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MEETING: CABINET
DATE: Thursday, 4th January, 2024
TIME: 10.00 a.m.
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: Debbie Campbell
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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 7 December 2023		(Pages 5 - 16)
* 4	Procurement Strategy for Southport Eastern Access - Phase 1 Report of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection)	Dukes; Kew; Norwood	(Pages 17 - 30)
* 5	Procurement Strategy for Maritime Corridor Scheme - Phase 1 Report of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection)	All Wards	(Pages 31 - 42)

* 6	Southport Business Improvement District	Cambridge; Dukes	(Pages 43 - 50)
	Report of the Executive Director - Place		
7	Programme of Meetings – 2024/25 Municipal Year	All Wards	(Pages 51 - 74)
	Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer		
* 8	Annual Health and Safety Report	All Wards	(Pages 75 - 100)
	Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services		
* 9	Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base for 2024/25 and Review of Council Tax Premiums for Long-Term Empty Properties	All Wards	(Pages 101 - 166)
	Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services		
* 10	Financial Management 2023/24 to 2026/27 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2023/24 – January Update	All Wards	(Pages 167 - 182)
	Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services		
11	Exclusion of Press and Public		
	To comply with Regulation 5(2) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, notice has been published regarding the intention to consider the following matter(s) in private for the reasons set out below.		
	The Cabinet is recommended to pass the following resolution:		
	That, under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following 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.

12 **Sefton New Directions - Exempt Appendix**

(Pages 183 -
198)

Exempt appendix of the Executive Director of
Adult Social Care and Health

13 **Re-admittance of the Public**

The Cabinet meeting will now move back into
open session to consider the following agenda
item

* 14 **Sefton New Directions**

All Wards

(Pages 199 -
206)

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social
Care and Health

THE "CALL IN" PERIOD FOR THIS SET OF MINUTES ENDS AT 12 NOON ON WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2023.

CABINET

MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON THURSDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2023

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Sir Ron Watson CBE

85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Fairclough.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Paragraph 9 of the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of personal interest were made and the Member concerned remained in the room during the consideration of the items, but took no part in the consideration of the items and did not vote thereon:

Member	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Councillor Veidman	Minutes Nod. 94 and 97 - Crosby New Library Outline Business Case Update - Exempt Appendix; and Crosby New Library Outline Business Case Update	He is the Chair of the Planning Committee and a planning application on the matter is in progress.

87. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

88. SEFTON HOSPITALITY OPERATIONS LIMITED - BUSINESS PLAN

Agenda Item 3

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place providing an update on the performance of Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited relative to the previous Business Plan for the company and to the original Business Case for the Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre project, part of which was now operated by the company. The report provided an update on operational activities, alongside recent and forecast financial performance in the context of current and future conditions and outlook for the economy and for the sector, highlighting key decisions required by the Council.

Decisions Made:

That:

- (1) the outturn for the company for the financial year 2022-23 and the factors influencing that outturn be noted;
- (2) the recent and current factors affecting the economy and the hospitality sector, and future outlook for both, and how they have affected and will affect the company, be noted;
- (3) the updated strategy and business plan for the company be approved;
- (4) the changes to the loan agreement between the Council and the company, as stated in section 5 of the report, be approved;
- (5) it be noted that any material variations to the Business Plan will be reported to the Cabinet as shareholder at the earliest opportunity; and
- (6) the appointment of an interim Board Chair, as per section 6 of the report, be approved.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The role of Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited (SHOL) remained focused on the delivery of an experience for customers that aligned with the vision and objectives of the borough and the Council. In addition to the revitalisation of, and the maximisation of opportunity from, underused assets in Sefton, SHOL and its strategy continued to enable support for local people with access to higher-quality career opportunities in the hospitality sector. As previously, this model also delivered best value to the Council (via the removal of the subsidy formerly required to the previous hospitality offer at Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre (CLAC).

The Council as shareholder remained committed to the long-term future of the company and the venues it operated.

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

With regards to governance and board composition, the Cabinet had delegated powers set out in Chapter 5, Paragraph 40 of the Constitution to appoint the Council's representatives to serve on Outside Bodies.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No other options were considered by the Council. The company, as part of its strategy and business planning process, had considered options for the business and its current and potential future venues, although some aspects of that review process would be commercially sensitive and confidential.

89. SANDWAY HOMES LIMITED PHASE 1 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 60 of 7 September 2023, the Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) providing an update on the progress and delivery of new homes as part of the Phase 1 Business Plan for Sandway Homes Limited and which followed on from the revised Business Plan approved by Cabinet in September 2023.

The report provided an update on the delivery of construction activity and forecast financial performance, comparing this to the previously agreed Business Plan. Details of the current progress in respect of Phase 2 Business Planning was also provided.

Decisions Made:

That:

- (1) the updated position of the Phase 1 Business Plan, as approved by the Cabinet in September 2023, be noted; and
- (2) the range of external economic factors and risks that have the potential to impact the delivery and financial performance of the Phase 1 Business Plan be noted and acceptance and understanding of these and the material impact that they may have, be confirmed; and
- (3) the current position in relation to the Phase 2 Business plan, and the intention for any further material variations to this to be reported to the Cabinet at the earliest opportunity, be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

Since 2016 the Council had been considering its role in the provision of housing throughout the Borough to complement an active third and private sector market.

Agenda Item 3

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

There was significant demand for housing sites and housing development within Sefton, with over 11,000 housing units being required, over the Local Plan period, to meet with the local housing demand. There was a national shortfall of circa 1m homes (of which 400,000 fell into affordable homes) whilst across the Liverpool City Region a total of circa 50,000 housing units would be required in the medium term. There was currently a 'housing crisis' driven by a shortage of high quality, secure and affordable homes for residents. Sandway Homes had helped meet some of this shortfall, and the recommendations, and the proposals for future phases outlined in the report would ensure that they continued to do so. The homes that Sandway were developing in the Borough would increase housing completions and the availability of choice for residents and those wishing to live in Sefton.

This would be achieved by working with the Council and stakeholders including Homes England and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to leverage in brownfield enabling funds to assist the local authority in proactively re-developing sites included in its brownfield disposal register.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

There were no alternative options to be considered.

90. MICROSOFT AZURE AND OFFICE 365 LICENCES

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services setting out the background for the Council's main Microsoft provision which comprised of Office 365 end user licences, including email services, PowerBI subscription, used for business intelligence and reporting, Sefton's Azure cloud environment, the Azure managed service and Server Cloud Enrolment for SQL databases. These functions made up a large portion of the Council's ICT provision used by officers to conduct their day-to-day duties, helping provide services to the public and the Council's stakeholders.

The report also detailed the associated procurement route(s) available to the authority to renew these licences and services due to the current contract expiring on 30 April 2024.

Decisions Made:

That:

- (1) the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services be authorised to select an appropriate framework provider to conduct a direct award procurement exercise leading to the forming of a new contract for the provision of Microsoft Office 365 licences used by Council staff and also usage of the Council's cloud environment Microsoft Azure, which hosts the majority of the Council's Data Centre, with a view to entering into a contract for a

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

period of 3 years plus an optional 1-year extension period for contingency; and

- (2) the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, be granted delegated authority to award the Contract resulting from the procurement exercise and any subsequent contract extensions.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure that Council staff could continue using Microsoft Office 365 applications and that software applications and data stored within the Council's cloud environment (Microsoft Azure) were still available for use upon the expiry of the current contract.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

To conduct a competition via a framework for a new provider. However, due to the timing of the new Microsoft DTA agreement and the current challenges with the existing frameworks, this would be incredibly challenging in terms of timescales to deliver.

91. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2023/24 TO 2026/27 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2023/24 – DECEMBER UPDATE

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

- 1) The current position relating to the 2023/24 revenue budget;
- 2) The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2023/24; and
- 3) The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of October 2023 relating to:
 - 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 .

The following appendix was attached to the report:

- Appendix A – Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26

Decisions Made:

That:

Agenda Item 3

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

Revenue Budget

- (1) the current position relating to the 2023/24 revenue budget be noted;
- (2) the actions being taken to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced position be noted;
- (3) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2023/24 revenue budget be recognised and the fact 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, be acknowledged;

Capital Programme

- (4) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme, as set out at paragraph 7.1 of the report, be noted;
- (5) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 October 2023 of £18.642m, as set out at paragraph 7.6 of the report; together with the latest full year forecast of £55.731m, as set out at paragraph 7.7 of the report, be noted;
- (6) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate for £0.148m for ICT Service Developments funded by prudential borrowing; and
- (7) the fact 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, as set out at paragraphs 7.11-7.13 of the report, be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure the Cabinet was informed of the current position in relation to the 2023/24 revenue budget.

To provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep Members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2023/24 and agreed allocations for future years.

To progress any changes that were required in order to maintain a relevant and accurate budget profile necessary for effective monitoring of the Capital Programme.

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

To approve any updates to funding resources in order that they could be applied to capital schemes in the delivery of the Council's overall capital strategy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not Applicable.

92. 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 matters 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 items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 7 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Public Interest Test has been applied and favoured exclusion of the information from the Press and Public.

93. ICT SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

The Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (Strategic Support) seeking authority to commence a procurement exercise in connection with ICT service provision.

Decision Made:

That the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

Reasons for the Decision:

For the reasons specified within the report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Do nothing – rejected due to the risk profile to the authority.

94. CROSBY NEW LIBRARY OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE UPDATE - EXEMPT APPENDIX

The Cabinet considered exempt information provided by the Executive Director - People in relation to the Crosby New Library Outline Business Case Update (Minute No. 97 below refers).

Agenda Item 3

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

Decision Made:

That the exempt information be considered as part of the report in relation to the Crosby New Library Outline Business Case Update (Minute No. 97 below refers).

Reasons for the Decision:

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

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

95. BUSINESS CASE FOR PROCEEDING WITH PHASE 1 OF THE STRAND RE-PURPOSING PROGRAMME - EXEMPT APPENDICES

The Cabinet considered exempt information provided by the Assistant Director of Place (Commercial Development) in relation to the Business Case for Proceeding with Phase 1 of The Strand Re-purposing Programme (Minute No. 98 below refers).

Decision Made:

That the exempt information be considered as part of the report in relation to the Business Case for Proceeding with Phase 1 of The Strand Re-purposing Programme (Minute No. 98 below refers).

Reasons for the Decision:

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

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

96. RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC

Decision Made:

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

97. CROSBY NEW LIBRARY OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 17 of 25 May 2023, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – People on the agreement to proceed

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

with the development of a new Library in Crosby as a stand-alone project. Support had also been reiterated for the existing Library in Waterloo and that position was unchanged and work was proceeding in relation to both.

The report indicated that there was a need to revisit the previous Outline Business Case for the New Library and to refresh this. Work was continuing in progressing the Crosby New Library project with a planning application in progress to secure alongside other highways and car park works, an outline consent for the new library on the Green Car Park site in accordance with the Crosby Investment Strategy and Crosby Village Supplementary Planning Document.

