



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS)

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON TUESDAY 28TH JUNE, 2022

PRESENT: Councillor Dowd (in the Chair)
Councillor Howard (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Corcoran, Chris Maher, Page, Sathiy
and Sir Ron Watson

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Atkinson and Hardy

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Councillor Dowd, welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Committee in the 2022/23 municipal year; and extended her thanks, on behalf of the Committee, for the work of those Members in 2021/22 who were not reappointed to the Committee, namely Councillors Cluskey, D'Albuquerque, Robinson and John Sayers and former Councillor Blackburne.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hansen, Myers (and his substitute Member Councillor Waterfield) and Webster.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

5. RIVERSIDE DISPERSED ACCOMMODATION PILOT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Economic Growth and Housing that provided an overview of the Riverside Dispersed Accommodation pilot (the Pilot).

The report indicated that one of the actions within Sefton's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23 was to undertake a strategic review of temporary accommodation in Sefton to ensure that the provision was suitable; that at present Sefton's temporary accommodation for families was based in one location but that this was now considered out of date, with many councils attempting to provide dispersed supported temporary

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accommodation models as well as or instead of hostel provision; that in July 2019 the Cabinet Member – Communities and Housing approved the delivery of a service to provide dispersed temporary accommodation and support services for vulnerable households, particularly for those who struggled to access tenancies; that in June 2021, the Cabinet Member approved the extension of the Pilot so that Riverside could extend the pilot by a further six months and, to also extend the provision of properties that Riverside provided by an additional 10 properties, bringing the total number of properties to 30.

The report also indicated that an evaluation of the pilot was carried out by an independent company, Impact Limited, to assess the impact of the Pilot and the final Evaluation Report was attached to the report as Appendix A. The evaluation report concluded that the return on investment for every £1 which Sefton Council spent was £3.36 which represented potential public spending cost savings associated with homeless families of £24,394 per family.

The report also provided details of future service provision; that the Pilot had recently been shortlisted for the 2022 Northern Housing Awards within the category for Best Initiative for Tackling Homelessness; and Housing Strategy and Commissioning outcomes.

The report concluded that Homeless services had been improved and recommissioned over the last four years, which had seen Sefton's rough sleeper numbers reduced to zero and a shift in approach that would focus on residents' strengths rather than their deficits; and that the learning gained from commissioning the Pilot with a model of dispersed supported accommodation had been a valuable lesson as Sefton looked to find better ways of assisting the most vulnerable families approaching its Housing Options Team for assistance.

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

- The report and outcomes contained in the report were very good and the Council should be proud of the achievements
- The potential for elected Members to report incidences of homelessness to officers or other agencies
- How funding issues for the continuation of the scheme would be addressed in order to mainstream the service, using Flexible Homeless Support Grant
- The report indicated that there were no revenue costs associated with the proposal but could the Council be certain of this if funding streams ceased; and that this could therefore have implications for the Council's base budget
- Clear timescales were sought on the receipt of external funding
- Reference was made to the evaluation which concluded that the return on investment for every £1 which Sefton Council spent was

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£3.36; and that this represented potential public spending costs savings associated with homeless families of £24,394 per family

- The operation of the Payment by Results model
- The link between the Riverside Dispersed Accommodation pilot and the Empty Homes Plan
- The Sefton Families Service Evaluation Final Report contained extensive customer feedback via exit surveys but there was little mention of feedback from communities in which the Riverside properties associated with the pilot were located. Could this information be obtained?

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report providing an overview of the Riverside Dispersed Accommodation pilot be noted; and
- (2) the Head of Economic Growth and Housing request Riverside Housing to compile feedback from communities in which their properties associated with the pilot were located for circulation to Members of the Committee.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23, SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS AND KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought the views of Members on the draft Work Programme for 2022/23; the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by a Working Group(s) appointed by the Committee; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; updated Members on the progress of items that had previously been considered by the Committee; and updated on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (LCRCAO&S).

Councillor Dowd, Chair of the Committee suggested a fresh approach to the operation of the Committee during 2022/23 by making arrangements for two additional informal meetings to be held:

- The week commencing 10 October 2022 to focus on Locality Services and to consider an update on the Operational Activities delivered via Locality Services and the Green Sefton 2021/2022 Annual Report, Service Vision 2030, and Service Plan 2022/23; and
- The week commencing 6 February 2023 to focus on Housing and to consider reports on Leasehold House Sales and an update on the operation of Sandway Homes.

This new proposal would obviate the need for the Committee to establish Working Groups as short reviews of services could be undertaken by all Members at informal meetings.

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Accordingly, if approved by the Committee, the Work Programme attached to the report would need to be amended to reflect the above changes.

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

- Arranging informal meetings would provide all Members of the Committee with the opportunity to take part in short, sharp scrutiny of portfolios rather than a limited number of Members who served on Working Groups
- Scrutiny undertaken at the informal meetings could lead to the submission of reports to formal meetings of the Committee or the generation of additional items for consideration
- The potential for the provision of statistics associated with Locality Services to be provided on a ward-by-ward basis
- Reference was made to the Chair of the LCRCOA&S not being a Member of the majority group on the Committee; the selection of Chairs to serve on House of Commons Select Committees; and a suggestion that this was best practice and should be adopted in Sefton

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be amended as referred to above and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be authorised to arrange two additional informal meetings in October 2022 and February 2023; and that the informal meetings commence at 6.30 p.m. and be held in Bootle and Southport Town Halls respectively; and
- (2) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

7. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS - FEBRUARY 2022 - JUNE 2022

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that included the most recent reports from the Cabinet Members for Communities and Housing; Locality Services; Planning and Building Control; and Regeneration and Skills.

Councillor Atkinson, Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills presented her report and particularly referenced:

- The positive results detailed in the latest data from Career Connect associated with NEET Reduction and Early Intervention
- The engagement with local businesses and case studies undertaken
- Business visits undertaken to Print Room UK Ltd. and Character Mailing, Aintree

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Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following aspects of Councillor Atkinson's report:

- In respect of the Southport Food and Drink Festival a comment was made that the entrance fee to the event was too high; a complaint was made that attendees were not allowed to bring their own food and drink into the event; it was alleged that the costs for a certain product at the event was very high; and a question was asked whether the Council had control over conditions attached to the event
- In respect of the European Social Fund (ESF) concern was expressed at the cessation of funding at the end of 2023; and that without replacement funding, Ways to Work in Sefton and the Positive Inclusions Project were under threat. Clarification was sought on the scale of the problem; and whether this issue was included on the Council's corporate risk register

Councillor Hardy, Cabinet Member – Communities and Housing presented her report and particularly referenced:

- Major infrastructure work begins on the People's Network
- Improvement works to Meadows Library
- The breakdown of funding secured through the Rough Sleeper Initiative over the next 3 years

Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following aspects of Councillor Hardy's report:

- In respect of equalities issues, the low response of staff getting in touch in relation to the disability staff group and LGBT staff group
- In respect of Neighbourhoods and Partnerships, were elected Members automatically invited to attend events in their wards

Members of the Committee also asked questions/commented on the following matters:

- Work underway to move the Careline onto a Cloud-based platform (the migration of older physical systems to a brand-new Cloud service) that would significantly improve the operation of the service
- The potential to purchase or lease specialist equipment to remove gum from pavements
- How volunteer groups are alerted to the availability of funding, via ward funds, for small value capital issues

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update reports from the Cabinet Members for Communities and Housing; Locality Services; Planning and Building Control; and Regeneration and Skills be noted; and

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- (2) Councillors Atkinson and Hardy be thanked for their attendance at the meeting.