



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS)

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON TUESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER, 2022

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Atkinson, Hardy and Fairclough

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hansen and Councillor Moncur, Cabinet Member – Health and Wellbeing.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

20. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

21. SOUTHPORT MARKET - 1 YEAR REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Place that provided an overview of the performance of the Southport Market during the first year of operation, focused on the period during the financial year 2021-2022.

The report indicated that Cabinet at its meeting on 3rd September 2020 approved the delivery of a fully refurbished Market Hall with a focus on food and drink incorporating a flexible events space that would support the wider visitor economy; that the new Market opened in July 2021 after undergoing the £1.4m refurbishment (funded totally from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Town Deal Acceleration Fund); and that the Market now had a central bar, 8 hot food units, 2 cold food units, a butcher and events space to the rear.

The conclusions outlined in the report were that:

- since opening in late July 2021 the Market had been a great success; that by the year ending in 21/22 it had met its business

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- plan targets in an 8-month trading period; and that the food and drink offer had exceeded expectations
- the events space had hosted a number of large-scale events such as the Christmas Extravaganza and had been booked for private bookings
- the new Market had had a catalyst impact with many long-term empty units in the Market and King Street becoming occupied by new independent businesses, with a number of commercial sales in the area
- lessons had been learned over the first year with regards to the number of traders, operational hours and procedures and the market would continue to evolve and improve over the next two years. Many other local authorities had visited the market and requested meetings in order to learn and implement their own food markets with Southport Market being used as a good practice case study
- the people of Southport had embraced the Market and that it had brought people back into the town centre and continued to generate great reviews
- the next 6-12 months and beyond would be challenging for the hospitality industry; that there would be increased costs and a reduction in consumer spend and that it was expected this would impact future trading in the Market, as with all other hospitality businesses. Mitigation measures had and were being put in place
- The Project has delivered 1,600 m² of refurbished floorspace; the creation of 10 new businesses; 1 business being safeguarded; and over 30 jobs created

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

- Congratulations were extended to Councillor Atkinson, Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills and the staff involved in the regeneration of the Southport Market
- The potential to introduce a loop system or other system in the Market to assist the hearing impaired who were attending meetings at the venue
- Contingencies and marketing strategies in place if visitor numbers to the Market reduce due to the cost-of-living crisis
- Incentives to customers such as reward cards or early bird menus
- Doubts about the viability of the scheme without access to external grant funding
- A concern was raised about the promotion of the venue being called a market when it was not; and it was suggested that this may cause confusion
- Other retail and food outlets in the vicinity of the Market welcomed its opening due to increased footfall in the area

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- The potential pedestrianisation of the area in the vicinity of the Market
- Assurance was sought on the accuracy of the figures in the table within the report detailing the 2021/22 final outturn. This assurance was given
- The revenue costs to the Council as part of the operation of the Market

RESOLVED:

That the report providing an overview of the performance of the Southport Market during the first year of operation, focused on the period during the financial year 2021-2022, be noted.

22. FLOOD AND COASTAL EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2021-2022

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of People (Operational In-House Services) advising that the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 previously required that arrangements be made to review and scrutinise the exercise by the Council as a Lead Local Flood Risk Authority of its flood risk management functions and coastal erosion risk management functions; that following the cessation of this requirement, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested that an annual Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management review be submitted to it.

The report indicated that the Annual Review covered the 12-month period from September 2021-2022 and detailed the following key areas:

- Information on flooding & erosion incidents experienced over the last year.
- Work progress relative to our legislative responsibilities as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Riparian Owner and Coastal Authority.
- Work progress relative to our own actions set out in our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) 2022-2030.
- Overview of annual finances

The report concluded by seeking the Committee's comments for submission to the Cabinet Member - Health and Wellbeing.

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

- The total flood incidents (all types) reported between Oct-2021 and Sep-22 being 20 and it was noted that this was a reduction of 58 incidents on the previous year
- How inland surface water flood events were measured

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- Interim and enabling works to deliver the Crosby Flood and Coastal Defence Scheme and plans in place to continue to seek funding for the scheme
- Early interventions to clear small watercourses, such as Dobb's Gutter, to prevent later, longer-term flooding problems

RESOLVED:

That the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management annual report be noted.

