Climate Change Emergency as a result of the construction and build process. Sandway Homes have included mitigation measures within their design for the development and will be undertaking the development in a manner compliant with Planning policy EQ7 Energy efficient and low carbon design.

Measures introduced at Buckley Hill Lane to reduce the carbon footprint through construction include:

- Electric vehicle charging points to each dwelling and to the apartment block
- Energy efficient design with high thermal efficiency values to reduce heat loss, high efficiency boilers and heating systems
- Sustainable design and landscaping throughout the site with 'green streets'
- Surface water drainage integrated into landscape features to encourage wildlife

Similar measures are anticipated on all future sites covered by the proposed Business Plan.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:

New council housing will provide secure, quality homes to those most in housing need. Homes will be let at social rent level which offers the most affordable route to social housing. Homes will be developed to high energy efficiency standards which will help to reduce energy bills for tenants

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

Provision of new council housing will provide additional housing choice to local communities in Sefton. Homes will be offered through Council tenancies enabling stability for households and families in housing need creating sustainable, confident, and resilient communities. A new housing management and maintenance service will be in place for tenants of any new council owned homes and will

<p>support tenants and communities through this service. Provision of shared ownership homes will provide an added housing offer and alternative route to home ownership.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services: Provision of new council housing will become a core service. A housing management and maintenance service will be procured, and the Council will work with a Registered Provider of Social Housing to deliver this for new Council tenants. Homes will be let through the existing allocations scheme, Property Pool Plus which is already in place as a core service.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer: Not Applicable</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform: Delivery of new council housing will offer homes at social rent adding to the existing provision of social housing in Sefton and providing an alternative social housing offer to those in housing need.</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Having a good place to live is essential for the future success and prosperity of our residents. Development of new council housing will generate direct and indirect employment and training opportunities supporting economic prosperity. Supply chains such as contractors, suppliers, technical and professional services will be supported throughout the development process.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment: Rental income generated by new council housing can be reinvested back to deliver the positive social impacts outlined in this paper.</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener: Newly developed council housing will provide high quality homes and be energy efficient with low carbon design measures. Design of the homes has been developed by Sandway Homes to be compliant with Planning policy and Building Regulations.</p>

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7187/23.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5387/23.) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

- Appendix I** Business Plan – Part A (Option Appraisal)
- Appendix II** Business Plan – Part B (not for publication)
- Appendix III** Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers: None

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 In January 2021 Cabinet considered a Strategic Business Case proposal to re-enter the Social Housing market through the acquisition of properties from Sandway Homes, at their site at Buckley Hill Lane for use as affordable housing.
- 1.2 At the January 2021 meeting Cabinet agreed:
 - (1) the strategic case for Sefton Council re-entering the social housing market through the provision of council housing for rent set out in this report;
 - (2) give authority to negotiate the terms to acquire one block, comprising nine apartments, as the start of its future stock of council housing from Sandway Homes, as part of Sandway's development at Buckley Hill Lane Netherton;
 - (3) give approval to register Sefton Council with the Regulator of Social Housing as a social housing provider;
 - (4) give authority to apply to Homes England to become an Investment Partner;
 - (5) instruct officers to develop a Business Plan for council housing provision which sets out greater detail for the operational requirements, including financial modelling and management arrangements;
 - (6) give authority to pursue the procurement of a suitable housing association to provide the required housing management services, and delegate authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing to appoint a management agent;
 - (7) to the procurement and appointment of suitable consultant(s) to assist undertake associated tasks set out in this report and arising from the recommendations in this report. The costs will be met from within the existing budget for the Economic Growth and Housing Service. Delegate the appointment of the consultants to the Head of Economic Growth and Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing; and

- (8) that a further report will be submitted to Cabinet setting out the terms to acquire the council housing stock from Sandway Homes, and which sets out the Business Plan and proposed operational arrangements.
- 1.3 The Council currently has approximately £5m of capital available to fund the acquisition of Council Housing as a result of the Right to Buy Receipts Sharing Agreement with One Vision Housing and from commuted sums secured via S106 agreements. It is made up as follows: uncommitted receipts of £4.7m and S106 commuted sums of £380k.
- 1.4 In December 2021 a Workshop was held with Cabinet to sketch out the plan the approach which was to be taken to this work.

The key conclusions from the Workshop session were as follows:

- There is a strong corporate commitment among Councillors and Senior Officers to take forward Council housing in Sefton. It is important that we continue to move forward with this and move forward positively;
- It is important to understand what we want to achieve and how we are going to achieve it and be clear on the aims and objectives of a programme;
- It was recognised that Sefton are not setting out to achieve a large development programme but will rather start small, take a cautious approach and grow slowly ensuring that housing need is at the heart and centre of a programme;
- Financial resource is finite and will determine the scale and pace of a programme with grant funding opportunities to be maximised;
- The relationship with Sandway Homes offers the lowest risk option including opportunity to target housing need through early identification of homes required and this unique position should be prioritised;
- Ensure that the programme connects to wider corporate objectives including that of the housing management requirements;
- Commit to Social Rent tenure being the starting point ensuring true affordability but consider the use of Affordable Rent on a scheme-by-scheme basis;
- Consider structures that could reduce the financial risk of Right to Buy.

2. Progress to Date

- 2.1 Since the Cabinet resolution of January 2021 a considerable amount of work has been undertaken to establish a new Council Housing Programme (CHP):
- *Buckley Hill Lane (recommendation 2 and 8)* – Cabinet considered a report in May 2022, approving the acquisition of 9 apartments for social rent, and 4 houses for Shared Ownership. This mix of properties represented the Planning Policy compliant affordable housing requirement on the site.

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In December 2022 Planning Committee approved the removal of the affordable housing requirement on the site due to viability concerns. Grants through Homes England's Affordable Homes Programme 2021 – 2026 are only available to fund schemes where there is no planning requirement to provide affordable housing and therefore removal of the condition has presented the opportunity for the Council to apply for grant funding to help fund the acquisition of properties on the Buckley Hill Lane site.

Negotiations are currently underway to potentially acquire an additional block of apartments on the site to bring the total number of affordable homes to 18. This is a revision to the mix previously agreed by Cabinet:

- December 2021 – Cabinet approved the acquisition of 1 apartment block at Buckley Hill Lane comprising 9 x 1 and 2 bed apartments;
- May 2022 – Cabinet approved the acquisition of 4 houses on the site for use as Shared Ownership properties, in addition to the 9 apartments previously approved such that the Council proposed acquisition was in line with the affordable housing requirement outlined in the Council's Planning Policy;
- April 2023 (current position) – negotiations are currently underway to acquire both apartment blocks on the site for social rent increasing the total number of affordable homes on the site to 18 x 1 and 2 bed apartments, compared to the planning policy compliant requirement of 13 units. This is due to market changes affecting Sandway which have seen a reduced demand for apartment sale properties, and in order to ensure that the first tranche of Council housing is sustainable.

Subject to Homes England's agreement to provide grant funding to acquire 18 apartments for social rent on the site and reaching financial agreement with Sandway a further paper will be brought to Council to update and amend proposal first considered by Cabinet in May 2022. For the purposes of this Business Planning exercise it has been assumed that the Council will acquire 18 apartments on this site.

- *Regulator of Social Housing (recommendation 3)* – In November 2021 the Council successfully registered with the Regulator of Social Housing as approved by Cabinet in January 2021.
- *Register as an Investment Partner with Homes England (recommendation 4)* – positive discussions have been held with Homes England about Sefton's Council Housing Programme and officers have kept the agency updated as development of the programme progresses. Homes England anticipate receiving a grant application following Council approval of the revised mix of Council Housing properties at Buckley Hill Lane and upon approval of this grant the Council will be registered as an Investment Partner.

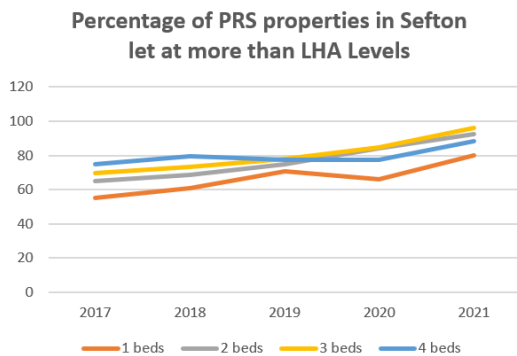
- *Development of a CHP Business Plan (recommendation 5)* – Ark Consultants were appointed in July 2022 to help officers prepare a Business Plan as instructed by Cabinet in January 2021. This paper outlines the proposed Business Case for Cabinet approval.
- *Procurement of a Management Agent (recommendation 6)* – Preparation of tender documentation to procure a Management Agent is nearly complete with a view to having a provider appointed by the summer 2023.
- *Consultant Team (recommendation 7)* – in order to help develop the CHP external consultants have been procured and used where necessary to provide specialist advice to officers.

3. Strategic Rationale

- 3.1 Over the past few years there has been a growing acceptance in Government that councils need to play a greater role in meeting new build housing targets. Although very little additional council housing has been developed in the last 50 years the active participation of local councils acting as developers and landlords is something that government are actively encouraging. Sefton Council has already partly responded to this through the establishment of Sandway Homes, its wholly owned private housing development company and the Cabinet resolution of January 2021 agreed the strategic rationale for the Council to once again provide council housing in Sefton, an updated version of which is outlined below.
- 3.2 Over the last 15 to 20 years, nationally, there has been a change in the housing market and the growth of the Private Rented Sector (PRS), indicating a growing demand for rented homes. Sefton has similarly seen a growth in the levels of its PRS and between 2011 and 2021 the number of PRS properties in the borough increased by 44% (6,655) and now makes up 18.3% of all properties in the borough. In part this growth in PRS and demand has been fuelled by a shortage of (alternative) social housing provision. The PRS offers a different kind of tenure option. While it may seem more accessible to many households, or in preferable locations, it also comes with perceived shortcomings for some households: e.g. a reliance upon short term tenancies and variable quality of provision offered – in particular the poor quality often offered by the lower to middle end of the PRS market.
- 3.3 In recent years the levels of private rents in Sefton have increased significantly, particularly in the last 12 months. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a means tested benefit paid to those who live in private rented accommodation and who are claiming housing benefit. LHA *does not* apply to social housing tenants. LHA is a useful benchmark with which to assess residential rental levels in Sefton. Over the last 5 years private rental levels have increased such that the cost of the vast majority of Private Rented Sector (PRS) properties now exceeds the LHA:

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Percentage of PRS properties in Sefton let at more than LHA levels					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1 beds	54.9	60.7	70.9	65.9	80.2
2 beds	64.8	68.6	75	84.4	92.5
3 beds	69.9	73.3	78.1	84.5	96.1
4 beds	75	79.6	77.5	77.3	88.1