Alongside this work, revised design and technical work was ongoing and a Full Business Case (FBC) was in preparation in support of the project which would be reported once complete to allow further consideration of the detail design and associated costs of delivering the project in full.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix A: Outline Business Case (OBC) (Exempt)
- Appendix B: Outline Business Case Redacted
- Appendix C: Options Appraisal

Decision Made:

That the content of the revised and updated Outline Business Case for the Crosby New Library Project be approved.

Reasons for the Decision:

The revised Outline Business Case for the Crosby New Library project set out the position of the project.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The report to the Cabinet in May 2023 set out the range of options considered in progressing the New Library project, the majority of which remained valid in the context of the Outline Business Case (OBC) update as detailed in the appended OBC report (Appendix A/B). The only variance in the updated OBC being the revenue cost implications based on the loss of any receipt from disposal or redevelopment of the existing library site at Waterloo which might have offset part of the capital cost and reduced the borrowing requirement and hence revenue implications of the project.

Without an update of the previously presented Outline Business Case (OBC), the project financing requirement would be misrepresented and any subsequent work on a Full Business Case (FBC) would be unsound. On that basis and without a sound business case, the risk would be that the Crosby New Library project could not proceed to delivery.

Agenda Item 3

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

98. BUSINESS CASE FOR PROCEEDING WITH PHASE 1 OF THE STRAND RE-PURPOSING PROGRAMME

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Place on the case for proceeding with delivery of Phase 1 of the planned Bootle Strand Transformation Programme and the new five-year Business Plan for the fiscal years 2023/24 to 2027/28 for the Strand Shopping Centre, reflecting the impacts on operations of proceeding with the programme works.

The report indicated that given the on-going challenges of the economic climate, which continued to impact day to day operations at the Strand, and the complexity of the work required to deliver Phase 1 of the Programme whilst the rest of the centre continued to trade, the Business Plan included an updated overview of the impacts on the retail sector of the current economic climate and the impacts on operations of delivering the works.

Notwithstanding the challenges to the Business Plan, it had always been made clear that the acquisition of the Strand was for regeneration purposes, and the continuation of the pressures of the economic climate reinforced the importance of delivering the vision for the future of Bootle town centre and the Strand through implementation of the Transformation Programme.

The report recommended proceeding with the implementation of Phase 1 of the Transformation Programme, for which funding had been secured from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (“DLUHC”) and agreed in principle with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (“CA”).

Although the Transformation Programme and the associated, updated Business Plan took account of the latest economic data and assessed the implications of undertaking works whilst the shopping centre continued to trade, based on now more detailed designs and plans, there nevertheless remained some uncertainty because of the volatile pressures of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis.

The following Annexes and Appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 – The Strand BP and FBC Summary 2023-2028
- Appendix 2 – The Strand BP 2023-2028 - Detailed
- Appendix 3 – The Strand Transformation Programme FBC - Detailed

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) proceeding with Phase 1 of the Strand Transformation Programme be approved;

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

- (2) the Executive Director - Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills, be authorised to draw down the DLUHC £20m grant funding for Phase 1 of the Transformation Programme under the previously signed Memorandum of Understanding in place between the Council and DLUHC;
- (3) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate of £20m fully funded by the DLUHC grant funding;
- (4) the Executive Director - Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills, be authorised to procure the preferred building contractor for Phase 1, with the award of the contract, to be subject to a subsequent Cabinet report;
- (5) the Executive Director - Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills, be authorised to appoint the Council's existing Asset Manager to also act as the Development Manager for Phase 1 of the Programme;
- (6) the Executive Director - Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills, be authorised to appoint Avison Young as PM, Cost and Design consultants for Phase 1A-C via the Crown Commercial Services framework;
- (7) the new, 5-year, Transformation Programme Business Plan for the Strand Shopping Centre be approved, noting continued challenges in the economic climate;
- (8) any material variations to the Transformation Business Plan be presented back to Cabinet for further decision; and
- (9) an updated Business Plan, for the following three years from the financial year 2027/28, be submitted to the Cabinet for approval ahead of the start of that financial year.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Council's objectives for the acquisition of the Strand in 2017 were to ensure that it was supported to continue its role in the local community, as a key asset at the heart of Bootle critical to the town's physical, economic, and social regeneration. This remained the Council's priority in relation to the Strand.

The report set out the deliverability of Phase 1 of the Transformation Programme and provided accompanying financial forecasts for the coming years, via an updated 5-year Business Plan, accounting for the impacts of the economy and of the works on day-to-day operations as well as outlining the positive outcomes on the Business Plan and wider regeneration objectives of proceeding with the Transformation Programme.

Agenda Item 3

CABINET - THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not proceeding with Phase 1 of the Transformation Programme had been considered but discounted as the deterioration to the financial sustainability of the Strand would continue unchecked, which would inevitably lead to it no longer being viable. This would also fail to realise any of the regeneration objectives the Programme was designed to provide as well as require the return of the £20m grant funding award that the Council had secured for Phase 1 of the Programme.

No alternatives to the publication of an updated Business Plan were considered, as this was required annually by the Cabinet.

Agenda Item 4

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 4 January 2024
Subject:	Procurement Strategy for Southport Eastern Access - Phase 1		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection)	Wards Affected:	Dukes; Kew; Norwood;
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Locality Services - Deputy Leader		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report seeks Cabinet approval to appoint Balfour Beatty under the Scape Framework to provide Early Contract Involvement in the development of the works information for the first Phase of the Southport Eastern Access scheme with a view to a further appointment to deliver the works. The Southport Eastern Access scheme seeks to deliver highway improvement measures at a series of junctions and links on the eastern approaches to Southport improve access and safety for all road users to the town centre from the east. The Scape Framework allows a contractor to be appointed during the scheme design and development; the provide a Feasibility report at no cost, followed by an Early Contractor involvement stage during which a Target Cost is established and other pre construction activities undertaken leading to a Contract to deliver the works.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Approves the appointment of Balfour Beatty under the Scape Framework to offer Feasibility input into the development of the first Phase of the Southport Eastern Access Scheme at no cost to the Council.
- (2) Gives delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Place - Highways & Public Protection, following consultation with Cabinet Member, to award the Contract for Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) in the construction of Southport Eastern Access Phase 1 works to Balfour Beatty, subject to the Feasibility Input (above) and receipt of a Grant Funding Agreement from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.
- (3) Gives delegated authority to the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer, following consultation with Cabinet Member, to sign the grant funding agreement for the necessary Development Funding to enable the ECI stage of the project to be undertaken.
- (4) Gives delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Place - Highways & Public Protection, following consultation with Cabinet Member, to award the Contract for

Agenda Item 4

the construction of Southport Eastern Access Phase 1 works to Balfour Beatty, subject to the Feasibility Input and ECI (above) and receipt of a Grant Funding Agreement.

- (5) Gives delegated authority to the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer, following consultation with Cabinet Member, to sign the grant funding agreement for the necessary works funding to enable the construction stage of the project to be undertaken.
- (6) That Cabinet approve a supplementary capital estimate of £450k for Development Funding secured from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority into the Transport Capital Programme for 23-24 pending receipt of a Grant Funding agreement..

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) has received a City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement allocation from the Department for Transport to deliver highway improvement and maintenance projects throughout the City Region by March 2027. Within the recently completed re-baselining exercise an allocation of funding for £16.8m has been identified to fund Southport Eastern Access projects. It is recognised that careful planning and co-ordination of all the elements of work will be critical to ensure the works are delivered within the window and that disruption is minimised as far as possible. Early Contractor Involvement, as offered by the Scape Framework, has the advantage of ensuring that the works are well programmed, buildability of the scheme is considered at an early stage and that the period between completing the design (and agreeing a contract cost) and the works commencing will be reduced. This should ensure that greater cost certainty is achieved, construction risks are reduced and the works are more likely to be delivered within the funding window.

The use of the Scape Framework has been welcomed by the LCRCA as they see the benefits, particularly in giving more certainty of delivering the scheme in the timeframe.

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

The works could be delivered using a tendering process. This would introduce some further competition into the procurement process. However, the project planning wouldn't have the benefit of contractor input until following the award of the contract for the works thus increasing the risk of delay and claims. There is also the risk that contractors may chose not to tender due to current workloads. The tender appraisal process would also shorten the time available for construction and therefore increase the risk of the funds not being expended by the deadline.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

None

(B) Capital Costs

The Feasibility Stage of the Commission comes at no cost to the Council.

The Early Contractor Involvement stage is charged at a percentage of the Works cost which determined at Feasibility Stage. The percentage is fixed by the rate agreed in the Scape Framework.

The ECI process enables the Target Cost for the scheme to be established through detailed consideration with the supply chain. It also allows for the programme to be developed. Under the Scape framework, it is expected that the Council will award the main works Contract in recognition of the ECI work but there is no legally binding requirement. These costs will be funded through the LCRCA Development Fund subject to a successful appraisal as part of the LCRCA Gateway Process and approval of a supplementary capital estimate in the Transport Capital Programme as per the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

The Construction and any ancillary costs, following award of the main contract, will be funded from the allocation within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). The Council will receive a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) setting out the terms and conditions of the Capital Funding subject to a successful appraisal as part of the LCRCA Gateway Process. These GFA conditions will be reviewed and the funding brought into the Capital Programme subject to approval of a supplementary capital estimate by Cabinet and Council.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
<p>The management of the contract will be overseen by staff in Transportation Planning and Highway Development team. The contract administration and supervision will be undertaken by a team from the existing Transport Technical Services Supply Framework. The intention being that this team will administer and supervise several larger capital schemes which are expected for delivery at the same time.</p> <p>The staff costs incurred prior to the award of the Contract will be funded from the Development Funding secured by the Council from the LCRCA which is contained within the Transport capital Programme. Staff Costs, once the contract for the works is awarded, will be funded from the capital funding secured for the construction.</p>
Legal Implications:
<p>As determined by the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, the contract for the works will need to be sealed.</p>
Equality Implications:
<p>An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed on the detailed design prior to construction. This should determine whether there are equality implications.</p>
Impact on Cared for Children and Care Experienced Young People:

Agenda Item 4

The Impact of the scheme cared for children and care experienced young people will be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment. Options for positive impacts will be considered in the development of the Social Value commitments that the Contractor will be expected to provide.

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will

Have a positive impact	Y/N
Have a neutral impact	Y/N
Have a negative impact	Y/N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y/N

This report relates to the Procurement exercise which by its nature will have little impact. The construction process will have negative impact in that new materials will be used and there will be a net carbon increase. There will also be a negative impact on traffic movements on the impacted streets whilst works are ongoing.

However, the scheme when implemented, will improve accessibility and should encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport . This should reduce the carbon impact.

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The scheme aims to ensure that highway safety and accessibility is improved and provides some opportunity for community developed public realm improvements.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable.
Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The scheme should help improve access to tourism facilities in Southport.
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable.

Cleaner Greener

The scheme should improve walking and cycling in the local area by joining cycle infrastructure and making areas of employment easier to access on foot.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**(A) Internal Consultations**

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7453/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5553/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Consultation on the highway proposals formed part of the wider consultation on The Southport Eastern Access Scheme. This consultation was completed in early 2022 in accordance with the proposals approved by the Public Consultation and Engagement Panel. Further detailed engagement with Ward Members, key stakeholders, residents and business was completed in October. Public Engagement, showing further details of the scheme has been undertaken in November and December and results are being appraised.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Cabinet decision.

