



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES)**

**MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL BOOTLE
ON THURSDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2022**

PRESENT: Councillor Bradshaw (in the Chair)
Councillors Bennett, Grace, Killen, Murphy, Shaw
and Thomas

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lappin

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Byrom, Brennan
(and his substitute member Councillor Myers), Carlin and Robinson.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

9. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2022 be confirmed as a
correct record.

10. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Further to Minute No. 6 (2) of its meeting held on 14 June 2022 the
Committee received a presentation from Michael Mainwaring, Workforce
Learning and Development Manager and Ruth Appleby, Democratic
Services Officer on Members' training and development.

Mr. Mainwaring and Ms. Appleby circulated a handout that provided
information on:

- E-learning courses that lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour
- Shorter courses offered by Sefton Corporate Learning Centre that lasted 30 minutes
- How to enrol on an E-learning course
- Difficulties experienced by Members logging onto Me-Learning and help that could be provided via the Member Development Handbook
- Password requirements in accordance with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy

Members of the Committee were also provided with a copy of the
Councillor Induction and Member Development Schedule of Courses
2022/23.

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

- Difficulties experienced accessing the mandatory course relating to Safeguarding Adults Awareness
- Whether the mandatory courses are mandatory for all Members of the Council or targeted at Members of relevant Committees
- How Members could access courses “on the go” via use of their mobile devices
- The Overview and Scrutiny training event held in May 2022 being very informative and helpful
- The openness of the Treasury Management training event that provided a general introduction to treasury management in local government finance to all Members of the Council not just Audit and Governance Committee members

RESOLVED:

That Michael Mainwaring and Ruth Appleby be thanked for their informative presentation.

11. LEVELS OF DISCIPLINARY, GRIEVANCE, DIGNITY AT WORK AND SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that provided information on the levels of discipline, grievance, dignity at work and sickness absence within the Council (excluding schools).

The report indicated that the management of the workforce was an important activity to ensure outcomes for Sefton’s communities were achieved and to ensure that the workforce was appropriately managed and motivated. Specific information was provided on:

- Disciplinary, Grievance and Dignity at Work - the organisation enjoyed a comparatively good level of cases and this reflected on the whole, both the good overall industrial relations environment, the partnership approach that was undertaken and also the work undertaken within departments
- Council Sickness Absence - Year End 2021/22 plus first quarter of 2022/23 - relating to both short-term and long-term absences; and analysis by service area
- Health Unit Data – advising that a new report would be prepared via the new iTrent system to provide information on percentage of sickness reasons across the Council; and that past reports had always shown the top 3 reasons to interchange between mental health, musculoskeletal and medical illness /infection

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- Occupational Health referrals – advising that as in previous years, mental health related issues continued to be the main reason for referral and that Operational In-House Services, Communities and Adult Social Care were the areas with the highest number of referrals overall
- The Strategic Leadership Board continuing to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence; and that the Personnel Team worked closely with departments providing information and advice and appropriate levels of support, advising managers on informal processes and assisting managers with the more formal and complex levels of sickness absence management
- The Council's Sickness Absence Policy which operated in a partnership with trade unions

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

- Concern expressed that staff working from home may continue working when they were ill. It was stressed that the same rules applied to staff working from home or office based regarding sickness absence, namely, that they should report any absence to their line manager in the normal way
- Did the Council follow the ACAS mental health guide, have mental health awareness training and have mental health champions. It was noted that the Council did not have mental health champions but that the consideration could be given to the first two issues. Information was provided on work undertaken with trades unions, staff being urged to have continuous conversations with their managers, the availability of referrals to occupational health and the provision of the appropriate kit to enable staff to work safely from home
- A comment was made that on occasions that a manager could be the cause of mental health problems for staff
- Regarding sickness level statistics by service area a comment was made that in areas with small numbers of staff a few people off ill in such areas could skew the percentage figure in comparison to larger service areas; and a request was made for actual numbers of staff being absent to be provided, together with percentage figures, in future reports. It was noted that the actual numbers of staff being absent would be provided, together with percentage figures, in future reports
- A question was asked whether the sickness absence policy was working to tackle short-term absences. The view of officers was that the policy was working and being managed well in respect of short-term absences but that the real challenge was long-term absence; and it was considered that the policy was fit for purpose but acknowledged that it had to be continually worked on and reviewed