SOURCE: Northern Housing Consortium

- 3.4 The demand for the return to ‘Council housing’ has also been partly driven by the perceived commercialisation and independence of the broader housing association (HA) movement. In some cases HAs are perceived to have moved away from their traditional role of rehousing people in ‘housing need’. Over recent years HAs pursuing Government grant funding to support new housing developments have been forced to build for ‘affordable rent’, which in many parts of the country can result in much higher rent levels than traditional ‘social rents’.
- 3.5 Sefton’s Local Plan identifies the need for a supply of affordable (including rented) homes. The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2019 evidence continues to support the need for more affordable rented homes; particularly in the north of the borough. Therefore, the Council may wish to be seen to contribute to meeting such needs by directly delivering new council housing for social rent.
- 3.6 The Council has a statutory duty to maintain a social housing allocations policy and housing register, which is administered via the Property Pool Plus (PPP) scheme in Sefton. All HAs would normally offer at least 50% of their property vacancies under this scheme (75% for OVH), though some offer a higher proportion than required. Direct provision of council houses would allow all (100%) vacancies to be let via PPP to households in need.
- 3.7 The Council adopted a new Housing Strategy (2022-27) in November 2022. The Strategy recognises the importance that good housing plays in the lives of our residents to enable them to live fulfilling and successful lives in Sefton. The strategy identifies 5 key priority themes:
- Driving housing quality in communities and neighbourhoods;
 - Meeting people’s housing needs;
 - Enabling people to live independently;

- Tackling barriers to obtaining suitable housing for the most vulnerable and ensuring equal access to housing services;
- Effectively utilising Council assets to support housing delivery.

The provision of new high quality council housing supports all of these priority themes outlined in the new Housing Strategy.

- 3.8 A trend among some HAs is a desire to target the rehousing of economically active households. For HAs they probably see this as a way of creating mixed and sustainable communities, and also not relying on rental income from a large portion of tenants on Welfare Benefits. However, it could also be seen as turning away from households who have greater (affordable) needs for social housing. The Council could take a slightly different approach and offer 100% of its own stock, under its (PPP) Allocations policy, and ensure it all gets allocated to households with the greatest needs.
- 3.9 The majority of the existing HA social rented stock will have rents set at (historic) Social rent levels. But since 2011, nearly all of the new-build HA rented stock will have rents set at Affordable rent levels. Social rent typically provides lower rents at 50-60% of the market rent, and are based on a formula for calculating rent levels. Affordable rents are usually higher, set at 'up to' 80% of market rent. By providing new homes at social rent levels the Council will be providing homes at more affordable rental levels.
- 3.10 SHMA evidence suggests the greatest social housing need is increasing the supply of 1- and 2-bedroom properties. Some HAs are reluctant to deliver new 1 bedroom homes, due to perceived longer term demand risks, and a desire to target the traditional family housing market.
- 3.11 The provision of council housing will help support the Council's Climate Emergency declaration because new properties are built to current Building Regulations which are being progressively tightens to reduce carbon emissions from new housing. The latest example of this took place in June 2022 when Part L of the Building Regulations were updated to ensure that new homes must produce 31% less carbon emissions than the previous Part L regulations.
- 3.12 Accepting the evidence of the need for more social housing in Sefton, the Council could opt to rely upon Housing Associations (HA) to continue to deliver affordable rented housing for the borough. While the provision of HA affordable rent housing is generally welcomed, provision of council housing can offer a complementary alternative. Benefits of council housing over HA provision could include; - rents could be set at lower social rent levels - all the homes could be offered to households on the Council's social housing register - the Council can have greater control over the types of housing units provided - the Council can have greater control and influence over how the homes are managed - provision and management of social housing becomes democratically controlled.

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- 3.13 Based upon the above analysis, the case for the Council contributing towards the provision of social rented housing is strong.

4. Delivery Model Option Appraisal

- 4.1 Specialist housing consultancy Ark Consultants were appointed to prepare the Business Plan and with reference to the conclusions of the December 2021 Workshop event followed a process agreed with officers to complete this commission. In preparing the Business Plan Ark carried out a number of interviews with key officers as well as speaking to Cabinet Member Housing and Communities. The initial stage of the Business Planning process was the preparation of an options appraisal study evaluating a number of different delivery models. Following approval of the preferred option following the Option Appraisal stage they began work on the Council Housing Business Case.

Options Appraisal – Business Plan Part A

- 4.2 Four delivery models were appraised as part of the Option Appraisal process:

- A) Direct Delivery via the Council's General Fund
- B) Establishing a Special Purpose Vehicle (or expanding the role of Sandway)
- C) A Joint Venture with a Private Developer/Contractor
- D) A Joint Venture with a Registered Provider (housing association)

- 4.3 Each of the delivery models were assessed against 14 criteria:

- Strategic Fit
- Council Control
- Capital Cost/Viability
- Start Up Costs
- Operational Revenue Costs
- Retained Equity
- Legal Implications
- Tax Implications
- Right to Buy Implications
- Skills/Experience
- Flexibility
- Resilience
- Social Value
- Balance of Risk

- 4.4 The delivery models were scored against each of the above criteria and the full analysis is contained within the Option Appraisal report appended to this paper at Appendix I and summarised below:

Option	Strategic Fit	Council Control	Capital Cost	Start Up Cost	Operational Revenue Cost	Retained Equity	Local Implications	Tax Implications	RTB Implications	Skills/Experience	Flexibility	Resilience	Social Value	Risk	Total
Direct Delivery	8	7.5	4.5	1	6	7.5	4	2.5	1	2	4.5	4.5	4	4.5	61.5
SPV/Sandway	6	4.5	3	1	6	6	2	1	4	3	6	3	3	3	51.5
JV with Developer	4	3	6	1.5	8	3	3	1.5	2	3	3	4.5	3	4.5	50
JV with an RP	4	3	6	4.5	6	3	3	1	3	4	4.5	3	3	6	54

- 4.5 As can be seen the direct delivery option scored the highest of all of the options.
This option would entail the Council developing new council homes, primarily rented homes, 'on balance sheet' and under the auspices of the Council's direct operations. The scale of development and ownership of homes permitted within the General Fund accounting format is 199. Beyond that number of homes, the Council would be required to re-establish a Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 4.6 A future decision will need to be made as to whether and when to re-establish a Housing Committee. Certainly, if the level of new homes provision requires an HRA, the Council ought to carve out a precise oversight role for one of its committees. However, the stock holding proposed within this Business Plan falls well below the 199 that would require the operation of an HRA and this is not proposed.
- 4.7 In the early stages, the direct delivery model will mean that development delivery will require an agent or external resource. Over time, and dependent on scale, it may be more economic to recruit to at least one Development Manager role.
- 4.8 Housing management and maintenance will require an outsourced service as in house provision of a management service would not be viable for a stockholding of less than 300 homes.
- 4.9 Under the direct delivery model homes will be in the legal ownership of the Council and the programme under the Council's direction, control is at a high level. Because the Council has already registered with the Regulator of Social Housing an application can be made to access Homes England grant on eligible schemes. The Council will also make an application for Homes England Investment Partner status alongside our first grant application, which is likely to be for the Buckley Hill Lane site. We do not anticipate any issues with this process and extensive discussions have already taken place with

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Homes England over an extended period about our Council Housing Programme and they are very supportive. The control environment will need an appropriate level of policy, process and authorisation procedures.

- 4.10 For modelling purposes in the Business Plan, the average unit costs for the direct delivery options have been assumed to be; £186k with land cost, and £152k with no land cost. Best cost assumptions include on-costs. Funding will come from the Right to Buy and Section 106 receipts with grant funding where possible.
- 4.11 Under the direct delivery option agency development and management support is scalable to match the programme/portfolio size. Project development costs will be around 4% of programme value. Housing services costs will be around 12% of rent roll not including direct maintenance outlay and allowance for voids.
- 4.12 The set-up costs of a direct delivery programme can vary significantly dependent on the complexity of the governance and management model created. The overall scale of ambition will influence the initial start-up outlay. Avoiding re-establishing the HRA will help initially to keep costs down and has been covered an HRA is not proposed in this case. Costs to develop the programme in 2022/23 have been contained within the Housing Revenue budget, however, this is not sustainable, and it is proposed to capitalise programme costs going forward, subject to scheme approval.
- 4.13 There is an underlying viability challenge for all new affordable homes when there is no historic stock revenue surplus to offset early years revenue deficits. It is on this basis that it is proposed to double the first tranche stock holding from 9 units approved by Cabinet in January 2021 to 18 units.
- 4.14 There are minimal legal implications for the direct delivery model, aside from the normal legal aspects of developing new homes. The Council has the power to immediately begin developing new homes and so would not have to create a legal construct to frame a development programme with this option.
- 4.15 Under the direct delivery model the Council is able to reclaim VAT on its day-to-day activities. Although new-build construction is zero rated for VAT, consultancy fees and development and management agency arrangements will attract VAT at 20%, which the Council can reclaim. Any profits received from development activity will not attract a Corporation Tax liability.
- 4.16 The strengths and weaknesses of the direct delivery model are as follows:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
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<p>Straightforward and deliverable</p> <p>Enables the Council to retain ownership of assets</p> <p>Most rented homes developed will be social rented</p> <p>Tenants have high security of tenure</p> <p>The Council will have an additional tool in its box to support affordable housing development in Sefton</p>	<p>There is less flexibility with tenure than in some other models</p> <p>Over 199 homes will require HRA re-establishment</p> <p>Tenants of social rented homes will have the Right to Buy</p> <p>Outsourced services for development and management will be required</p> <p>There is an additional scheme viability gap for the Council to bridge</p> <p>Achieving an effective governance and organisational model can be difficult</p>
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- 4.17 Cabinet is particularly asked to note that the direct delivery model will mean that there will be a risk that properties can be bought under the Right to Buy. However, some protection against this provided by the 'Cost Floor Rule':

A special limit on the amount of discount may apply if the property is newly built or acquired, or where there have been improvements, repairs or maintenance work on the property. This is known as the 'cost floor rule'.

If a total of £5,000 or more has been spent in the 10 years (15 years for properties built or acquired by the landlord on or after 2 April 2012) before the right to buy application, the discount must not reduce the sale price below the amount that has been spent.

Ongoing repairs and maintenance work to existing properties (as opposed to work on recently acquired dwellings) can only be counted if the cost of the work exceeds £5,500.