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Email Address:	Andrew.Dunsmore@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

Appendix A – General Arrangement Plans

Background Papers:

None

Agenda Item 4

1.0 Introduction/ Background

- 1.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) approved the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Southport Eastern Access (SEA). This was a series of junction and link improvements on key routes on the eastern approach to Southport including the re-opening of Foul Lane. The proposals were intended to reduce congestion, particularly on days when large numbers of visitors are attracted to the town. The measures were also designed to improve safety and accessibility. In the development of the proposals further consideration was given to how people walking or cycling could better access the town centre and hence the scope of the scheme was developed further to include a significant active travel element..
- 1.2 The Council were invited to develop and submit a Full Business Case (FBC) on the understanding that all costs incurred would be funded from a Development Fund administered by the LCRCA. A condition of this funding was that the scheme be developed to detailed design stage prior to the FBC submission. It was believed that this would improve cost certainty.
- 1.3 An allowance of funding of £12m was originally identified by the LCRCA in the distribution of funds from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement to fund all the works set out within the OBC for Southport Eastern Access. It was acknowledged that this had to be expended within the lifespan of the current CRSS programme, i.e. before March 2027.
- 1.4 The LCRCA then were asked by the Department for Transport (DfT) to review the programme and reprofile to reflect revised costs and likely deliverability within the funding window. Local Authorities were then asked to review their schemes and identify likely costs to enable the programme to be 're-baselined'. As a result of this exercise, the allocation towards the SEA scheme was increased to £16.8m.
- 1.5 In discussions with the LCRCA, the Council have identified works contained within the Original Business Case which can be delivered for this allocation and hence by March 2027. The exact scope will be agreed when further costing work is completed.
- 1.6 It is accepted that some of the works require land to be purchased and whilst every effort will be made to secure this land by negotiation, it is accepted that, subject to approval, compulsory purchase powers may be needed. As the land acquisition process will take some time it is accepted that some of the work will be delivered towards the end of the current window. The elements of work which don't require land have been identified. These elements represent Phase 1.

2.0 Scheme Proposals and Funding

- 2.1 In determining the scope of works to be included in Phase 1, each element of the project has been reviewed to identify those elements where land take isn't or where land take is minimal and where a significant positive impact can be made.

- 2.2 The proposals for Phase 1 include the following;
- localised widening at the junction of Bispham Road and Norwood Road
 - junction improvement including widening at the junction of Sussex Road and Norwood Road
 - the reopening of Foul Lane to Traffic
 - a series of improvement and traffic mitigation measures in the Norwood area.
- 2.2 The general arrangement plans are contained with Appendix A. It is intended that the improvement will be taken to the Council's Licensing and Regulatory Committee at the March 2024 meeting. The report will include feedback from the consultation completed in November and December, centred on the elements related to Phase 1.
- 2.3 The Phase 2 of the scheme, which will be the elements delivered as part of the current CRSTS programme from the £16.8m allocation less the costs of the Phase 1 work will be further defined in due course. They will almost certainly include the active travel element on the Foul lane corridor and works at Kew Roundabout.
- 2.4 It should be noted that Phase 1 of the proposals includes an allocation of funding for traffic mitigation, safety and potential public realm improvements in the Norwood Ward area. It is recognised that the reopening of Foul lane brings benefits, it could lead to a potential increase in rat running through the Norwood area. Therefore, we are exploring measures that can be put in place to ensure that traffic uses the main roads and is discouraged from travelling through residential areas.
- 2.5 In developing these proposals, it is proposed that a community lead approach is adopted whereby initial mitigation and improvement ideas can be shared with Ward members and the community and engagement work can be undertaken with the local schools to discuss proposed interventions to increase the safety of the area, in particular for those walking and cycling to and from school. This work will also consider proposed housing developments in the area. A time frame is being established for this engagement process. The challenge will be to ensure that the mitigation measures are in place prior to the opening of Foul Lane.
- 2.6 The Council have been invited to make an application of further development funding to take the project through to the Construction stage. The bid will include all costs, including those incurred through the ECI process. The LCRCA will consider this application using their gateway assessment process. If successful a Grant Funding Agreement will be received. The application will be submitted in January 24 with a GFA anticipated in March.
- 2.7 It is anticipated that the funding of the Phase 1 of the construction activity and any ancillary costs will be granted once a further gateway assessment is completed. the information required for this submission will include the Full Business Case. If approved, the GFA to enable the construction to proceed is anticipated in September or October 2024.

Agenda Item 4

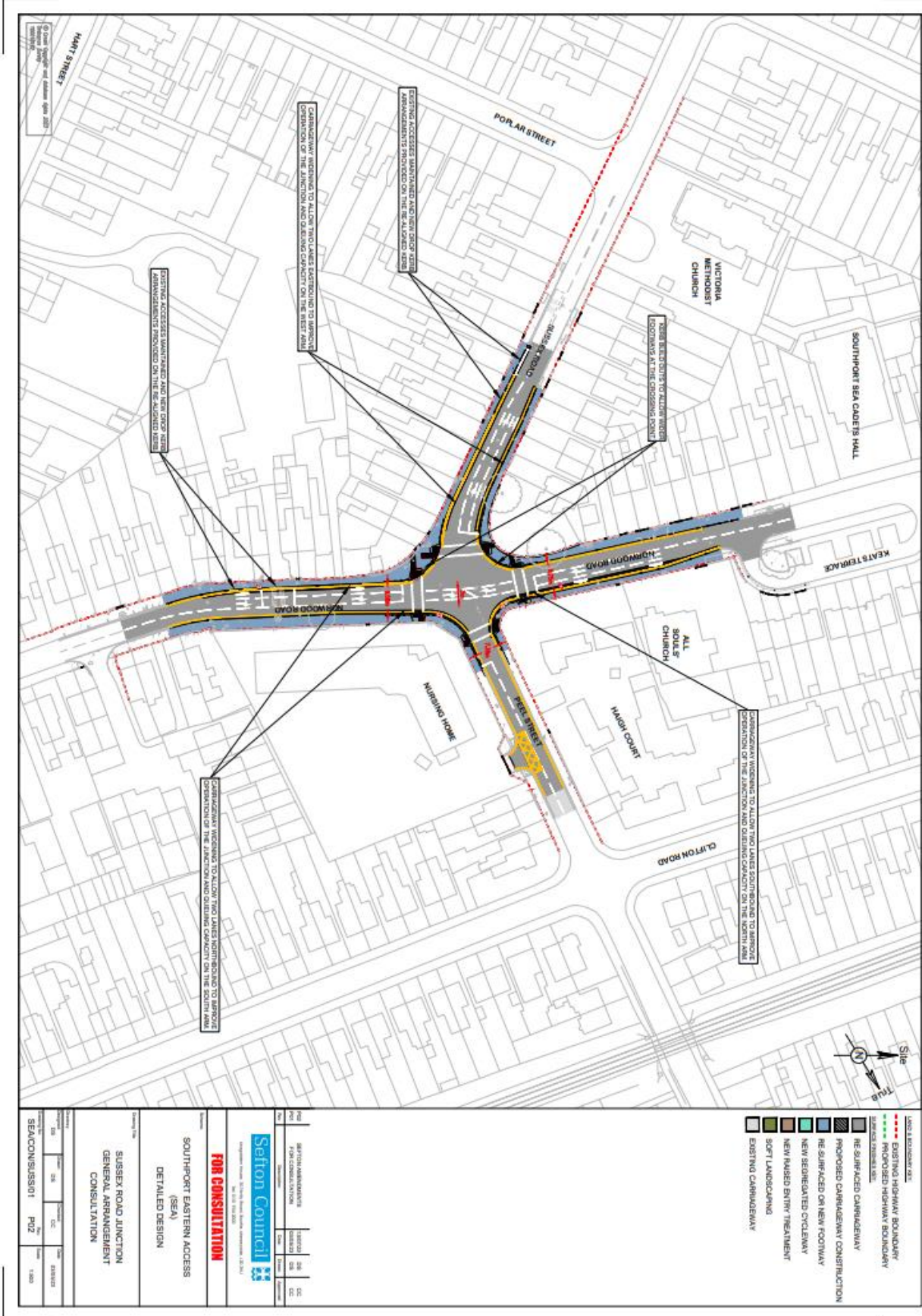
3.0 Procurement Process

- 3.1 The Council have entered into an agreement with Scape which enables the Framework to be used of the delivery of construction projects.
- 3.2 The Scape Civil Engineering Framework is a single supplier framework designed for use by public sector organisations in which the successful Contactor, Balfour Beatty has been through a competitive tender process aimed at fixing Contractors overheads and profits. These tendered figures will then be applied to costs provided by the supply chain and the contactor builds up prices for the works based on the completed design.
- 3.3 There are three stages to the process under the commission. The first is the Feasibility Stage. This is a service, offered by the Contractor, Balfour Beatty, to assist the Officers and Atkins Realis, as one of the Councils Transport Technical Services Supplier, in the compilation of the detailed design and works information, in the development of the outline Contract Price, the establishment of an initial Social Value Plan and in the programming of the works including any statutory undertakers diversion. This results in a Feasibility Report.
- 3.4 Following a review of the report by Officers, Balfour Beatty can then be commissioned, under an appropriate form of Contract, to complete an Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) exercise in which the detailed design drawings and other Works Information is scrutinised and a Target Cost and Programme of implementation developed. This work is charged at a fixed rate applied to the anticipated works costs arising from the Feasibility Exercise. The fixed percentage is derived from tendered rates which are set out in the Scape framework.
- 3.5 The ECI process will also allow for any enabling works to be undertaken and will consider the programming of the and potential management of any statutory undertakers diversion work necessary to be completed before the works commence.. The outcome from this exercise is a report containing the Target Cost, programme, confirmation of any enabling work and other relevant information.
- 3.6 It should be noted that this ECI exercise will be dependent on the Council securing the appropriate development funding, following a review through the LCRCA Gateway process. A letter of confirmation or GFA is expected.
- 3.7 In developing the Target Cost for the scheme, The Construction fee and preliminaries fees are fixed, based on the tendered figures. The Sub Contracts packages will be established by securing costs from three suppliers. This process is open and transparent and will be overseen by the Council's team.
- 3.8 This ECI report will then be assessed by officers, shared with Cabinet Member Locality Services prior to the award of the main contact for the Works. The Contract will only be entered into when the assessment has been completed and