23. GREEN SEFTON ANNUAL REVIEW 2022

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of People (Operational In-House Services) that provided an update on the progress of Green Sefton's operational delivery over the last year, and setting out the strategic work programme, in line with the Service Vision 2030, and Service Plan for the next year; and which proposed a refresh of the Vision and Service Plan and sought the Committee's comments on these documents for submission to the Cabinet Member - Health and Well Being and the Cabinet Member - Locality Services.

A copy of the Green Sefton Annual Review 2022 was attached as an appendix to the report.

Mark Shaw, Green Sefton Service Manager, made a presentation to the Committee and highlighted the work undertaken by his service during the past year which included:

- Partnership work with others, and the update of the Volunteer Handbook
- The public sharing of the Service Plan, and workload management
- The delivery and formal opening of Bootle golf course driving range
- In Bloom successes
- The introduction of a new coast PSPO
- Contributions to the Climate Change Working Group
- Responses to extreme weather events
- Successful bids for external funds, and developed and delivered improvement projects
- Development of income through innovation and business case approaches
- Performance tracking and responses to increasing complaints, and a start on defining service standards possible

Mr. Shaw also identified activity to be undertaken in 2023 which included:

- Development and exploration of new funding bids, such as for Botanic Gardens Heritage Lottery
- Delivery of further improvement schemes, such as Crosby coastal defences (interim works)

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- Seek to increase in staff capacity, apprenticeships and training
- Adoption of the Tree, Allotment, Playing Pitch/ Football Development and Nature Conservation Strategies
- Start replacement of fleet and machinery
- Continue to develop the Coastal Gateways
- Tender for investment at Southport Golf
- Development of a Strategic Vision for our places in the future
- Promotion of changes to overall Landscape Management
- Publish the standards of what can be achieved within resources available
- Lead of key aspects of the Climate Action Plan
- Revisit Service Strategy, and workload management

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

- Workload and mitigation measures to reduce complaints
- The re-designation of some locations as tourist areas rather than sites of environmental importance
- Unusual weather events would become less unusual and measures needed to be put in place to mitigate such climate change issues
- Environmental impacts did matter to our communities and there was a responsibility to tackle these
- Natural Alternatives, Green Sefton's own long-running inclusion programme for adults and young people with additional needs was commended; information was sought on whether the programme could be expanded and how it was funded; and whether added social value of the programme could be quantified and factored into the funding formula
- Air quality improvements pursued by the Council helped to improve the health benefits of local residents
- The Member Development Steering Group had agreed to a module on climate change being made available to all Members of the Council

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report on the Green Sefton Annual Review 2022 be noted;
- (2) Members be requested to submit any comments they may have on the current Service Vision to 2030 and Service Plan directly to the Cabinet Member Health and Well Being and the Cabinet Member - Locality Services; and
- (3) Mark Shaw be thanked for his informative presentation.

24. DIGITAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to Minute No. 17 of 21 September 2021 the Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer setting out progress made against each of the recommendations formulated by the Digital Inclusion Working Group and approved by Cabinet.

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

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

- A concern was expressed about residents who did not have access to ICT equipment, including affordability reasons; and about residents who lacked the appropriate ICT skills to access the ever increasing services in the digital world
- subject to assurances that the actions identified in the report were continued and became “business as usual” operational matters then there was no requirement for the Committee to receive further update reports on this matter

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the report setting out progress made against each of the recommendations formulated by the Digital Inclusion Working Group and approved by Cabinet be noted; and
- (2) no further update reports be submitted to the Committee subject to assurances that the actions identified in the report are continued and become “business as usual” operational matters.

25. 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 views on the Work Programme for 2022/23; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; that sought views on the establishment of a Working Group to review the topic of the adoption of a strategic approach for waste containment/disposal across the Borough and to seek input from Sefton’s representatives on the Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority; that updated on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and seeking consideration of the views of the Cabinet Member – Locality Services and the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services in response to a request of the Committee concerning the implementation of recommendations arising from the Effectiveness of the Council’s Enforcement Activity Working Group.