- 4.18 The 'cost floor rule' will mitigate the risk that properties will be lost to Right to Buy but not completely remove it. Should a property be lost to Right to Buy (RTB) the Council will automatically retain 25% of the receipt with the remaining 75% paid to central government. However, under changes introduced by government in April 2021 to the RTB pooling arrangements local authorities can apply to retain a greater proportion of receipts for reinvestment into affordable housing delivery.
- 4.19 In April 2012, the government raised the maximum cash cap on Right to Buy discounts to £75,000 and confirmed that receipts generated by additional sales resulting from the discount increases (against a baseline of sales forecast before the increases) would be used to fund replacement stock on a one-for-one basis nationally. At the same time, the government offered to enter into an agreement with any local authorities that wished to retain their own receipts from additional RTB sales so that they could reinvest them in new affordable housing themselves.

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- 4.20 To retain their “additional receipts”, local authorities must enter into an agreement with the Secretary of State under section 11(6) of the Local Government Act 2003 (as substituted by section 174 of the Localism Act 2011). Under this agreement, authorities can retain receipts arising from additional RTB sales provided the authority spends a sufficient level of those receipts on replacement social housing within a 5-year period.
- 4.21 Additional restrictions apply to acquisition of properties, however, all local authorities are free to use any retained receipts to acquire up to 20 replacement properties each year.
- 4.22 It is difficult to anticipate the level of RTB interest that there will be in the new stock, however, the ‘cost floor rule’ is likely to be a significant disincentive to potential purchasers. As part of their commission Ark Consulting considered an Exit Strategy of selling the portfolio of stock to an existing Registered Provider should RTB sales undermine the Business Plan. Any sale of the portfolio to an existing Registered Provider will ensure that it is retained as affordable housing.

Business Plan Overview

- 4.23 As outlined in the January 2021 Cabinet Paper the proposal to acquire residential properties for the purposes of making them available as Council housing is supported by a capital budget accrued through the Council’s share of Right to Buy receipts from One Vision Housing under the terms of the Stock Transfer Agreement in 2006.
- 4.24 In addition, the Council is also in receipt of Section 106 Commuted Sums payments from developers who have not been able to provide planning policy compliant affordable housing on their sites.
- 4.25 Taking account of ongoing potential liabilities and income over the period of the Council Housing Programme Business Plan it is estimated that approximately £5m is available to fund the acquisition of new Council Housing in Sefton.
- 4.26 Based upon the conclusions of the Workshop held with Cabinet in December 2021 that the lowest risk option for the Council was to work with Sandway Homes during an initial phase of growth to establish the Council Housing Programme. Sandway plans to develop 3 sites over the next 5 year period:

Site	Total Units	Affordable Housing	Start on Site (estimate)	Completion (estimate)
Buckley Hill Lane, Netherton	63 units	18 units	July 2023	April 2024
Bootle High, Netherton	63 units	8 units	April 2024	Dec 2025
Bentham’s Way, Southport	150 units	45 units	Sept 2024	Oct 2027

- 4.27 As has already been covered the discussions are underway to acquire 18 apartments from Sandway on their Buckley Hill Lane site and a separate paper will be brought for approval on this proposal later in the year, however, for the purposes of Business Plan modelling an acquisition of 18 units on the Buckley Hill Lane site has been assumed.
- 4.28 Should members not wish to pursue the acquisition of the additional apartment block and revert to the mix approved in May 2022 the Business Planning assumptions remain the same and the Business Plan can simply be updated. In either case the Business Plan will remain a ‘live’ document and will be updated periodically to reflect approved changes to the programme and to update market assumptions.
- 4.29 Cabinet is also asked to note that separate papers will be brought with specific proposals relating to all of the sites in the programme. Acquisition of properties is subject to successfully negotiating with Sandway and agreeing a purchase price based on open market value of the properties. Detailed appraisals for each tranche of properties will be prepared and presented for approval.

Estimated Acquisition Costs

- 4.30 Ark Consulting modelled the estimated acquisition costs for the properties the Council proposes to acquire based on anticipated values, and assumed discounts for bulk purchase based on market rates. These are set out in the Business Plan appended to this report at Appendix II.

Scenario	Description	No. of Units	Assumption
A	Funded with grant and Council housing capital – no borrowing assumed.	46	Both Scenario A & B assume the following: Buckley Hill Lane properties will be purchased at 85% of open market value and Homes England grant will be available to the scheme. Bentham’s Way and Bootle High will be purchased at 75% and 55% of open market value for shared ownership and affordable rent homes respectively and with no Homes England grant.
B	Funded with loan finance and based on the assumption that borrowing is limited to a level that ensures that revenue breaks even from the first year of the operation of schemes.	71	
C	Funded with grant and Council housing capital – no borrowing assumed	46	Both Scenario C & D assume the following: Buckley Hill Lane properties will be purchased as in Scenarios A & B. Bentham’s Way and Bootle
D	Funded with loan finance and based on the assumption that	71	

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	borrowing is limited to a level that ensures that revenue breaks even from the first year of the operation of schemes		High will be purchased at an average of 75% of open market value for both tenures. Homes England grant is assumed.
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4.31 The 'no borrowing' option is recommended to Cabinet for several reasons:

- It represents the low-risk option compared to borrowing to part fund the programme;
- The income from the Right To Buy Sharing Agreement with One Vision Housing as part of the stock transfer continues to be paid. This is the primary source of the capital accrued to fund the first phase of acquisition of the new Council Housing Programme. The sharing agreement remains in place until 2036 and although there are no guarantees that income will remain at current levels the Council currently receives in the region of £0.75m per annum;
- Commuted sums on private development sites continue to be paid where necessary, and the Council may choose to prioritise the payment of Commuted Sums in future in order to help fund further programme acquisitions;
- The 'no borrowing' option will ensure that the programme shows a strong 'cashflow positive' position from Year 1 to potentially fund additional property acquisitions as part of a self-sustaining model;
- Borrowing may become more viable in the future after the programme has been established through the first phase of growth over the next 5 years.

4.32 On the basis that the 'no borrowing' option is adopted the first phase of acquisitions will result in approximately 46 properties being secured.

4.33 The split of the 46 of the 71 affordable units to be acquire on the site has yet to be determined but will based on the mix of affordable properties available on each site set against the strategic housing need, and on discussions with other Registered Providers required to acquire the balance of units on the 3 sites in order to comply with planning policy.

5 Management and Maintenance

5.11 Arrangements to manage and maintain the new housing stock was first considered by Cabinet in January 2021, and a recommendation was approved to procure an existing Registered Provider to provide a management and maintenance service.

5.12 The development of a management specification and model contract has been progressed over the last year with a view to procuring a Management Agent by summer 2023, ahead of the first units coming into management in April 2024.

- 5.13 However, advice that we have received from our external legal advisor is that if the procurement process is restricted just to providers registered with the Regulator of Social Housing the Council may be in breach of Public Procurement Regulations at risk of a legal challenge so Cabinet is asked to note that this will no longer be a specific requirement.
- 5.14 However, performance and specifically customer service will be central to the selection of the Management Agent and the selected provider will be required to meet key performance targets to ensure the best possible service for tenants.
- 5.15 It is recommended that the Development Agent role is kept separate from the procured provider who will manage the stock on our behalf. Although some local authorities have gone down this route in our case there is a potential conflict of interest in Sefton.
- 5.16 Any Development Agent who is part of the negotiations with Sandway and potentially other developers on the acquisition of future properties for use as council housing will be aware of the details of any agreed terms. If that development agent is also a Registered Provider (housing association) who is active in the borough having knowledge of such commercially sensitive information would be an advantage for them in any future negotiations that they may have with Sandway to acquire Affordable Housing. The most immediate example relates to the 71 affordable housing units that will be developed by Sandway on the Buckley Hill Lane, Bootle High and Bentham's Way sites. The council will only be in a position to acquire 46 of these 71 units so another provider will be required to negotiate with Sandway to acquire the balance of these properties. Knowledge of the terms agreed with the Council would potentially compromise Sandway's negotiating position. Instead, it is proposed that consultant support is used to provide Development Agent support on future sites as it has been on the Buckley Hill Lane scheme.

6 Programme Risks

- 6.1 A Risk Profile is included in the Business Plan Part B (Appendix II). This outlines a number of risks to the ongoing development of the Council Housing Programme.
- 6.2 The key risks, identified as having a 'medium residual risk score' identified by the risk profiling exercise include:

Key Programme Risks	
Key Risk	Mitigation
2. Buckley Hill – Grant is not agreed with HE	If HE will not provide grant Council renegotiate with Sandway
6 Handover delays for Sandway – All Sites	The payments will mitigate the financial impact of delays – but the impact on future tenants can be high – Careful management between Sandway/Sefton & the managing agent should manage this issue.
7 Sandway's contractor enters	The contract will require Sandway to find the

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administration	solution at their cost.
8 Total scheme costs increase.	The Plan is modelled with a 10% contingency
9 The Council cannot procure a managing partner	The Council could self – manage or appoint an agent to manage all or elements of the management and maintenance of the homes.
14. The revenue position takes too long to become positive.	Bear down on costs and maximise income

6.3 Programme risks will be actively managed by the project team, and current oversight is provided by an officer Steering Group and reporting to Cabinet Member.

7 Key Timescales

- Phase 1 Business Plan Agreed – April 23
- Agreement with Sandway on terms for Buckley Hill Lane – April 23
- Homes England Grant Application Process – May 23
- Revised Buckley Hill Lane Proposal considered by Council – June 23
- Management Agent Procurement Completed – June 23
- Controls and Governance Arrangements in place – Sept 23
- Onboarding 1st tranche of properties – April 24

APPENDIX I – OPTIONS APPRAISAL (BUSINESS PLAN PART A)



SEFTON

Option Appraisal

August 2022

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BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF ARK'S APPOINTMENT

In January 2021, Sefton Council (the Council) approved in principle an objective to establish a programme of new council housing provision. The Council's key drivers for wishing to establish this programme are summarised in the following section of this document.

Sefton is a sizeable metropolitan borough situated to the north of Liverpool and incorporating urban and suburban parts of the northern city conurbation and its fringes and some coastal and semi-rural areas which were traditionally part of West Lancashire.

The Council is seeking to consider options for how best to further its aspirations to directly develop new affordable homes. The Council appointed ARK Consultancy (ARK) to provide support in assessing its options, developing a business case for a preferred approach and then formulating a more evolved business plan for the preferred approach.

The scope of ARK's assignment to support the Council in furthering its aspirations and plans to develop new affordable homes falls into two phases of work:

- A. An assessment of the market and policy context, some initial briefing for the Council, consultation and engagement with stakeholders and the development of an option appraisal. This phase is expected to culminate in a Gateway Approval step to decide whether to proceed to Phase B.
- B. More detailed research on opportunities, exploration of viability and appraisal assumptions and development of the business case evaluation and of the business plan forecasting to a more detailed level.