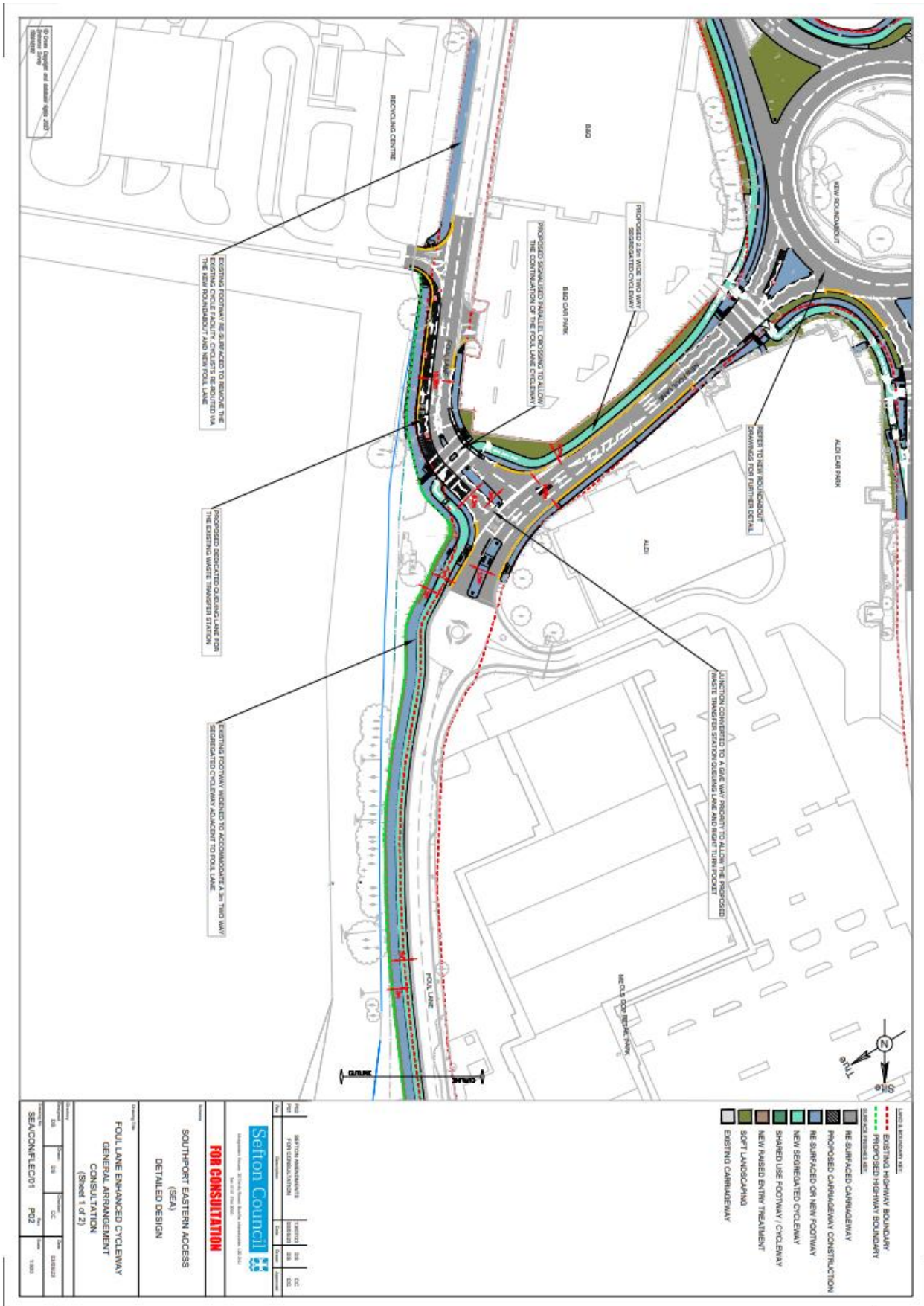
Agenda Item 4

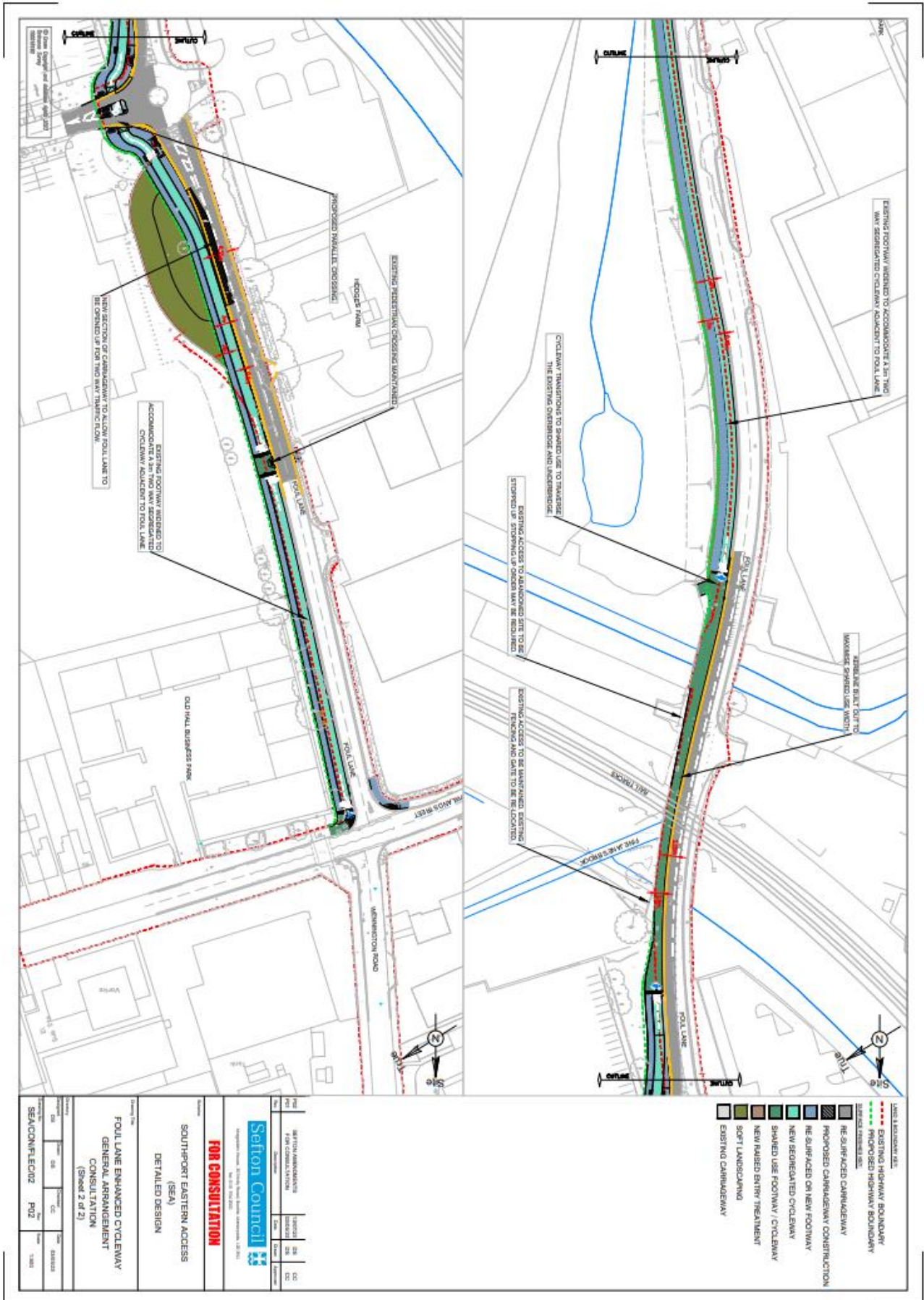
all information provided deemed to be in accordance with the conditions within the Scape Framework.

- 3.9 The works contract, which be a separate contract to the ECI process, will only be signed once the works funding has been secured, the appropriate GFA received and funding brought into the Council's Capital Programme.
- 3.10 It should also be noted that the Scape framework commits the contractor to developing a Social Value Action Plan with the Council. Targets are established which agree percentages for local labour, local spend, percentage of waste diverted form landfill and SME engagement. These targets are measured by the Scape team throughout the delivery of the works and a regular report will be given to Cabinet Member.
- 3.11 The Scape Framework requires the contractor to report on their targets including Social Value Commitment and other Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- 3.12 Should the recommendation be approved, the performance of Balfour Beatty will be assessed, using these KPI's and this will help influence the decision over whether Phase 2 of the Southport Eastern Access scheme, i.e. that not included in Phase 1, will be delivered using the Scape Framework.
- 3.13 The following points should also be noted;
 - 1) that procurement advice has been sought;
 - 2) that this appointment is allowed under the relevant framework 3)
 - 3) the use of this framework is in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.



Agenda Item 4





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Agenda Item 5

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 4 January 2024
Subject:	Procurement Strategy for Maritime Corridor Scheme - Phase 1		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection)	Wards Affected:	Litherland; Molyneux; Netherton and Orrell; St. Oswald;
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Locality Services - Deputy Leader		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary: This report seeks Cabinet approval to appoint Balfour Beatty under the Scape Framework to provide Early Contract Involvement in the development of the works information for the first Phase of the Maritime Corridor scheme with a view to a further appointment to deliver the works. The Maritime Corridor scheme seeks to deliver measures in the south of the borough to improve access for all highway users to employment sites. The Scape Framework allows a contractor to be appointed during the scheme design and development; to provide a Feasibility report at no costs, followed by an Early Contractor Involvement stage during which a Target Cost is established and other pre construction activities undertaken leading to a Contract to deliver the works.

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet :

- 1) Approves the appointment of Balfour Beatty under the Scape Framework to offer Feasibility input into the development of the first Phase of the Maritime Corridor Scheme, at no cost to the Council.
- 2) Gives delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Place - Highways & Public Protection, following consultation with Cabinet Member, to award the Contract for Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) in the construction of Maritime Corridor Phase 1 works to Balfour Beatty, subject to the Feasibility Input (above) and receipt of a Grant Funding Agreement or similar confirmation of funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.
- 3) Gives delegated authority to the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer, following consultation with Cabinet Member, to sign the grant funding agreement for the necessary Development Funding to enable the ECI stage of the Maritime Corridor Phase 1 project to be undertaken.
- 4) Gives delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Place - Highways & Public Protection, following consultation with Cabinet Member, to award the Contract for the construction of Maritime Corridor Phase 1 works to Balfour Beatty, subject to the Feasibility Input and EIC (above) and receipt of a Grant Funding Agreement.
- 5) Gives delegated authority to the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer, following consultation with Cabinet Member, to sign the grant funding agreement for the

Agenda Item 5

necessary Funding to enable the Construction stage of the Maritime Corridor Phase 1 project to be undertaken.

- 6) Approves a supplementary capital estimate of £500k for Development Funding secured from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority into the Transport Capital Programme for 23-24.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) have received funding from the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) to deliver a number of linked transport projects throughout the City Region including elements of the Maritime Corridor Phase 1. This funding is conditional on all the funds being expended by March 2025. Early Contractor Involvement has the advantage of ensuring that the works are well programmed, buildability of the scheme is considered at an early stage and that the period between completing the design (and agreeing a contract cost) and the works commencing will be reduced. This should ensure that greater cost certainty is achieved, construction risks are reduced and the works are more likely to be delivered within the funding window.

The use of the Scape Framework has been welcomed by the LCRCA as they see the benefits, particularly in giving more certainty of delivering the scheme in the timeframe.