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- Reference was made to the perceived high level of disciplinarys in In-House Operational Services. It was noted that this service area employed a high number of staff but that only 3 of the investigated case resulted in a sanction
- In respect of the reasons for referral to Occupational Health referred to in paragraph 8.1 of the report was it know whether staff had pre-existing conditions relating to their referrals

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report providing information in terms of discipline, grievance, dignity at work and sickness levels be noted; and
- (2) the ongoing work and initiatives to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence be noted.

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

Further to Minute No. 50 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1 September 2022 the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that advised of:

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

The Cabinet had resolved (Minute No. 50):

That in respect of the Revenue Budget:

- (1) the current position relating to the 2022/23 revenue budget be noted;
- (2) the Remedial Action Plan to offset the budget pressures being faced in 2022/23 be noted;

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

That in respect of the Capital Programme:

- (6) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 7.1) be noted;
- (7) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 July 2022 of £7.535m (paragraph 7.5); and the latest full year forecast is £42.814m (paragraph 7.6) be noted;
- (8) the explanations of variances to project budgets (paragraph 7.1) be noted;
- (9) Council be recommended to approve of a supplementary capital estimate for £2.000m for Core Disabled Facilities Grants (paragraph 7.11);
- (10) Council be recommended to approve a supplementary revenue estimate of £1.064m for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement support grant (paragraph 7.13.1);
- (11) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.759m for the Maritime Corridor and Southport Eastern access schemes (paragraph 7.13.2) be approved;
- (12) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.577m for Section 106 funding for Highways Capital schemes (paragraph 7.13.3) be approved;
- (13) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.468m for projects on the Key Route Network (paragraph 7.13.4) be approved;
- (14) Council be recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate of £1.620m for Tranche 3 of the Active travel Fund (paragraph 7.13.5);

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

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

- Regarding the estimated increase of £4.3m on the Council's energy and fuel costs a question was asked whether the recent Government announcement to provide help to businesses in this respect would also help local authorities. It was noted that at this stage it was unknown what help would be provided by the Government to local authorities

RESOLVED:

That the financial monitoring report and the decision taken by Cabinet in respect of this matter be noted.

**13. 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 the Committee on the 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 items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; updated on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and updated on issues considered at previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (2) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted; and

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- (3) the update on matters considered at previous meetings of the Committee in relation to the procurement for the provision of enforcement agent services and the Elections Act 2022 be noted.

**14. WELFARE REFORM AND ANTI-POVERTY REFERENCE GROUP
- UPDATE**

Further to Minute No. 24 of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 the Committee considered a Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty update of the Head of Health and Wellbeing and Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

The update provided information on the latest meeting of the Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty (WRAP) Cabinet Member Reference Group and in particular on activities associated with:

- The cost-of-living crisis
- Community pantry
- Childhood poverty in Sefton
- Feedback from Marmot work
- Council tax energy rebate
- Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme
- Child poverty and children entering care
- Household support grant
- Healthy start voucher uptake
- A request for action that period poverty be discussed at the next WRAP meeting

Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services presented the update.

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

- The establishment of “warm hubs”, places within local communities where people could be assured of finding a safe, warm and friendly environment; and whether updates could be provided on such “warm hubs”. The importance of a co-ordinated approach to the establishment of “warm hubs” was stressed to ensure adequate provision throughout the week. It was noted that updates would be provided via Cost of Living Crisis reports to Cabinet and Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Cabinet Member Reference Group reports; and that the matter was being coordinated by Councillor Hardy, Cabinet Member – Communities and Housing and the Neighbourhoods Team
- The great service provided by the St. Leonard’s Youth and Community Centre food pantry

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RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update on the operation of the Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group be noted; and
- (2) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her update.

15. CABINET MEMBER REPORT - JUNE 2022 TO AUGUST 2022

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that included the most recent report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be noted; and
- (2) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.