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

- a suggestion was made that the recommended review of the adoption of a strategic approach for waste containment/disposal across the Borough be dealt with by an informal meeting of the Committee rather than establishing a Working Group to review the topic. Comments were also raised as to the informal meeting, if agreed, should be held remotely or in-person and what time of the day the meeting should take place
- a comment was made that for adequate scrutiny to take place then background information on items contained in the Forward Plan needed to be disclosed; the Forward Plan item relating to Sandway Homes was cited as an example, but other Council wholly-owned companies were equally as relevant; and it was alleged that wholly-owned Council companies imposed charges for the copying of documents requested and that it was considered that this was unfair. Councillor Dowd, Chair of the Committee indicated that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had earlier that day considered a report which allowed Members to carry out effective scrutiny of council companies; and that the extract for each company, including Sandway Homes, would be considered by the respective individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the next cycle.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be endorsed;
- (2) a review of the adoption of a strategic approach for waste containment/disposal across the Borough be dealt with at an informal meeting of the Committee rather than establishing a Working Group to review the topic;
- (3) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be requested to canvas the views of Members on whether the informal meeting referred to in (2) above should be held remotely or in person; and at what time of the day the meeting should take place;
- (4) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted; and
- (5) the Cabinet Member – Locality Services and the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be requested to submit their comments in response to a request of the Committee concerning the implementation of recommendations arising from the Effectiveness of the Council's Enforcement Activity Working Group to the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 17 January 2023.

26. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS - SEPTEMBER 2022 - OCTOBER 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; Health and Wellbeing (Green Sefton element); Locality Services; Planning and Building Control; and Regeneration and Skills.

Councillor Hardy, Cabinet Member – Communities and Housing presented her report and highlighted the following issues:

- Operation Banger, a multi-agency plan, activity over the Halloween and bonfire night period
- Work undertaken with Ward Councillors to identify their Christmas tree and Christmas Lighting needs
- Significant increases in demand for welfare reform services such as foodbanks and the Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme
- The establishment of warm hubs across the borough
- Equalities work across the borough
- the operation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Sefton
- Sefton library service and the successful award of funding
- Christmas pantomime production of Aladdin at the Atkinson
- The approval by Cabinet of Sefton's Housing Strategy (2022 – 2027); and the Council's house building programme
- Praise offered by the DLUHC's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Advisor, Alastair Reeves, to Sefton for the provision of its homeless service

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

- Anti-social behaviour incidents and whether the figures have increased or decreased on previous years
- the Homes for Ukraine scheme
- the availability of grants for organisations to establish warm hubs in the borough
- support for groups undertaking work in the community such as attending pantomime productions at the Atkinson and the Little Theatre

Councillor Atkinson, Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills presented her report and highlighted the following issues:

- the great work undertaken by the Sefton Adult Learning Service. Concern was expressed that since the demise of the Champion Group newspaper the advertising facility to provide details of the courses on offer had been lost
- Sefton events programme
- Closure of the Southport Theatre and Convention Centre

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- The positive work associated with the Regeneration, Growth and Investment Programme
- The successful opening of the new Lake House centre
- The successful first year operation of the refurbished Southport Market
- Updates on the levelling-up fund bids

A Member of the Committee asked a question concerning the Southport Pier restoration and associated funding issues.

Councillor Fairclough, Cabinet Member – Locality Services presented his report and highlighted the following issues:

- Catering and Building Cleaning Services
- Burials and cremations
- Sefton ARC and Careline
- Waste Management and Street Cleansing, including weed control, street cleansing provision, fly-tipping and service improvements since 1st April 2022
- Strategic transport and delays to the National Highways proposal to build a road through Rimrose Valley as part of Port access
- LTP and Growth Plan; and the help the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could give by scrutinising proposals within the Plan. It was indicated that officers would be requested to prepare a report for submission to the Committee
- Southport eastern access
- Winter maintenance
- Street lighting LED retro fit scheme
- Traffic signals LED retro fit scheme

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

- The potential to install “subterranean super-bins” similar to those used in Europe and recently introduced by Liverpool City Council
- Congratulations were extended to the Burials and Cremations team who had received a high standard of recognition from the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) for Southport Crematorium
- Consultation and engagement with local residents in areas with high incidents of rear entry fly-tipping in an effort to combat the problem

RESOLVED: That:

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

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