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

The works could be delivered using a tendering process. This would introduce some further competition into the procurement process. However, the project planning wouldn't have the benefit of contractor input until following the award of the contract for the works thus increasing the risk of delay and claims. There is also the risk that contractors may choose not to tender due to current workloads. The tender appraisal process would also shorten the time available for construction and therefore increase the risk of the funds not being expended by the deadline. The SCAPE Framework was developed following a fully compliant OJEU Procurement process.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

None

(B) Capital Costs

The Feasibility Stage of the Commission comes at no cost to the Council.

The Early Contractor Involvement stage is charged at a percentage of the Works cost which are determined at Feasibility Stage. The percentage is fixed by the rate agreed in the Scape Framework.

The ECI process enables the Target Cost for the scheme to be established through detailed consideration with the supply chain. It also allows for the programme to be

developed. Under the Scape framework, it is expected that the Council will award the main works Contract in recognition of the ECI work but there is no legally binding requirement. These costs will be funded through the LCRCA Development Fund subject to a successful appraisal as part of the LCRCA Gateway Process and approval of a supplementary capital estimate in the Transport capital programme as per the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

The Construction and any ancillary costs, following award of the main contract, will be funded from the Levelling Up Fund and an element from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). The Council will receive a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) setting out the terms and conditions of the Capital Funding subject to a successful appraisal as part of the LCRCA Gateway Process. These GFA conditions will be reviewed and the funding brought into the Capital Programme subject to approval of a supplementary capital estimate by Cabinet and Council. The Works contract value is expected to be approximately £12m.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
<p>The management of the contract will be overseen by staff in Transportation Planning and Highway Development team. The contract administration and supervision will be undertaken by a team from the existing Transport Technical Services Supply Framework. The intention being that this team will administer and supervise several large capital schemes which are expected for delivery at the same time.</p> <p>The staff costs incurred prior to the award of the Contract will be funded from the Development Funding secured by the Council from the LCRCA which is contained within the Transport capital Programme. Staff Costs, once the contract for the works is awarded, will be funded from the capital funding secured for the construction.</p>	
Legal Implications:	
<p>As determined by the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, the contract for the works will need to be sealed.</p>	
Equality Implications:	
<p>An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed on the detailed design prior to construction. This should determine whether there are equality implications.</p>	
Impact on Cared for Children and Care Experienced Young People:	
<p>The Impact of the scheme cared for children and care experienced young people will be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment. Options for positive impacts will be considered in the development of the Social Value commitments that the Contractor will be expected to provide.</p>	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
<p>The recommendations within this report will</p>	
Have a positive impact	Y/N
Have a neutral impact	Y/N

Agenda Item 5

Have a negative impact	Y/N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y/N

This report relates to the Procurement exercise which by its nature will have little impact. The construction process will have negative impact in that new materials will be used and there will be a net carbon increase. There will also be a negative impact on traffic movements on the impacted streets whilst works are ongoing.

However, the scheme when implemented, will improve accessibility and should encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport . This should reduce the carbon impact.

The scheme is one of a number of schemes currently subject to a Whole Life Carbon Assessment which will be able to provide a definitive picture.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable.</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The scheme should improve walking and cycling in the local area by making employment areas easier to access.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services: As the local Highway Authority, it is incumbent upon the Council to seek to improve provision for all highway users, including those walking, cycling, using public transport and driving motor vehicles.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer: The scheme should help improve access to places of employment in the south of the borough.</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform: The delivery of facilities that encourage and enable more active travel is consistent with a range of national, regional and local policy objectives, including those related to addressing climate change and improving air quality, health and wellbeing</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The scheme should help improve access to existing and proposed development on Atlantic park and other areas in the Corridor.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment: Not applicable.</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener</p>

The scheme should improve walking and cycling in the local area by joining cycle infrastructure and making areas of employment easier to access on foot.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD 7432/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5532/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Consultation on the highway proposals formed part of the wider consultation on The Maritime Corridor. This consultation was completed in accordance with the proposals approved by the Public Consultation and Engagement Panel in April 2021. Further detailed engagement with Ward Members, key stakeholders, residents and business has recently been completed in September and October 2023 and results appraised. Comments relating to the Phase 1 proposals were summarised in the recent report to Licensing and Regulatory Committee (Nov 23).

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Cabinet decision.

Contact Officer:	Andrew Dunsmore
Telephone Number:	0151-934-2766
Email Address:	Andrew.Dunsmore@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

Appendix A – General Arrangement Plans

Background Papers:

Report to Licensing and Regulatory Committee November 2023

Agenda Item 5

1.0 Introduction/ Background

- 1.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) approved the Outline Business Case for the Maritime Corridor Scheme. This was a series of improvements centred around the A5036 and the A59 and the employment land in between. The proposals were intended to reduce congestion, improve safety and provide easier access to employment sites in the south of the borough. In the development of the proposals further consideration was given to how people walking or cycling could better access employment sites and hence the scope of the scheme was increased.
- 1.2 The Council were invited to develop and submit a Full Business Case (FBC) on the understanding that all costs incurred would be funded from a Development Fund administered by the LCRCA. A condition of this funding was that the scheme be developed to detailed design stage prior to the FBC submission. It was believed that this would improve cost certainty.
- 1.3 An allowance of funding of £12m was originally identified by the LCRCA in the distribution of funds from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement to fund all the works within the Maritime Corridor. This has to be expended before March 2027.
- 1.4 The LCRCA then were asked by the Department for Transport (DfT) to review the programme and reprofile to reflect revised costs and likely deliverability within the funding window. Local Authorities were then asked to review their schemes and identify likely costs to enable the programme to be 're-baselined'. As a result of this exercise, the allocation towards the Maritime Corridor was increased.
- 1.5 The LCRCA also explored the opportunity of securing Levelling Up Funding (LUF) for a series of transport related improvements in Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton. As such elements of the Maritime Corridor work were included in the LUF Business Case.
- 1.6 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities then asked the LCRCA to reprofile the LUF Business Case to clarify the scope of the work that can be delivered before the deadline for expenditure of March 2025. In turn the LCRCA asked the three contributing local authorities to critically examine their programme and cost profile.
- 1.7 In response to this request, the Council have identified works which will form Phase 1 of the improvements and thus could be delivered by March 2025 and hence can be funded from the LUF contribution.
- 1.8 Following the rebaselining exercise of the CRSTS funding allocation and the revision to the LUF Business Case a total allocation of £21.2m has been made to the Maritime Corridor scheme for expending before March 2027. Within this allocation is £9.5m LUF and £2.5m CRSTS which has to be expended before March 2025. This represents Phase 1.

2.0 Scheme Proposals and Funding

- 2.1 In determining the scope of works to be included in Phase 1, each element of the project has been reviewed to identify those elements where land take is minimal and where a significant positive impact can be made. As such the works on the A5036 providing a new left turn lane to Atlantic Park, on Netherton way and the junction with Bridle Road have been identified for inclusion in this phase.
- 2.2 The general arrangement plans are contained with Appendix A. Those elements within Sefton's highways have secured approval from Council's Licensing and Regulatory Committee at the November 2023 meeting. The report included feedback from the consultation completed in September and October which related to Phase 1. The element within the trunk road requires approval from National Highways. Discussions are progressing to secure the necessary approval for the plans.
- 2.3 The LCRCA have confirmed that the Phase 1 works will still form part of the FBC which, if approved, will release the CRSTS allocation to fund the other elements of the Maritime Corridor scheme. However it should be noted that delivery of the Phase 1 scheme isn't dependant on approval of the FBC for the whole scheme. As the LUF funding (and an element of CRSTS) will be approved, once the revised LUF business case is signed off by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, the works can be delivered as soon as the relevant GFA is received from the LCRCA and a scheme is approved for inclusion with the Transport Capital Programme as per the Financial Procedure Rules.

3.0 Procurement Process

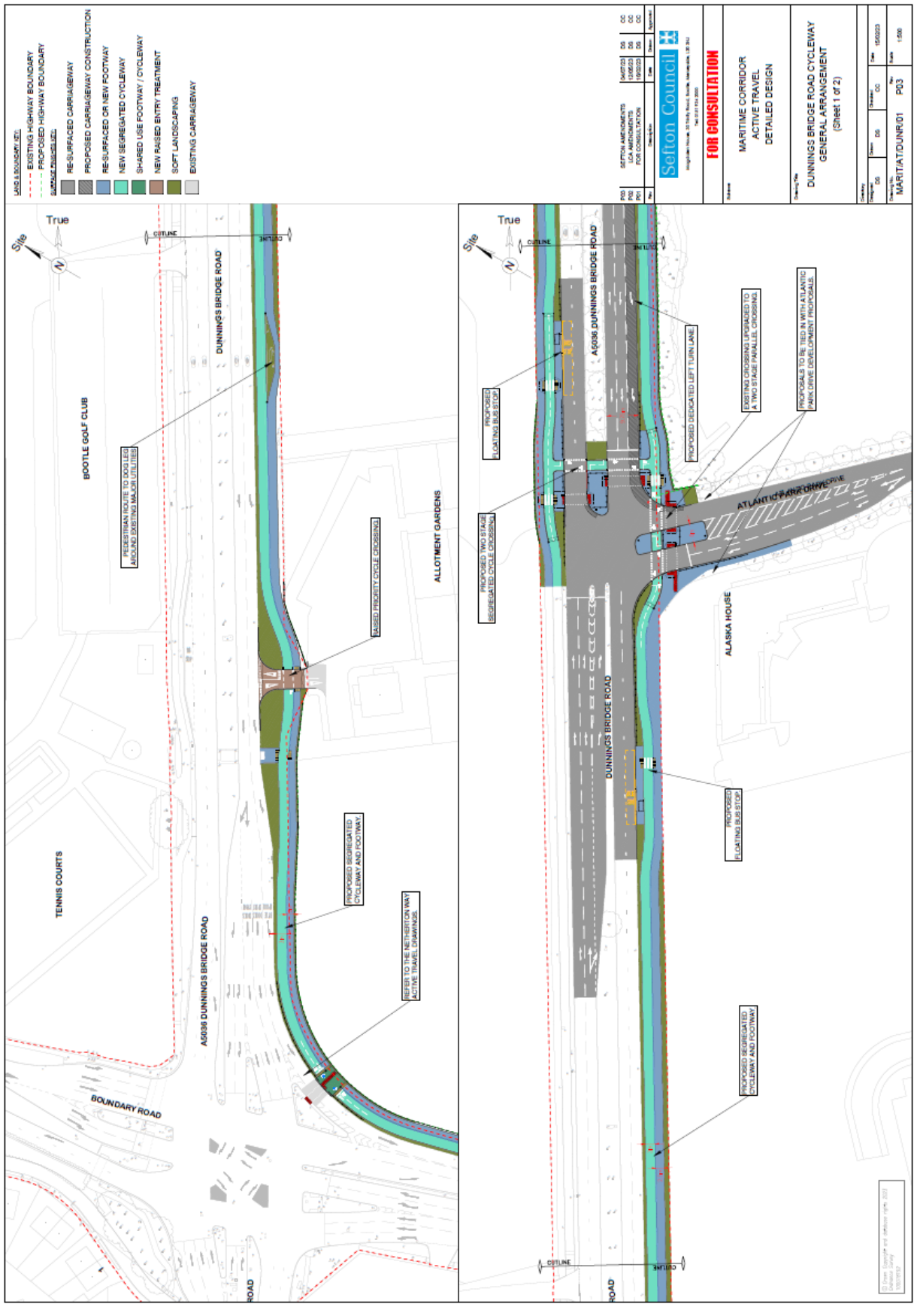
- 3.1 The Council have entered into an agreement with SCAPE which enables the Framework to be used of the delivery of construction projects.
- 3.2 The SCAPE Civil Engineering Framework is a single supplier framework designed for use by public sector organisations in which the successful Contactor, Balfour Beatty has been through a competitive tender process aimed at fixing Contractors overheads and profits. These tendered figures will then be applied to costs provided by the supply chain and the contactor builds up prices for the works based on the completed design.
- 3.3 There are three stages to the process under the commission. The first is the Feasibility Stage. This is a service, offered by the Contractor, Balfour Beatty, to assist the Officers and Atkins Realis, as one of the Council's Transport Technical Services Supplier, in the compilation of the detailed design and works information, in the development of the outline Contract Price, the establishment of an initial Social Value Plan and in the programming of the works including any statutory undertakers diversions. This results in a Feasibility Report.
- 3.4 Following a review of the report by Officers, Balfour Beatty can then be commissioned, under an appropriate form of Contract, to complete an Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) exercise in which the detailed design drawings and other Works Information is scrutinised and a Target Cost and Programme of implementation developed. This work is charged at a fixed rate applied to the