This document is the principal output of the Phase A work and is intended to support the Gateway Approval step. It includes the outputs of ARK's assessment of the policy context for delivering affordable housing in Sefton, a brief assessment of the condition and functionality of the various housing markets in Sefton, the outcome of a series of consultation meetings with key personnel, a structured appraisal of realistic options available to the Council to intervene more directly in affordable housing provision and a suggested preferred approach.

Phase A has been undertaken largely in July and August 2022, having commenced at the end of June. This is a fairly condensed timetable for the work involved and time pressures have been exacerbated when aiming to complete consultation and engagement tasks during a period when most personnel have some holiday commitments.

SEFTON'S DRIVERS FOR DIRECT DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned in Section 1, the Council had decided in principle to re-establish the direct development and ownership of affordable homes back in January 2021. At present the Council does not own any social housing having transferred its housing stock in 2006 to One Vision Housing (now The Sovini Group).

The Council has previously set up a wholly owned development company, Sandway Homes, which was established for the purposes of developing market housing on sites in the Council's ownership. Sandway schemes will bring forward affordable housing as a result of planning obligations in Section 106 agreements. So, in particular, the Council is motivated to acquire the affordable housing produced as a result of Sandway's activity.

Aside from enabling Sandway schemes to be fairly self-contained in terms of the participants and the outlet for affordable homes produced, the other key drivers for the Council wishing to develop affordable homes more directly include:

- adding to the capacity of providers active in the borough
- focusing more on achieving social rented homes within the programme of affordable housing production because rents are more genuinely affordable
- having a provider more likely to engage effectively with smaller schemes
- having a provider fully attuned to the strategic priorities for the type of affordable housing needed in different parts of the borough
- adding impetus and timeliness on bringing schemes forward and to fruition
- simplifying the development process for affordable housing being produced on land in the Council's ownership by avoiding the land transfer stage.

The Council ran an internal workshop session for key officers and members back in December 2021 and an output of that session is an underlying preference for more direct affordable housing development to be 'on balance sheet' and controlled entirely by the Council. However, the terms for engaging consultancy support did expect that work to test and analyse available options and ensure that the Council's initial preference was justified. Part of that process needs to include a thorough assessment of the implications and a solid comparative analysis of the realistic options available.

LEGISLATIVE AND LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

This section focuses on legislation and policy at both a national and local level and putting into context other aspects of the Option Appraisal. Appendix A provides a more detailed analysis of the legislative and policy environment.

NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND POLICY

There is a raft of legislation that places obligations and duties on local authorities. One of the most significant pieces of legislation in recent years is The Localism Act 2011 which introduced substantial new freedoms (the General Power of Competence) for local authorities to act with the scope in law which any individual person would have.

However, any specific extant powers relating to local authorities supporting new housing development in their areas largely remained in place and these powers still take precedence in terms of a council's statutory powers.

Easing of borrowing constraints on local authority housebuilding by the removal of the borrowing cap on housing debt attributable to the Housing Revenue Account took place in 2018. This enabled local authorities to more readily consider programmes of new council housebuilding.

Other significant relevant legislation includes the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, both of which contain provisions that amend the operation of the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out how the Government expects planning policy to be applied, has been amended and updated to reflect the changes in legislation.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places new duties on councils in relation to the prevention of homelessness. These requirements have underlined the importance to councils of being able to access a sufficient supply of suitable affordable housing.

There are a number of important bills currently making their way through parliament. The Regeneration And Levelling Up Bill signals further significant changes to the planning system, including how affordable housing is delivered. It includes measures to simplify compulsory purchase powers and encourage regeneration of towns. The Social Housing Regulation Bill is intended to improve the regulation of social housing, to strengthen the rights of tenants and to ensure better quality, safer homes.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Sefton borders the city of Liverpool to the south, the borough of Knowsley to the south-east, and West Lancashire to the east.

Sefton is a member of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA), which brings together six local authorities; Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.

Sefton is a diverse borough and it is noted in several council documents that, although Sefton may appear as a fairly average borough in terms of key indicators, it is in fact polarised in a number of areas including income, economic activity and home ownership.

This is illustrated by areas in the south of Sefton, such as Bootle, Netherton and Seaforth, being in the 20% most deprived areas in the country, whilst Birkdale, Ainsdale and Crosby are in the 20% least deprived.

The Council recognises that an important way to address the disparities across the borough is through economic development and regeneration and enabling the local economy to become more resilient and diverse.

To support this ambition the Council's priorities for investment and growth include infrastructure, regeneration in Bootle and Crosby and investment in Southport town centre and its leisure facilities.

A number of these projects have attracted significant investment from the LCRCA.

COUNCIL VISION

The Council has developed a vision called Sefton 2030. This includes in the Vision Framework a pledge to "Work together to ensure choice across all types and tenures across the borough."

This flags that, although there is not a specific strand relating to housing within the vision document, housing choice is regarded as an important objective and a contributory factor to the delivery of the vision.

HOUSING STRATEGY

The corporate recognition of the importance of housing flows through into the latest Housing Strategy. The previous Housing Strategy covered the period 2016 -21, a new draft Strategy has recently been subject to a public consultation and will cover the period 2022 to 2027.

A key objective of both strategies is to prioritise land and assets in the Council's ownership to deliver its housing, including affordable housing and regeneration ambitions.

PLANNING POLICY

The Sefton Local Plan (the Local Plan) was adopted in April 2017 and is the document that guides development in Sefton. It covers the period up to 2030. In order to remain compliant with policy and legislative requirements the Council proposes that a review of the Local Plan will commence during 2022.

The Local Plan recognises the growing importance of the LCRCA in developing a joined-up approach in the city region to: “economic development and regeneration, employment and skills, transport and strategic housing.”

The Council does not currently have a Community Infrastructure Levy in place and, having deferred the matter in 2017, there appears to be no date fixed for its introduction.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Between 1981, when the population was 300,100, to 2017 the population has been in decline; although since 2017 there has been a slight increase and the population currently stands (2021) at 275,900. By 2030 Sefton’s population is projected to increase to 280,000.

According to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019 (SHMA) there is a 33% increase forecast in the population aged 65+ over 2017-2036, potentially accounting for over 100% of total population growth.

This is reflected by the first release census figures 2021, which records 23% of residents as being aged 65 and over.

HOUSING SUPPLY REQUIREMENT

The Local Plan sets out the housing requirement for the period 2012 – 2030, stating that provision will be made for the development of a minimum of 11,520 new homes in Sefton. This requirement results in an average annual delivery rate of 500 homes per annum from 2012 to 2017 and 694 dwellings per annum from 2017-2030. Actual delivery to date is detailed below.

The net affordable housing need identified in the Local Plan is 434 affordable homes per year.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

Affordable and Special Needs Housing and Housing Mix Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in 2018 and a new affordable housing SPD is planned.

The Local Plan requires 30% of housing provided on sites of 15 dwellings or more to be affordable housing, with the majority (80%) provided as rented homes. In Bootle and Netherton, the percentage of affordable housing required is lower, at 15%, and only 50% should be for rent. There is provision allowing “special needs” housing as part of the affordable housing planning obligation if it is classed as meeting affordability requirements.

LAND SUPPLY

The Local Plan identified that the supply of brownfield sites was no longer sufficient to meet the housing and employment need. It was noted that some land would need to be released from the Green Belt.

According to the latest Authority Monitoring Report 2020/21, the Council has a 5.1 year housing supply. It currently has a call for sites in progress to support the proposed review of the Local Plan.

SEFTON OWNED LAND AND ASSETS

The Council's Asset Management Strategy (2023) and its Asset Disposal Policy (2023) set out how it will support its housing delivery objective. This policy highlights that the Council will normally dispose of sites for best consideration but may accept a lower bid where affordable housing is to be provided. Bidding can also be restricted to Registered Providers. Sandway Homes has been the beneficiary of a number of disposals.

QUANTIFICATION OF HOUSING NEED

The housing numbers identified in the Local Plan are based on surveys carried out to establish housing need (including market housing need) in Sefton up to 2030. This data has been updated through subsequent housing need surveys, the most recent being the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) produced by Justin Gardner Consulting in 2019.

The SHMA assesses housing need for all tenures for Sefton at 645 dwellings per annum. This calculation has been based on household growth in the 2018-28 period and is similar to the housing need identified in the Local Plan. The SHMA states that there is a need for all sizes of housing within all tenure groups.

The SHMA identifies a net total net need of 7,400 additional affordable homes over the 19-year period (2017-36), this equates to 391 homes per annum. This is slightly lower than the number in the current Local Plan.

The highest need identified for affordable housing is in Southport. There is a small surplus of affordable housing in Bootle and Netherton. However, the SHMA suggests that in areas where there is an oversupply the existing housing stock may not meet the nature of local housing need and therefore affordable housing is still required.

The SHMA suggests a target of no more than 10% of affordable housing provision being provided as low-cost home ownership. It also points out that access to market housing is often restricted due to the lack of a deposit and other finance rather than affordability.

HOUSING REGISTER

The housing register is another indicator of housing need. The latest housing register data (June 2022) shows that there were 3,700 active household applications. Of those, 55% were in band A and B, which contain households assessed as having the highest housing need.

ASSESSMENT OF AFFORDABILITY

The SHMA makes the point that market rents in Sefton are low compared to those seen nationally, with increases being relatively modest, thus making this a more affordable tenure than in other areas. The average rent for a lower quartile 2 bedroom property is £525 per month and for a 3 bedroom property it is £625 per month (ONS 2022). This illustrates why the private rented sector can be an affordable option for some households.

The lower quartile house prices also assist in demonstrating affordability in the market sale sector with lower quartile house prices in 2021 ranging from £85,000 for an apartment to £165,000 for a semi-detached property based on actual sales data. ARK does recognise that these numbers are skewed by the relatively low prices in the south of Sefton and the following section of this document includes average house prices by sub-market gleaned by ARK's primary research.

The ONS identifies that lower quartile resident-based earnings in 2021 were £20k in Sefton. This compares with £21k across the North West and £23k across England. Again, this masks differences between the north and south of the borough, with the SHMA detailing that the lower quartile income in Bootle was nearly 30% less than the average lower quartile income for the borough as a whole.

The earnings-to-house-price ratio in 2021, based on lower quartile house prices, was 6.95.

The SHMA undertook analysis of housing affordability and concluded that around 50% of those defined as being in housing need were unable to meet their needs in the market. Although this is a relatively positive position compared to other council areas, it still demonstrates there is a considerable need for affordable rented housing.

THE CHARACTER OF SEFTON'S HOUSING MARKET

The SHMA provides a solid characterisation of the make-up of Sefton's housing market. As a component in developing the Option Appraisal and establishing an understanding of the operating context for the council when considering the direct development of affordable housing, ARK included a swift but incisive review of current housing market conditions across Sefton.