Agenda Item 5

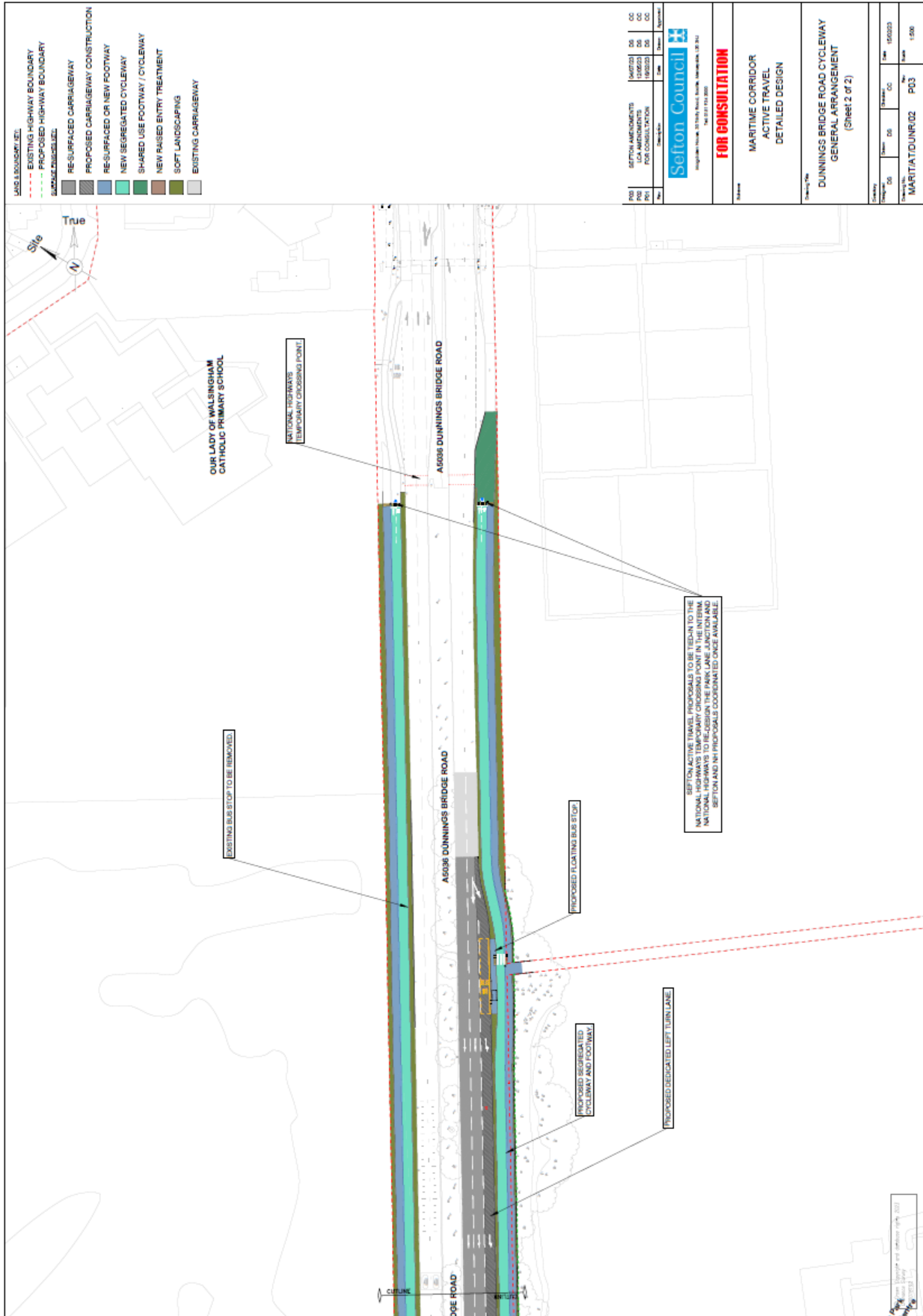
anticipated works costs arising from the Feasibility Exercise. The fixed percentage is derived from tendered rates which are set out in the SCAPE framework.

- 3.5 The ECI process will also allow for any enabling works to be undertaken and will consider the programming and potential management of any statutory undertakers diversion work necessary to be completed before the works commence. The outcome from this exercise is a report containing the Target Cost, programme, confirmation of any enabling work and other relevant information.
- 3.6 It should be noted that this ECI exercise will be dependent on the Council securing the appropriate development funding, following a review through the LCRCA Gateway process. A letter of confirmation or GFA is expected.
- 3.7 In developing the Target Cost for the scheme, The Construction fee and preliminaries fees are fixed, based on the tendered figures. The Sub Contracts packages will be established by securing costs from three suppliers. This process is open and transparent and will be overseen by the Council's team.
- 3.8 This ECI report will then be assessed by officers, shared with Cabinet Member Locality Services prior to the award of the main contract for the Works. The Contract will only be entered into when the assessment has been completed and all information provided deemed to be in accordance with the conditions within the SCAPE Framework.
- 3.9 The works contract, which be a separate contract to the ECI process, will only be signed once the works funding has been secured, the appropriate GFA received and funding brought into the Council's Capital Programme.
- 3.10 It should also be noted that the SCAPE framework commits the contractor to developing a Social Value Action Plan with the Council. Targets are established which agree percentages for local labour, local spend, percentage of waste diverted from landfill and SME engagement. These targets are measured by the SCAPE team throughout the delivery of the works and a regular report will be given to Cabinet Member.
- 3.11 The SCAPE Framework requires the contractor to report on their targets including Social Value Commitment and other Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- 3.12 Should the recommendation be approved, the performance of Balfour Beatty will be assessed, using these KPI's and this will help influence the decision over whether Phase 2 of the Maritime Corridor scheme, i.e. that not included in Phase 1, will be delivered using the Scape Framework.
- 3.13 The following points should also be noted;
 - 1) that procurement advice has been sought;
 - 2) that this appointment is allowed under the relevant framework
 - 3) the use of this framework is in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Appendix A – General Arrangement Plans – Maritime Corridor Phase 1



Agenda Item 5





- LEGEND**
- EXISTING HIGHWAY BOUNDARY
 - PROPOSED HIGHWAY BOUNDARY
 - SURFACE FINISH LINE
 - RE-SURFACED CARRIAGEWAY
 - PROPOSED CARRIAGEWAY CONSTRUCTION
 - RE-SURFACED OR NEW FOOTWAY
 - NEW SEGREGATED CYCLEWAY
 - SHARED USE FOOTWAY / CYCLEWAY
 - NEW RAISED ENTRY TREATMENT
 - SOFT LANDSCAPING
 - EXISTING CARRIAGEWAY

NO	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY	CHKD
01	SECTION AMENDMENTS FOR CONSULTATION	15/02/23	DS	CC
02	LOA AMENDMENTS FOR CONSULTATION	15/02/23	DS	CC
03		15/02/23	DS	CC

Sefton Council
 Highgate House, 23 Talbot Road, Sefton, Merseyside, L32 7JY
 Tel: 0151 703 2000

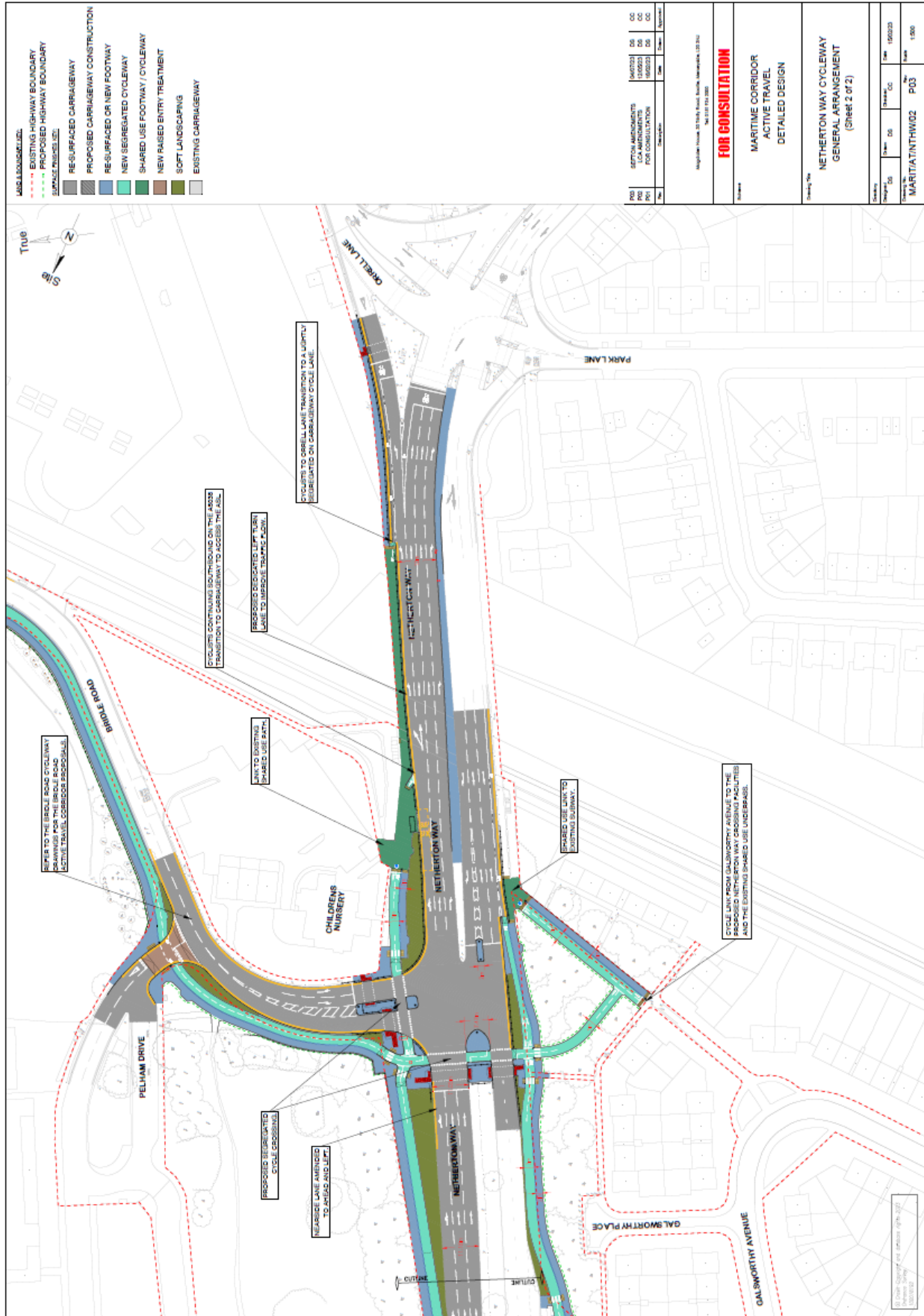
FOR CONSULTATION

MARITIME CORRIDOR ACTIVE TRAVEL DETAILED DESIGN

NETHERTON WAY CYCLEWAY GENERAL ARRANGEMENT (Sheet 1 of 2)

Drawn	DS	Checkd	CC	Date	15/02/23
Checked	DS	Scale		Sheet	1/00
Project No.	MARITIA/NTHW01_P03				

Agenda Item 5



Agenda Item 6

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 4 January 2024
Subject:	Southport Business Improvement District		
Report of:	Executive Director - Place	Wards Affected:	Cambridge; Dukes;
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To consider the Southport Business Improvement District (BID) Business Plan for the period 2024-2029 and agree the next steps by the council as part of the BID ballot process.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Approve the proposals for the Southport Business Improvement District (BID);
- (2) Authorise the Executive Director Place to submit a positive vote on behalf of the Council;
- (3) Provide delegated authority to The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Section 151 Officer, to sign a future BID Baseline Agreement on behalf of the Council;
- (4) That the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services be authorised to complete the necessary formal agreements required for the collection of the BID Levy if a Yes vote is achieved; and
- (5) As the relevant ballot holder, authorise Civica to hold the BID ballot.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To allow the BID ballot to commence and then thereafter for the BID company to deliver a new 5 year term

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

There are no other alternative options for BID delivery, or similar model that would secure the level of private sector investment into Southport. If the Council were to refuse a new BID ballot the existing BID would stop at the end of October 2024, this would see a loss of £2.4m invested over the next 5 years.

Agenda Item 6

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

It is estimated that the BID Company would raise in the region of £448,000 in year 1 raising to £504,00 by year 5 for key areas of investment in the town (in accordance with the BID business plan).

This would represent over £2.3 million of additional investment within the BID area over this period.

The Council has rateable property within the BID area. Based on the rateable value of these properties, it is estimated that the Council's contribution towards the BID would be in the region of £30,414 per year through BID levy payments. This is met through individual department budgets as is currently the process.

As per The Business Improvement District (England) Regulations 2004 The Local Authority is legally responsible for the ballot process including costs incurred. The costs for Civica to hold and manage the ballot will cost £5,565.

If a Yes vote is achieved the levy collection costs incurred by the Council will be rechargeable to the BID Company. The Council will pass on the revenue it collects using reasonable endeavours to collect any shortfall. Depending on collection levels, the budget available to the BID Company may vary slightly from year to year.

(B) Capital Costs

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
The Council will have 18 levy payments to make per year totalling £30,414. These individual payments will be met from the relevant service budgets.
Legal Implications:
The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004. If the BID achieves a Yes vote a number of legal agreements will need to be formalised in relation to levy collection and baseline services.
Equality Implications:
There are no equality implications associated with the ballot.
Impact on Children and Young People: None associated with the ballot itself.
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
The ballot renewal will have a neutral impact.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: N/A
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The BID will bring over 700 businesses together to work in partnership and create a confident business partnership.
Commission, broker and provide core services: N/A
Place – leadership and influencer: A thriving Town Centre is critical in creating a sense of place for residents, businesses and visitors.
Drivers of change and reform: Private Sector taking a lead in delivering additional services
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Investment in Southport town centre will help improve the vitality and viability.
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener: The BID will focus on improved planting and other cleaner greener initiative.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7456/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5556/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

The BID has consulted levy payers as part of the business plan process, this has involved a comprehensive survey of levy payers to help formulate the business plan. The BID also hold a number of regular events for levy payers to attend and allows the BID team to actively consult throughout the BID term.

Agenda Item 6

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer:	Mark Catherall
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 2315
Email Address:	mark.catherall@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 A Business Improvement District (BID) is a defined area where businesses get together to plan how to improve their trading environment, identifying additional projects and services that will improve the town centre. Businesses within the BID area agree the level of funds which they will contribute to make it happen and they have total control of the money and how it is spent.
- 1.2 Businesses pay an agreed levy based on the rateable value of their premises. In Southport, this is currently at 1.5% (proposed to increase to 2% in the new term). The funding is collected by the council and handed to the Southport BID Company to spend as the businesses have requested. Businesses within a successful BID area will pay this levy so that everyone who benefits will have paid towards it; it is therefore fair and transparent.
- 1.3 The process by which a prospective BID seeks to become formally established is set out below in accordance with the 2004 BID Regulations:
 - Formal notification to the local authority and Secretary of State
 - Request to local authority to hold ballot, which must be accompanied by:
 - A copy of the BID proposals
 - The proposed business plan with estimates of cash flow, revenue and expenditure, the predicted budget and the contingency margin included in the budget
- 1.4 The Southport BID have now submitted their business plan for a third term, and this report summarises the main proposals.

2.0 Business Plan

- 2.1 The BID's second term comes to an end in November 2024, and the new business plan has identified many BID achievements in the first 5 years - these include.
- The BID Team has dedicated 2,000 hours every year to visiting and talking to BID businesses, offering an ongoing support and delivering collaborative projects.
 - 'Your Southport' was launched in August 2022 and has quickly established itself as the leading platform to celebrate the people and businesses that make Southport special. It has received almost 500,000 engagements so far. The content the BID produced for businesses is valued at more than £200 000.
 - The BID has created and delivered more than 200 x bespoke promotional articles for the business community.
 - Southport Stars Annual Awards - launched in 2021 delivered the opportunity for businesses to come together, connect, and celebrate achievements.
 - Street improvements – Using the BID income and securing further funding the BID delivered comprehensive street light programme valued at £250,000.
 - Every Christmas the BID displays a 60-foot Christmas tree together with 200,000 additional festive lights and further bespoke light installations including The Bear and The Reindeer. The Christmas celebrations were accompanied by events and programmes which attracted 70 000 people.
 - Throughout the year the BID decorates the town with stunning floral displays. Up to 10,000 are planted every year.
 - Safe in Southport – The BID are committed to ensuring Southport town centre is a safe and secure place for businesses, residents, and visitors alike. This includes providing ongoing support and training for the Southport Pub watch group, management of the Town Link Radio scheme, replacement of a number of CCTV cameras and working closely in partnership with Merseyside Police.
 - Representation- by bringing more than 1,000 people together through leadership forums and networking events (often in collaboration with, but also additional to the Council).
- 2.2 The above achievements alone demonstrate the value of The BID to Southport Town Centre, and to continue the programme of investment it is recommended that the Council submits a positive vote on its properties.
- 2.3 The BID business plan sets out a rateable value of 2%, this will be for business rate payers that fall within the BID area as identified in the business plan. The BID are increasing the levy to achieve same income as previous terms, due to lower rateable values on properties It should also be noted businesses with a rateable value under £7,000 will not be liable while Charities will not be exempt as per the BID regulations and will have to pay the 2% levy based on their property rateable value.
- 2.4 The BID is projected to raise a total of £2.4 million over 5 years; this includes the levy, voluntary contributions along with other revenue streams.
- 2.5 The Southport BID priorities for the next term are;

Agenda Item 6

- Promotion – continued investment in the ‘Your Southport’ platform as the primary means of advertising town centre businesses to residents and visitors.
- Celebration – the hugely successful Your Southport Stars Awards will spotlight exceptional businesses and the people that work in them, whilst new programmes will celebrate the heritage of the town and work collaboratively with schools and colleges to support young people in engaging with the business community so that they can provide the dynamic workforce of the future.
- Activation – significant investment into light animation of the streets of Southport at Christmas and during the year, accompanied by luscious floral displays, which collectively create an attractive environment for events, and family programme. Safe Southport ensures that activities take place in a welcoming environment by working with Merseyside Police and Sefton Arc to deliver town wide security programmes, building on the Town Link radios programme already active across the area.
- Collaboration – cementing the work already started on developing a sense of community amongst businesses, representing their views, and lobbying in their interests, providing them with the resources they need to make trading decisions (e.g., footfall, economic trends, changes to legislation etc.), and working with other stakeholders nationally and throughout the Liverpool City Region. The BID will drive diversifying of the town centre economy, by lobbying for investment to improve infrastructures with a specific focus on digital connectivity to attract new business sectors investment and create a more sustainable all year-round economy.

2.5 The management team and the BID Board’s role is to execute programmes designed to meet the priorities set by BID’s businesses. Through one-to-one meetings and business forums and events, the BID holds over 1000 conversations each year. To inform future strategy further, the BID carried out a representative survey of 100 businesses. The returns fed into their new strategy.

3.0 The Council’s Vote

- 3.1 Sefton Council as a business rate payer within the defined BID area has several votes in the BID Ballot. The Southport BID is seeking approval from Sefton Council for a “Yes” vote. The council is recommended to vote “yes” in the ballot.
- 3.2 Sefton has 18 separate hereditaments within the defined BID area with a total rateable value of £1,520,700 The levy liability is £30,414 at 2%. This also allows Sefton Council to have 18 individual votes, the table below details the hereditaments and the levy for each one.

Property	Rateable Value	Levy (2%)
Talbot Street Family Wellbeing Centre	12750	255
Dunes Leisure Centre	520000	10400

Agenda Item 6

Car Park Adj Floral Hall	50000	1000
Public Convenience, Corner Of Lord Street & Eastbank Street	9800	196
1-2, Promenade	34750	695
The Atkinson, Lord Street, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 1DB	430000	8600
9-11, Eastbank Street, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 1DL	44750	895
Eco Centre & Car Park Esplanade	43750	875
77-91, Tulketh Street	35000	700
Rear 55, Tulketh Street	50500	1010
Adj, Marine Lake, Marine Drive	33000	660
66 , Nevill Street	34000	680
Havana, Promenade	69500	1390
Southport Pier, Promenade,	14500	290
Sefton Metropolitan Council, Town Hall	98000	1960
3, Eastbank Street	9400	188
5-7, Eastbank Street	21250	425
The Esplanade, Princes Park	9750	195
Total	1,520,700	30,414

4.0 Formal Agreements

- 4.1 If a Yes vote is achieved a formal agreement between the Council and Southport BID will have to be reviewed to cover services provided by the Council within the BID Area.
- 4.2 The baseline agreement will demonstrate what additional services the BID will deliver to its members while also acting as a tool for the BID Company to monitor and work with Sefton Council to deliver improved existing services.
- 4.3 Due to the BID term being 5 years there will be flexibility for the Baseline Agreement to be amended every financial year due to the realisation that the level of services within the BID area may change.
- 4.4 Cabinet are recommended to give delegated authority to Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and section 151 officer, to sign the BID Baseline Agreement on behalf of the council
- 4.5 The Council will collect the levy on behalf of the BID company, once collected the monies will be passed on to the BID. The collections costs will be recharged to the BID company.
- 4.6 An operating agreement will need to be reviewed and agreed between the BID Company and Sefton Council for the collection of the levy. Cabinet are recommended that The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services be authorised to complete the necessary formal

Agenda Item 6

operating agreements required for the collection of the BID Levy if a Yes vote is achieved.