Appendix B, attached to this document, sets out the findings of ARK's review of the Sefton housing market. Those findings are summarised in this section of the main document. Aside from reviewing relevant demographic, statistical and pricing data, ARK's review was informed by dialogue with estate agents and with solicitors handling residential property transactions in the area.

GENERAL

Sefton overall enjoys a positive profile as a place to live and this, combined with the generally buoyant housing market conditions being experienced in recent times across most parts of the UK, means that housing demand is high. Supply is relatively constrained in most parts of Sefton and therefore, generally, the market is characterised by rising prices and swift turnaround of available homes.

The borough naturally sub-divides into a series of sub-market areas which revolve around towns or locales which have a distinct identity and market pull. These are:

- Southport
- Formby
- Maghull
- Crosby
- Bootle
- Netherton

Each sub-market has its own specific profile or characteristics as follows:

SOUTHPORT

A seaside resort including the adjacent neighbourhoods of Ainsdale, Birkdale, Churchtown and Crossens.

Although the town centre is less vibrant than in the past, however the Council is currently progressing an ambitious regeneration programme, including the development of a new Events Centre in the town. The residential market remains strong with owner occupation at over 73% of the stock and a significant private rented sector representing almost 19% of stock. The area has an ageing population and affordable housing need is significant.

There are a number of gaps in supply in the Southport area including low-cost home ownership and purpose-built retirement housing. The market rented sector may also need to be bolstered if the trend for landlords exiting the market gathers pace. The following table provides an overview of house prices and market rents:

Type	Average Price	Rent PCM
------	---------------	----------

Flat	£125,000	£675
Terrace House	£175,000	£775
Semi-Detached House	£207,500	£900
Detached House	£365,000	£1,200

FORMBY

Sefton's most affluent sub-market which is relatively self-contained but does include the neighbouring villages of Ince Blundell and Hightown.

A stand-out feature of this sub-market is the very high level of owner-occupation at virtually 90% of stock. Over 35% of local people are over retirement age. This sub-market has a relatively overheated market with most good quality homes reaching the market receiving multiple offers (sometimes above the asking price).

Smaller dwellings, rented housing and low-cost home ownership are all pronounced gaps in this sub-market. The following table provides an overview of house prices and market rents:

Type	Average Price	Rent PCM
Flat	£160,000	£775
Terrace House	£235,000	£825
Semi-Detached House	£275,000	£1,150
Detached House	£475,000	£1,900

MAGHULL (AND AINTREE)

For housing market purposes, this area also includes Lydiate and the Old Roan and is somewhat less cohesive than some of the other Sefton sub-markets. Aside from its general desirability as a housing locale, the area is characterised by particularly good transport and community links.

Much of the local housing stock is semi-detached housing and a high proportion was developed in the post-war period, especially in the 60s and 70s. At 88%, this sub-market again has an extremely high level of owner-occupation. The area has a proportionately high number of identified residential development sites likely to add around 2,400 new homes in forthcoming years.

Good quality apartments and rented housing (market and affordable) are gaps in this sub-market, as is low-cost home ownership for first-time buyers. The following table provides an overview of house prices and market rents:

Type	Average Price	Rent PCM
Flat	£107,500	£650

Terrace House	£200,000	No data
Semi-Detached House	£225,000	£950
Detached House	£320,000	£1,500

CROSBY

As a housing sub-market area, Crosby includes the neighbouring areas of Waterloo, Seaforth, Blundellsands and Thornton. It has two distinct small ‘town centre’ locations being in Crosby itself and in Waterloo. This is Sefton’s most diverse housing sub-market with quite a broad range of pricing and housing stock from its more prosperous areas to its somewhat more deprived. Much of the housing stock is Victorian although there is also a considerable amount of inter-war semi-detached housing and some post-war estates, including ex-council housing.

Crosby’s town centre, ‘Crosby Village’, is a focus for regeneration and some of this will include new residential development (partly realised by conversion of commercial buildings). Otherwise, the area is characterised by a lack of residential development opportunities.

Agents point to a need for low-cost home ownership opportunities and for more market sales housing. There is also a noted shortage of purpose-built apartments. The following table provides an overview of house prices and market rents:

Type	Average Price	Rent PCM
Flat	£150,000	£650
Terrace House	£195,000	£850
Semi-Detached House	£275,000	£1,000
Detached House	£430,000	£1,800

BOOTLE

This sub-market area is closely aligned to neighbouring parts of Liverpool. This is Sefton’s most deprived locality overall and its housing stock consists of a high proportion of smaller terraced houses and a relatively large amount of social housing (36% of the total supply). Market renting accounts for a relatively high proportion of homes in Bootle, at 17% of the stock.

The area is the focus for a regeneration initiative and there are a number of residential developments in the pipeline, including the potential conversion of some sizeable office blocks. The balance of tenure of new homes needs to be managed carefully as there is an oversupply of general needs family affordable homes.

Some identified gaps in provision in this sub-market include larger family houses and low-cost home ownership for first-time buyers. The following table provides an overview of house prices and market rents:

Type	Average Price	Rent PCM
Flat	£60,000	£425

Terrace House	£110,000	£625
Semi-Detached House	£150,000	£675
Detached House	Little Data	Little Data

NETHERTON

For the purposes of housing market functionality, the Netherton sub-market also includes Litherland. The latter area does include some large traditional properties (both houses and flat conversions) but otherwise this sub-market is characterised by post-war small houses and flats. Netherton was substantially composed of 1960s and early 1970s council housing, much of which is now in private ownership as a result of Right to Buy.

New build developments in the area have largely provided new market homes for sale and these have proven popular. Communication links to the area have been enhanced with the relatively recent construction of a relief road and this has opened up further residential development opportunities.

Suggested gaps for new provision in this area include further housing for market sale and good quality purpose-built apartments. Low-cost home ownership is also perceived to be a pronounced need. The following table provides an overview of house prices and market rents:

Type	Average Price	Rent PCM
Flat	£70,000	£450
Terrace House	£133,000	£650
Semi-Detached House	£175,000	£750
Detached House	No data	No data

SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION IN SEFTON

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION

In 2021 there were 19,500 affordable homes of all tenure types in Sefton; 80% of these were rented homes, 17% were supported housing/housing for older people and 3% low-cost home ownership.

The Registered Provider (RP) with the most stock is One Vision Housing with 55% of the affordable homes in Sefton. This is not surprising as One Vision Housing was the stock transfer recipient for the council's homes in 2006. The other larger stock holders are Riverside Group and Jigsaw Homes North; the rest of the RPs with a local presence have small stock holdings. There are 33 RPs operating in Sefton in total. Some of the larger organisations present, such as Places for People and Sanctuary Housing Association, have small holdings of stock and do not appear to be active in terms of development.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRODUCTION

To understand affordable housing production it is helpful to look at overall housing production for all tenures. Over the last five years (2016 to 21), Sefton has had an average net completions (after deducting demolitions and including conversions and additional bedspaces in communal dwellings) of around 650 additional dwellings per annum (500 per annum of these have been new build homes). However, in the early years of the current Local Plan, net completions were running at around 270 completions per annum, well below the forecast 500 homes per annum required.

This has meant that cumulative completions are behind the Local Plan target with the annual completion rate needing to increase markedly going forward in order to achieve the overall target.

There has been an average of 149 affordable homes per annum completed over the last 5 years. Similarly, if the target of 434 homes per annum is to be reached, production will need to increase considerably.

The number of affordable homes developed against overall new build housing delivery during the five years is 23% of the total housing development in that period, suggesting that the planning policy position is not being maintained. The percentage of homes for rent (social and affordable rent) completed is around 75% of the total affordable housing production over that period and this is compliant with planning policy.

It appears that the bulk of affordable housing delivery in Sefton is via the operation of the planning system.

There is a pipeline of sites identified providing around 1000 affordable homes over the coming years, although some sites earmarked for the latter years in particular are less certain. One Vision Housing, Jigsaw/Adactus and Torus seem to be the most active registered providers in relation to future provision.

Appendix A provides data on Sefton's affordable housing delivery in comparison with other councils in the wider Liverpool city region. Sefton's delivery is 33% lower than Knowsley's for example. This might suggest that there could be scope for increasing production in Sefton although AEK is aware that there are significant differences in the operating contexts as between Sefton and Knowsley.

Sandway Homes primarily provides affordable housing as a consequence of planning obligations on its market housing development sites. It is therefore not providing additional affordable housing, over and above what is achievable or would have been anticipated through the planning system.

There is clearly an undersupply of affordable housing and the number of RPs engaged in developing new affordable homes appears low. This is something the Council needs to address.

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FROM CONSULTATION/ ENGAGEMENT

An important element of the Phase A assignment has been engagement with relevant Council and Sandway personnel.

The original project plan envisaged a range of one-to one meetings with the Cabinet member for Housing and with a number of Council officers and then, following completion of those meetings and other background research, a workshop session with various key personnel to help develop the appraisal of options.

Given that the meetings and workshop were expected to be conducted during July and August, there were inevitable constraints imposed because of people's holiday commitments. A decision was taken to adapt the original plan in order to achieve a meaningful level of consultation within the availability challenge. This meant in practice that the workshop session was curtailed in scope and combined with the consultation session with Cllr Hardy.

ARK was able to complete dialogue with a range of key personnel within the Council.

The findings from the various consultation sessions are extensive. Rather than attempt to exhaustively capture all of these in this document, and to avoid attributing specific feedback to particular consultees, the remainder of this section includes a bullet point summary of the most salient aspects of the feedback received:

STRATEGIC BACKDROP

The Council has considered carefully experiences among other local authorities when contemplating becoming a direct developer of affordable homes.

The Sandway role and the more direct provision of affordable housing by the Council are considered to be two different projects. The Council would need to think carefully about the strategic sense of combining them if this was an emerging preference.

The commitment among councillors to becoming a direct developer of council homes is robust.

The only commitments so far made by the Council to a new direct development of affordable homes is the 13 units at Buckley Hill Lane, Netherton.

Sandway is keen to be considered as a vehicle for development of affordable homes by the Council.

Sandway is currently on site with 73 homes where the affordable housing element is being sold to Together Housing.

OPERATIONAL BACKDROP

The Council has a small number of existing dwellings provided for school caretakers etc. The Council also operated a Gypsy and Traveller Site. It might be sensible to combine management of these with output dwellings from new council housing development.

The Assets and Estates teams brief is to maximise capital receipts to fund growth programmes when selling assets, unless there are some specific other objectives attaching to sites.

Although the working relationship between Planning and Housing Strategy is close, there is no formalised structure for joint working.

LAND SUPPLY AND PLANNING POLICY

The Council does have a reasonable level of land availability to support new affordable housing supply more generally via Sandway.

Overall, the Council perceives that general housing delivery levels are now at about the right level overall.

The Affordable Housing SPD is under review and will address spatial planning expectations but anything on decarbonisation would be expected to feature in the Local Plan review.

Generally, viability constraints on larger greenfield sites appear to be few and far between. Argument with developers tends to revolve more around dwelling mix.

Bellway is the only large developer active in Sefton which is addressing the regeneration needs of areas like Bootle.

At present, Sandway's role focuses on developing Council owned brownfield sites. There is recognition that Sandway's role could extend to acquisition of other non-council sites in the future.

EXPERIENCE WITH HOUSING SUPPLY TO DATE

The Council feels, despite its significant efforts to create a positive and up-to-date planning policy framework, that new housing provision does not always adhere to the Council's objectives. That is particularly true with affordable housing provision. Sandway is establishing a product which aims for consistency of standards between market and affordable homes and a focus on place-making.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING OPTIONS

It would be helpful if the Phase A output document did develop the descriptions for each of the appraisal or evaluation criteria.

The social value benefits of each option warrant a specific score in the option appraisal.

Council control, legal implications and the flexibility inherent in an option all warrant a significant weighting when appraising options.

Reputational management for the Council needs to be a particular aspect applied to weighing up the risks associated with different options.

The spread of weightings for option appraisal criteria ought to be widened to achieve a more distinct set of output scores for each of the options.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Some informal canvassing of interest in providing both development project management and housing management services has taken place. There was considerable interest expressed by a number of RPs.

ARK's view that around 350 units in management is the approximate threshold for bringing a degree of that service in-house is an important insight for sharing more widely among Council members and officers.

VIABILITY

The initial viability challenge for developing new affordable homes without the benefit of historic stock revenues to help with some initial revenue deficits on new homes has been considered to a degree by the Council. Access to accumulated Right to Buy receipts and S.106 commuted sums can help to address this challenge.

There is recognition that addressing the early years' viability challenge for newly developed affordable homes is best included in the Phase B work when some more detailed financial modelling will take place.

OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL DIRECT AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

ARK’s understanding is that the Council has weighed up its options for ‘direct’ development of new affordable homes previously. In so doing, we believe the Council concluded provisionally that it seemed appropriate to develop those homes within the envelope of the Council’s exclusive ownership and accounting arrangements, i.e. ‘on balance sheet’.

Despite the above, the Council’s brief for the ARK business case assignment expected the realistic options for ‘direct’ development to be revisited and subjected to structured comparative evaluation. This will enable the Council to arrive at a fully assessed preference for its approach and to be able to evidence its reasoning.

This section of the Option Appraisal for a preferred approach identifies those options which offer realistic and deliverable methods for the Council achieving its aims for direct development of new affordable homes, including securing a step-change in the level and targeting of new supply.

Although the focus of the assessment work is on approaches to ‘direct’ development, there are options which see the Council taking a core role in the provision process but entering legal partnerships with other parties in order to achieve the desired results. In one form or another, these are best described as ‘joint ventures’.

Another key option is an approach wholly controlled and owned by the Council but delivered via a separate legal entity. ARK would still regard this approach as a form of direct delivery by the Council.

So, taking on board the qualifications above, there are four key options available to the Council for direct delivery of new affordable homes, and these are:

- A) Direct development via the Council’s General Fund/Housing Revenue Account
- B) Establishing a Special Purpose Vehicle (or Expanding the Role of Sandway Homes)
- C) A Joint Venture with a Private Developer/Contractor
- D) A Joint Venture with a Registered Provider (Housing Association)

The remainder of this Section of the Option Appraisal is a structured explanation and assessment of each of these options in a consistent pro-forma style. Hopefully, this will help the Council to begin weighing up the respective implications, strengths and weaknesses of each option before we provide a further appraisal of those options in Sections 8 and 9 of this document.

OPTION:	A	TITLE:	DIRECT DEVELOPMENT VIA GENERAL
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			FUND/HRA
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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

This option would entail the Council developing new council homes, primarily rented homes, 'on balance sheet' and under the auspices of the Council's direct operations. The scale of development and ownership of homes permitted within the General Fund accounting format is 199. Beyond that number of homes, the Council would be required to re-establish a Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION

The Council would need to decide within which directorate its direct new homes programme would sit. That would include deciding upon the relationship between the new council homes operation and the Housing Strategy function. The Council would also need to decide whether and when to re-establish a Housing Committee. Certainly, if the level of new homes provision requires an HRA, the Council ought to carve out a precise oversight role for one of its committees.

RESOURCING

DEVELOPMENT

In the early stages, development delivery is likely to require an agent or external resource. Over time, and dependent on scale, it may be economic to recruit to at least one Development Manager role.

MANAGEMENT

Housing management and maintenance will require an outsourced service until this portfolio is at an economic scale for in-house staffing. That is likely to be around 300 homes in management. An RP is the most appropriate source of agency services initially.

CONTROL

Because the housing will be in the legal ownership of the Council and the programme under the Council's direction, control is at a high level. In order to access Homes England grant, the Council would need to secure Registered Provider status and this will bring an enhanced degree of external regulation from the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). The control environment will need an appropriate level of policy, process and authorisation procedures.

FINANCIALS

COST PROFILE:

A reasonably low-cost approach but with notable start-up costs and with an initial scheme viability challenge.

CAPITAL COST & FUNDING:

For modelling purposes, average unit costs can be assumed to be:

- (i) with land cost £186,000
- (ii) with no land cost £152,000

Best cost assumptions include on-costs. Funding will from the accrued capital with grant funding where possible.

REVENUE/ OPERATIONAL:

Agency development and management support is scalable to match the programme/portfolio size. Project development

	costs will be around 4% of programme value. Housing services costs will be around 12% of rent roll and not including direct maintenance outlay and allowance for voids.
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ESTABLISHMENT COST:	<p>The set-up costs can vary significantly dependent on the complexity of the governance and management model created. The overall scale of ambition will influence the initial start-up outlay. Avoiding re-establishing the HRA will help initially to keep costs down. There will be potentially abortive business development costs to allow for as well.</p> <p>Budget £120k for start-up and £40k for Yr 1 business development.</p>
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VIABILITY:	There is an underlying viability challenge for all new affordable homes when there is no historic stock revenue surplus to offset early years revenue deficits. General Fund support can help ride out the early years problems as can additional cross-subsidy from actual schemes.
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ACCOUNTING:	Initially, accounting can be via the General Fund until such point as the Council clearly expects to exceed 199 homes in management. There are specific accounting conventions applying to HRA accounting over and above the normal CIPFA codes. See OBC main doc. for more detail.
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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

These are minimal aside from the normal legal aspects of developing new homes (which include acquisition agreements and transfers for schemes requiring new land and building agreements for construction contracts).

The Council has the power immediately to begin developing new homes and so would not have to create a legal construct to frame a development programme with this option.

TAX IMPLICATIONS

The Council is able to reclaim VAT on its day-to-day activities. Although new-build construction is zero rated for VAT, consultancy fees and development and management agency arrangements will attract VAT at 20%, which the Council can reclaim.

Any profits received from development activity will not attract a Corporation Tax liability.

ACHIEVABILITY

This is the most straightforward and deliverable option from a standing start.

The Council would need to arrange its agency services and put in place a basic 'infrastructure' of policy, processes and systems (a lot of which can come via agents).

RISK PROFILE

KEY RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	GROSS	MITIGATION
It is more difficult to achieve scheme viability than for established providers.	High	Med.	High	The Council will need to secure some additional subsidy.
It will be difficult to contain growth ambition once development is underway.	High	Med.	Med.	The Council may need to be realistic about having to set up an HRA.
Cost and programme control is very difficult with development.	High	High	High	Realism is important and ideally early schemes should rely on council land.

SWOT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Straightforward and deliverable</p> <p>Enables the Council to retain ownership of assets</p> <p>Borrowing via PWLB attracts low interest rates</p> <p>Most rented homes developed will be social rented</p> <p>Tenants have high security of tenure</p> <p>The Council will have an additional tool in its box to support affordable housing development in Sefton</p>	<p>There is less flexibility with tenure than in some other models</p> <p>Over 199 homes will require HRA re-establishment</p> <p>Tenants of social rented homes will have the Right to Buy</p> <p>Outsourced services for development and management will be required</p> <p>There is an additional scheme viability gap for the Council to bridge</p> <p>Achieving an effective governance and organisational model can be difficult</p>

OPTION:	B	TITLE:	ESTABLISH A SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLE (OR EXPAND THE ROLE OF SANDWAY HOMES)
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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

This option would entail the Council establishing a wholly owned company, probably one limited by shares, charged with developing new homes. These companies are sometimes described as a 'Local Housing Company'. Typically these companies can develop homes in both market and affordable tenures with the former cross-subsidising the latter.

A sub-option is for the Council to expand the role of its existing company, Sandway Homes, to include affordable homes.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION

The company could be limited by shares or by guarantee (the latter a type of Community Interest Company). The company will be governed by a Board which would include Council nominees. All shares would normally be owned by the Council.

The company will need some staff in order to cement its operations and this can mean a fairly expensive start-up phase. Sandway has existing staffing. Some development resourcing may still be required from an outsourced provider. A group structure might be appropriate to ring-fence market housing risk.

RESOURCING

DEVELOPMENT	MANAGEMENT
If a new company is established, early development projects will require an outsourced resource. Sandway has some existing development skills and personnel.	Housing management and maintenance will require an outsourced service until the owned portfolio is at an economic scale for company staffing. This is likely to be around 300 homes in management. The company will need adequate staffing for its overall management and financial administration.

CONTROL

The wholly owned character of the company's ownership by the Council enables fairly effective control by the latter. However, the Council nominee(s) on the Board will normally be in the minority and the company will have an independent mindset. In order to access HE grant, the company will need to register as an RP and this external regulation is desirable in any event.

FINANCIALS

COST PROFILE:	A fairly high-cost approach, especially if a new company were to be established. The cost burden can be eased by working with Sandway although it is still a costlier approach, on the face of it, than Option A.
CAPITAL COST & FUNDING:	For modelling purposes, average unit costs can be assumed to be as for Option A. There is a higher level of capital cost because finance costs will be higher than Option A and so will internal on-costs. Page 263 would be the primary source of

	capital finance, raising loans from PWLB in the General Fund and on-lending to the company.
REVENUE/ OPERATIONAL:	Agency management costs are scalable to match the growing portfolio size. Development costs are less so, especially if an in-house team is established initially. Sandway has existing senior and development staff so can spread this overhead. Project development will be around 5% - 6% of programme value.
ESTABLISHMENT COST:	The set-up costs will vary significantly dependent on whether the Council establishes a new company or expands the role of Sandway. Budget £200k for the former and £80k for the latter. Also, budget £40k for Year 1 business development.
VIABILITY:	As with Option A, there is an initial viability challenge for affordable housing from a standing start, with no historic stock. A company will have less flexibility than the Council to manage this and will have higher development and funding costs. Cross subsidy from sales will be essential to achieve viability.
ACCOUNTING:	The company will be required to produce its own accounts in standard company form, including a P&L and a Balance Sheet. These will need to be submitted to Companies House within set timescales.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

If a new company is established, there are fairly significant legal steps for the Council to take including constituting and registering the new company. Land disposals from the Council will require contracts and transfers and loans will be subject to formal loan agreements.

Working with Sandway will avoid the set-up legal costs and potentially mean that additional loans could be subject to the framework of an existing loan agreement.

TAX IMPLICATIONS

VAT liabilities are more significant for a company than for the Council. Sandway may adopt some techniques in its relationship with the Council to help shelter exposure to VAT on some costs but the positive impact is likely to be limited.

A company limited by shares will be liable to Corporation Tax on profits before there is dividend distribution to the Council.

ACHIEVABILITY

This option is relatively achievable if the Council chooses to expand and adapt Sandway's role. The ownership and management of stock will change Sandway's character though and mean RP registration is advisable, which is time consuming.

If the Council sets up a new company, there is likely to be lengthy elapse time in appraising that approach and establishing the company's operations.

RISK PROFILE				
KEY RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	GROSS	MITIGATION
1. The establishment and operating costs will stretch viability to an unworkable extent.	Med.	High	Med.	Adapting the role of Sandway would be the most pragmatic approach.
Setting up a new company is too complex and challenging.	High	High	High	Again, working with Sandway would ease this risk considerably.
Sandway does not have affordable housing expertise.	High	High	High	Sandway may need to strengthen its governance and rely on outsourced expertise as well.

SWOT	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company can have a clear and ring-fenced focus • The model is well established • Sandway offers a ready-made solution which can spread cost • Independent Board experts can oversee the governance of the company • The wholly owned nature of the company offers strong influence for the Council • Tenants do not have Right to Buy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex unless it is possible to expand Sandway's role • Adds a layer of cost and complexity compared to Option A • Viability will be challenging and rely on cross subsidy from sales • There are negative VAT and Corporation Tax implications • There have been prominent failures of LHCs

OPTION:	C	TITLE:	JOINT VENTURE (JV) WITH A PRIVATE DEVELOPER/CONTRACTOR
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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

This option is a fairly common approach for local authorities seeking to regenerate specific areas or existing council stock. It has also been deployed to support new council house-building programmes in various localities (like Sheffield and Newcastle for example). The Council would usually create a separate legal entity to frame the JV.

Typically the Council would contribute land and/or funding and the JV partner would contribute construction and possibly sales. It is possible for JVs to be created by contract as well as by setting up a new legal entity.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION

Typically, especially for a programme of activity over a number of sites, a new JV entity is created, either a limited liability partnership (LLP) or a company. The entity would usually be owned 50/50 by the parties and have a Board which includes representatives of each and possibly one or two independent members.

Day-to-day operations are normally managed by existing staff but Sefton would need a dedicated resource to manage its role in the JV.

RESOURCING

DEVELOPMENT	MANAGEMENT
The Council would need a resource to deal with land assembly and identification and also with contract management of the JV. Most of the remaining development activities would be undertaken by the JV partner.	The product of the JV, new affordable homes, would need to be owned and managed by the Council or by another vehicle (for example Sandway). Either way, there is a need to contract a day-to-day management and maintenance service until the extent of stock can justify in-house staffing.

CONTROL

The scope of the JV and the selection of a partner are firmly in the Council's control. Once created, the Council's influence will be contained by the JV Agreement and the governing instrument and strategy of the JV entity.

The quality and effectiveness of the Council's influence will rely heavily on the Council's management of its role, including the nominees on the JV entity Board. There needs to be clear performance expectations set for the JV.

FINANCIALS

COST PROFILE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially this is a moderate cost approach to the development phase of schemes and also a good way of managing and transferring risk. Good affordable housing outcomes may still rely on some loan finance from the Council to the body (possibly itself)
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	which owns the resultant affordable housing.
CAPITAL COST & FUNDING:	In all probability, the JV will focus on schemes developed on council sites. So, for modelling purposes, only the unit cost for schemes without land is relevant (£152k). Funding solutions for affordable homes will definitely rely on cross-subsidy and may also require some Council PWLB borrowing.
REVENUE/ OPERATIONAL:	This option will minimise development administration costs. Also, cost should be a key criteria for selecting a JV partner and this should achieve competitive pricing for other development on-costs. Development admin could end up at 3% to 4% of scheme cost. Agency housing management costs will be as for Option A.
ESTABLISHMENT COST:	The set-up costs will include a procurement process for a partner and the Council's share of the establishment outlay. Budget £70k.
VIABILITY:	Many JV arrangements end up with a tenure balance that creates affordable housing of a value equivalent to the deferred land value. This will aid viability but means affordable housing levels are lower than they might be.
ACCOUNTING:	The Council would account for its role in setting up and helping to manage the JV via the General Fund. The JV vehicle will need to account independently for its work and fairly detailed management accounts will be part of the monitoring framework.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Where schemes are developed by a JV on Council land, the construction phase is supported by a lease or licence and the actual land transfers occur on sale or letting to the buyers of properties or the landlord owners.

The JV will require an important suite of legal agreements including a JV Agreement, constitution for the JV entity, Development Agreement, Building Agreement, Licence and so on.

TAX IMPLICATIONS

Working with an experienced developer/constructor should enable some techniques for avoiding VAT on fees etc. to be deployed. Any fee costs incurred by the Council can have VAT reclaimed.

The JV entity, if structured as a company, will have Corporation Tax liability if it makes a profit. An LLP treats tax differently and liabilities fall to individual partners (which will mean no tax liability for the Council on its share of the profit).

ACHIEVABILITY

JV approaches are a well tried and tested technique for partnership developments on Council owned land. There is likely to be a reasonable appetite for this

opportunity in the market, especially among the bigger partnership contractors like Wates and Kier.

Procurement and negotiating the final shape of a deal do present challenges. Also, the outturn benefits of JVs often fail to meet expectations so once the potential benefits become clearer, this could prove to be a barrier to progression.

RISK PROFILE

KEY RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	GROSS	MITIGATION
1. The level of affordable housing offered for schemes is lower than expected.	High	High	High	A good level of business case modelling is needed before agreeing to the approach.
The JV partner fails to meet contract expectations.	High	High	High	Selecting the right partner is crucial as is a thorough assessment of opportunities and robust legals.
Commitment to a JV approach constrains flexibility.	High	Med.	Med.	Programmes commitments often outlive their true benefits. Contractual JVs for a limited number of projects are better.

SWOT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreads risk • Leaves construction and related risks with an experienced partner • Development project management for the Council is modest • Can create a strong programme impetus • Council can take ownership of completed affordable homes • Cashflow profile is positive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success is dependent on maintaining a good working relationship • There is a fair amount of legal complexity • The JV partner will expect a higher profit than for a normal building contract • Typical JV partners are a little inflexible on product standards and construction methods • The model can be cumbersome for a small programme

OPTION:	D	TITLE:	JV WITH A REGISTERED PROVIDER (HOUSING ASSOCIATION)
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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

This is a variant of Option C but in this instance envisages a JV arrangement with a RP (likely to be a housing association). Such a JV is more likely to be project related and to be a contractual JV for that specific scheme. However, a programme-based JV or an area-based regeneration initiative might warrant the JV company approach.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION

For a specific project and contract-based JV, the Council and RP would create a Project Group or even a Project Board. The Council's role at that level is likely to be delivered via existing staff and even with some member input.

If a company solution is adopted then, as with Option C, this could be an LLP or a company limited by shares. Ownership would normally be 50/50.

RESOURCING

DEVELOPMENT	MANAGEMENT
The Council would need a resource to deal with land assembly and identification and contract management of the JV. Most of the remaining development activities would be undertaken by the JV partner.	The product of the JV, mainly affordable housing, could be owned either by the Council or by the RP. The benefit of the latter would be in terms of both viability and in housing services delivery. If the Council owned the resultant housing, it would need agency housing services, probably from the JV partner.

CONTROL

The scope of the JV and the selection of a suitable RP are firmly in the Council's control. Once created, the Council's influence will be contained by the JV Agreement and governance arrangements.

The quality and effectiveness of the Council's influence will rely heavily on the Council's management of its role and the personnel involved. The JV Agreement should set clear performance expectations.

FINANCIALS

COST PROFILE:	<p>Potentially this is a moderate cost approach, dependent on the structure of the deal. It can also be a good way of transferring risk.</p> <p>RPs are typically more expensive developers than private companies.</p> <p>There is potentially access to RP loan finance and also internal revenue subsidy if the housing ends up in RP ownership.</p>
CAPITAL COST &	In all probability the JV will focus on a scheme or schemes developed on C

FUNDING:	cost without land but with higher RP on costs (£158k). Funding solutions can flex dependent on the ultimate ownership of the new homes.
REVENUE/ OPERATIONAL:	Development administration costs will be higher than for Option C and be between 4% and 6% of scheme cost. If the RP owns resultant homes then there will be no agency management fee and stock can benefit from early years revenue subsidy.
ESTABLISHMENT COST:	The set-up costs will include a procurement process for a partner and the Council's share of the establishment cost. If based on a contractual JV, assume a budget of £60k.
VIABILITY:	As with Option C, some capital cross-subsidy from sales may be required. The RP can access HE funding more readily than the Council directly. RP ownership of output homes will enable them to benefit from early years support. This will increase the number of affordable homes produced compared to other options.
ACCOUNTING:	The Council would account for its role in setting up and helping to manage the JV via the General Fund. The JV vehicle will need to account independently for its work and fairly detailed management accounts will be part of the monitoring framework.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Very dependent on the scope and model of JV created. If Council land is developed and the Council ultimately takes ownership of affordable homes, the legal structure for schemes will be like Option C.

There is a stronger likelihood of a contractual JV than with Option C and this will simply lead to a JV and Development Agreement combined and then possibly a Building Licence. The RP will probably let the Building Agreement.

TAX IMPLICATIONS

If the RP leads the scheme development process, it will incur VAT on fees etc. in the normal way. Because a JV entity is unlikely, Corporation Tax would not be a consideration. Any scheme profits not used to subsidise affordable homes would be shared by the partners, with the Council's share not subject to a tax liability.

ACHIEVABILITY

JVs between local authorities and RPs are rarer than those between LAs and private developers. There is likely to be less appetite among RPs for a JV approach but nonetheless sufficient to achieve a deal.

Procurement and negotiating a deal will be challenging. RPs tend to be slow in progressing projects, especially those of an unusual character.

RISK PROFILE				
KEY RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	GROSS	MITIGATION
1. The level of affordable housing offered from schemes is lower than expected.	Low	High	Med.	Flexibility on long-term ownership will improve viability.
Lack of interest among RPs in JV approaches.	Med.	High	Med.	Interest will probably depend on Council plans for ownership of the stock.
Performance by RP fails to meet expectations.	Med.	High	Med.	Performance by RPs on development is generally poor to moderate. JV agreement needs to set clear targets.

SWOT	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreads risk • Leaves RP to deal with construction procurement and risk and with housing services • Development project management for the Council is modest • Council can take ownership of completed affordable homes • If RP owns output homes, RTB risk is reduced and viability improves • Relationship can begin on one project and then potentially be scaled up if successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be limited market appetite • RPs are inherently expensive and cumbersome developers • There is less track record of JVs involving RPs • The start-up phase is complex and time-consuming if for one or only a handful of projects

FACTORS IMPACTING ON A PREFERRED APPROACH/ CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING OPTIONS

The pro-forma style assessments making up the bulk of the previous section include information on aspects of each of the realistic options which help to contrast them and compare their relative strengths and weaknesses.

An evolution of those aspects of the options which suit the different approaches to Sefton's priorities and its market and operating context can form the basis for defining a series of evaluation criteria. These criteria can then be applied to each option and become the subject of a scoring process which will help the Council to decide on its preferred approach.

The following criteria are those suggested by ARK as the key factors or considerations to be adopted as the basis for a more structured and objective appraisal of the options. They are:

(i)	STRATEGIC FIT	The extent to which a particular option addresses the Council's strategic priorities and the objectives defined in the assignment brief.
(ii)	COUNCIL CONTROL	The degree to which the Council is 'in the driving seat' in terms of the model, its establishment and its on-going operation.
(iii)	CAPITAL COST/ VIABILITY	The relative level of capital cost to be incurred in applying the approach, the fundability of those costs and the inherent viability of the approach at the scheme and programme level.
(iv)	START-UP COSTS	The level of cost overall for setting up the option's approach and for reaching the point of the option becoming a productive resource. The costs focus mainly on those to be met by the Council but also on the overall cost economy of the approach when getting started.
(v)	OPERATIONAL/ REVENUE COST	The relative value for money offered by the approach in day-to-day revenue cost terms.
(vi)	RETAINED EQUITY	The degree to which the Council can retain or crystallise an asset investment value in the product of the approach.
(vii)	LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The relative complexity and effectiveness of the legal framework needed to establish and operate the approach.
(viii)	TAX IMPLICATIONS	The potential negative impacts on the viability of the approach as a result of likely tax liabilities.
(ix)	RTB	The risk of losing valuable affordable housing as

	IMPLICATIONS	a result of tenants securing a Right to Buy.
(x)	SKILLS/EXPERTISE	The inherent availability of the necessary skills and expertise required to deliver the approach.
(xi)	FLEXIBILITY	The degree to which the approach can flex to deliver schemes of differing types or to grow or reduce the programme as demand or funding changes.
(xii)	RESILIENCE	The robustness of the solution or approach so that it can continue to deliver good results for the Council and local people.
(xiii)	SOCIAL VALUE	The extent to which the option offers the potential to add social value like local jobs, training, local supply chain benefits or local community engagement.
(xiv)	BALANCE OF RISK	An overview of the risks presented by the approach and the quality and cost-effectiveness of mitigations which are on offer; this includes risk transfer. Reputational risk for the Council is an important facet.

Each option is scored in relation to the defined evaluation criteria. A score between 0 and 5 is awarded dependent on how well an option/approach fulfils an evaluation criteria positively. Higher scores mean more positive outcomes.

Not all criteria are of equal significance when selecting a preferred option. Therefore, ARK has weighted the scores achieved by options in relation to each of the criteria. Weights are multiples of the base scores and range between 0.5, 1, 1.5 and 2.

The following section of this document is a matrix showing, in ARK’s view, how each of the four realistic options performs when scores and weights are applied in relation to each of the criteria.

OPTION APPRAISAL

OPTION	STRATEGIC FIT			COUNCIL CONTROL			CAPITAL COST/VIABILITY			START-UP COST			OPERATIONAL/REVENUE COST			RETAINED EQUITY			LEGAL IMPLICATIONS			TAX IMPLICATIONS			RTB IMPLICATIONS			SKILLS/EXPERIENCE			FLEXIBILITY			RESILIENCE			SOCIAL VALUE			BALANCE OF RISK			TOTAL SCORE
	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	S	W	T	
A) Direct General Fund/HRA	4	2	8	5	1.5	7.5	3	1.5	4.5	2	0.5	1	3	2	6	5	1.5	7.5	4	1	4	5	0.5	2.5	1	1	1	2	1	2	3	1.5	4.5	3	1.5	4.5	4	1	4	3	1.5	4.5	61.5
B) SPV/Sandway	3	2	6	3	1.5	4.5	2	1.5	3	2	0.5	1	3	2	6	4	1.5	6	2	1	2	2	0.5	1	4	1	4	3	1	3	4	1.5	6	2	1.5	3	3	1	3	2	1.5	3	51.5
C) JV with Developer	2	2	4	2	1.5	3	4	1.5	6	3	0.5	1.5	4	2	8	2	1.5	3	3	1	3	3	0.5	1.5	2	1	2	3	1	3	2	1.5	3	3	1.5	4.5	3	1	3	3	1.5	4.5	50
D) JV with RP	2	2	4	2	1.5	3	4	1.5	6	3	0.5	4.5	3	2	6	2	1.5	3	3	1	3	2	0.5	1	3	1	3	4	1	4	3	1.5	4.5	2	1.5	3	3	1	3	4	1.5	6	54

A PREFERRED APPROACH AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the relatively straightforward option appraisal approach set out in the matrix in Section 9, Option A, Direct Development Via The General Fund/HRA, emerges as the most attractive proposition. The spread of scores between the various options is not especially wide and all offer their attractions and strengths. However, ARK does feel that Option A is distinctly the best match in relation to the established criteria.

ARK is aware that the Council has undertaken its own internal assessments of options for more direct development of new affordable homes in the fairly recent past. This process involved quite extensive engagement with members and relevant officers. We know that the preference emerging from that assessment is consistent with the findings and conclusions of the process now facilitated by ARK.

Because the Council's aspirations for the scale and pace of new affordable homes development are prudent and are linked to specific site development opportunities being pursued by Sandway, the number of new homes likely to be developed in the coming 5 years and more will remain comfortably within the threshold for holding them within the General Fund. This eases the accounting and administrative demands of the Option A, 'on balance sheet' approach for the time being.

Over the latter stages of the ARK Phase A assignment, we have explored with the Council some of the viability challenges associated with developing new affordable homes for rent from a standing start. Typical subsidy expectations for new affordable homes for rent are founded on a cumulative break-even for net revenues over an agreed appraisal period, usually linked to the loan repayment period. That presumes that any early years' revenue deficits are 'paid back' from discounted future revenue surpluses from other existing stock to keep operations viable in the early years of a new scheme. Sefton will not have that revenue benefit initially so an alternative means of subsidising the early years' deficits will be needed.

The Phase B assignment, if Sefton chooses to proceed to that next stage, will address the viability issue in more detail and identify a workable solution. This is likely to rely on accessing accumulated and eligible capital from other Council funding pots rather than placing a temporary revenue strain on the General Fund.

As well as this important financial modelling requirement, the Phase B work also needs to develop in more detail the resourcing solution for both development services (business development and project management) and housing management services.

In terms of the key output from this Phase A assignment, ARK recommends that the Council's preferred approach to developing new affordable homes more directly is to adopt the Option A model where homes will be owned directly within the envelope of the Council's General Fund.

If the Council is minded to accept this approach and approve progressing that as a strategy, the more detailed business plan modelling proposed for Phase B does then need to be instituted so that the Council can properly appraise and control the implications of moving forward with implementation of the strategy.

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Appendix III – Sefton Council Housing Business Plan Equality Impact Assessment

1. Introduction

1.1 The Equality Act 2010 outlines how public bodies must have due regard to:

2. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this act
3. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
4. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2.0 Protected Characteristics

2.1 Equality Act 2010 is clear that there are particular characteristics that are intrinsic to an individual against which it would be easy to discriminate. Section 149 (the Public Sector Equality Duty) lists the characteristics known as ‘protected characteristics’ against which we have to test for discrimination. These characteristics are gender, race/ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and disability.

3.0 Identifying Impacts across protected characteristics

Through reviewing your proposal, identify if and how the protected groups below may be impacted and identify any mitigating actions regarding the proposed changes but also as part of the consultation and engagement activity.

Protected characteristic	Recommendations/mitigating actions
Gender	<p>There are positive impact relating to Females due to gender differences between the composition of households and household tenures. The majority of single parent households are female. These households therefore rely on a single income, and current evidence identifies that; the remuneration levels for females is lower than males. Females are more likely to face challenges in accessing and affording housing, particularly private rented homes if in need of housing benefit assistance, and more likely to live in social rented housing.</p> <p>Mitigating Actions: This strategy aims to mitigate these factors by improving the access to housing and housing services and providing a greater range of homes in the borough.</p>
Age	<p>The Council Housing Business Plan aims to positively impact those age groups (both young and old) that may be disproportionately affected by access to the right types of housing and appropriate housing services. There are housing priorities that can have positive impacts on children and younger adults who would wish to access the housing market across a range of tenures.</p>
Disability	<p>The Council Housing Business Plan aims to positively impact upon these groups, including those with physical or mental disabilities by helping to ensure that the right type of good quality affordable housing is available in the borough. This will include specific adaptations for those with disabilities. These all prioritise improving the provision of housing and housing services that are accessible and adaptable will increase choice in all tenures to help mitigate existing identified shortfalls or barriers.</p>
Race/Ethnicity	<p>The Council Housing Business Plan seeks to positively address issues relating to race or ethnicity through housing needs of more diverse and vulnerable communities.</p>

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Appendix III – Sefton Council Housing Business Plan Equality Impact Assessment

Religion or belief	None identified. The Council Housing Business Plan is secular in its approach and implementation.
Sexual Orientation	None identified.
Gender Reassignment	None identified.
Pregnancy and maternity	None identified.
Other Protected Groups	The Council Housing Business Plan will have a positive impact on 'looked after children' by helping to provide sufficient affordable, safe and high-quality housing in the borough. Social housing is often the tenure that care leavers move to as they live independently for the first time. Direct provision and management of Council Housing is anticipated to provide greater flexibility around how care leavers are housed in the future.

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