4.7 The ballot must meet two tests for the BID to be approved. A simple majority of those voting in favour over those who do not, and those voting in favour must represent a greater total rateable value than those voting against.

4.8 As the relevant ballot holder (Sefton) Cabinet is asked to authorise the use of Civica to conduct the BID ballot.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 Ballot papers will be sent out in April 2024, with the result of the ballot being announced in May 2024.

5.2 If the vote is in favour the BID will start a second term on the 1 st of November 2024, the baseline agreement and operating agreement can then be signed by the delegated officer.

Agenda Item 7

Report to:	Cabinet Council	Date of Meeting:	4 January 2024 18 January 2024
Subject:	Programme of Meetings – 2024/25 Municipal Year		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To seek approval of a Programme of Meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

Recommendation:

Cabinet

That the Programme of Meetings for the Cabinet, Public Engagement and Consultation Panel, and Safer Sefton Together for 2024/25 as set out in Annexes A and D of the report be approved.

Council

- (1) the Programme of Meetings for the Council, Member Briefing Sessions; Regulatory Committees; Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Health and Wellbeing Board for 2024/25 as set out in Annexes B, C and D of the report be approved; and
- (2) the Programme of Meetings for the Cabinet, Public Engagement and Consultation Panel and Safer Sefton Together for 2024/25 as set out in Annexes A and D of the report be noted.

Reasons for the Recommendation:

To enable the business of the Council and its various Committees/bodies to be conducted during the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None. The Council is required to produce a programme of meetings.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs – None

Agenda Item 7

(B) Capital Costs – None

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): None	
Legal Implications: None	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Impact on Children and Young People: There are no direct implications impacting on children and young people arising from this report. Any impact on children and young people arising from the consideration of reports considered at meetings contained in the programme will be contained in such reports when they are presented to Members at the appropriate time.	
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
There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report. Any climate emergency implications arising from the consideration of reports referred to in the programme will be contained in such reports when they are presented to Members at the appropriate time.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Not applicable
Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable
Place – leadership and influencer: The Programme of Meetings for 2024/25 will be published on the Council's website for the benefit of the residents of Sefton and the wider general public. This will raise awareness of the Council's political management system and allow the opportunity for the public to engage in the Council's democratic processes.
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Not applicable
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener: Not applicable

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7459/23) has been consulted and notes there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5559/23) is the author of this report.

Chief Executive
Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services
Assistant Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services (Strategic Support)
Assistant Director of People (Communities)
Director of Public Health / Head of Health and Wellbeing
Chief Planning Officer

(B) External Consultations

Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner

Implementation Date for the Decision

In respect of the Programme of Meetings for the Cabinet, Public Engagement and Consultation Panel and Safer Sefton Together the implementation date will be upon the expiry of the call-in period of the minutes of the Cabinet meeting.

In respect of the Programme of Meetings for the Council, Member Briefing Sessions; Regulatory Committees; Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Health and Wellbeing Board immediately following the Council meeting.

Contact Officer:	Paul Fraser
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Appendices:

Annex A - Programme of Meetings for the Cabinet in 2024/25
Annex B - Programme of Meetings for the Council, Members' Briefing Sessions and Regulatory Committees in 2024/25
Annex C - Programme of Meetings for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2024/25
Annex D - Programme of Meetings for the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel, Sefton Safer Communities Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board in 2024/25
Calendar of meetings 2024/25

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Agenda Item 7

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Council is required to establish a programme of meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.
- 1.2 Annexes are attached to the report setting out the suggested programme.
- 1.3 Similar to the arrangements put in place last year once the programme of meetings have been approved, an “in-house” diary will be produced for Members of the Council.

2. Programme of Meetings 2024/25

- 2.1 The key principles of the Programme of Meetings are as follows:
 - Five Ordinary Council Meetings to be held every 8 weeks on a Thursday commencing at 6.30 p.m. plus the Budget Council Meeting to be held on 27 February 2025.
 - Council will not meet on the same day as Cabinet.
 - Members’ Briefing Sessions to be held at 5.00 p.m. prior to the five Ordinary Council Meetings.
 - No meetings will be held:
 - In the period between Christmas and New Year (December 2024/January 2025)
 - In April 2025 except for the meetings of the Planning Committee, Cabinet and Council.
 - As far as possible no meetings will be held during the school half term holiday weeks.
 - The programme of meetings indicates that all meetings will alternate between Bootle and Southport Town Halls.
 - Cabinet Meetings to be held on a Thursday at 10.00 a.m. The first meeting to be held on 23 May 2024.
 - Planning Committee to meet every four weeks on a Wednesday.
 - Planning Visiting Panel to meet 2 days prior to each meeting of the Planning Committee to undertake site visits as agreed by the Committee.
 - Each of the 4 Overview and Scrutiny Committees to meet bi-monthly, 5 times during the year commencing at 6.30 p.m. – the main Overview and Scrutiny work will be done by Informal Meetings or Working Groups established on an ad hoc basis.
 - Special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) to be held on 11 February 2025 to scrutinise the Cabinet budget process.
 - Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to meet 5 times per year, commencing at 4.30 p.m. These meetings will be held remotely
 - Licensing and Regulatory Committee to meet quarterly on a Monday commencing at 6.30 p.m.
 - Meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee to be convened as and when required.
 - Audit and Governance Committee to meet every quarter (4 meetings per year) on a Wednesday commencing at 3.00 p.m. In order to meet

statutory requirements etc. a special meeting of the Committee will be held on 25 September 2024 to approve the Statement of Accounts (or at a later date if the audit of the accounts hasn't been finalised by that date).

- Pay and Grading Committee to be convened as and when required.
- Health and Wellbeing Board to meet 4 times per year.
- The dates for the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel, which are not public meetings are included in the Corporate Calendar.

3. Calendar of Meetings

- 3.1 A copy of the Calendar of Meetings for 2024/25 and associated annexes are attached.

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ANNEX A
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF SEFTON
PROGRAMME OF CABINET MEETINGS - 2024/2025

Meeting	Day	Time	Venue	2024								2025					
				May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	
CABINET	Thur.	10.00 a.m.	B	23		25				3		5		6	6		22
			S		20				5		7		9	→13		3	

→ Budget Meeting

Key to Venues:

B - Bootle Town Hall

S - Southport Town Hall

ANNEX B
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF SEFTON
PROGRAMME OF COUNCIL, MEMBERS' BRIEFING SESSIONS AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS ETC. - 2024/2025

Meeting	Day	Time	Venue	2024								2025						
				May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	
COUNCIL	Thur.	6.30 p.m.	B	16←					12				16	27→			15°	
			S	14↑			11				14					24		13↓ Tue
MEMBERS' BRIEFING SESSIONS Prior to each Ordinary Council Meeting. Confirmation that Briefing Sessions will be held will be notified to Members nearer the time	Thur.	5.00 p.m.	B						12				16					
			S				11				14					24		
AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE	Wed.	3.00 p.m.	B		19				*25			11						
			S						4						19			
EALS (FOR PERSONNEL RES) - as and when required	Thur.	-																
LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE	Mon.	6.30 p.m.	B		10								6					
			S						2							10		
LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE - as and when required			B															
			S															
PLANNING COMMITTEE (Note: Mandatory meetings to start at 5.00 p.m. Meeting on 21/05 on Tue)	Wed.	6.30 p.m.	B	↑21	26				18		13		15		12		↓21	
			S		5	24					16		11		5		9	
PLANNING VISITING PANEL	Mon	10.00 a.m.	B		3 & 24	22			16	14	11	9	13	3	10	7		
PAY AND GRADING COMMITTEE – as and when required																		

↑ Annual Meeting 2024/25 - commences at 6.00 p.m. (Tuesday) (Venue to be determined)
 ← Adjourned Annual Meeting - Appointment of Committees etc. for 2024/25
 → Budget Meeting
 †Mandatory Planning Committee - To start at 5.00 p.m.

↓ Annual Meeting 2025/2026 - commences at 6.00 p.m. (Tuesday) (Venue to be determined)
 ° Adjourned Annual Meeting - Appointment of Committees etc. for 2025/2026
 * Audit & Governance - Approval of 2023/24 Statement Of Accounts

ANNEX C
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF SEFTON
PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES - 2024/2025
(Tuesday)

Meeting	Venue	2024								2025				
		May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Adult Social Care and Health) (6.30 p.m.) (Tue)	B		18				15					25		
	S					3				7				
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) (Tue) (6.30 p.m.)	B					10				14	*11			
	S		11				22					4		
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Regeneration and Skills) (6.30 p.m.) (Tue)	B		25						5			11		
	S					17				21				
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Children's Services Safeguarding) (6.30 p.m.) (Tue)	B		4						12			18		
	S					24				28				
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (4.30 p.m.) (Tue)	Remote Meetings		18			10			12			7		11

* Special meeting to consider Budget proposals.

ANNEX D
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF SEFTON
PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS- 2024/2025

Meeting	Day	Time	Venue	2024								2025				
				May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PANEL ^	Fri	10.00 a.m.	B	24		12		6		8		17		7		
			S													
SAFER SEFTON TOGETHER	Thu	10.00 a.m.	B		6	11		12		14		16		27		
			S													
HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD	Wed.	2.00 p.m.	B		5			11			4			5		
			S													

Meetings video conferenced to Southport Town Hall

Agenda Item 7

SEFTON COUNCIL CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25

MAY 2024		
WED	1	
THU	2	COUNCIL, MERSEYSIDE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY MAYORAL ELECTIONS
FRI	3	
SAT	4	
SUN	5	
MON	6	BANK HOLIDAY
TUE	7	
WED	8	
THU	9	
FRI	10	
SAT	11	
SUN	12	
MON	13	
TUE	14	6.00 ANNUAL COUNCIL (VENUE TO BE DETERMINED)
WED	15	
THU	16	6.30 ADJOURNED ANNUAL COUNCIL (B)
FRI	17	
SAT	18	
SUN	19	
MON	20	
TUE	21	5.00 MANDATORY PLANNING COMMITTEE TRAINING SESSION (B)
WED	22	
THU	23	10.00 CABINET (B)
FRI	24	10.00 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PANEL (B)
SAT	25	
SUN	26	
MON	27	SPRING BANK HOLIDAY SCHOOL HALF-TERM HOLIDAY WEEK
TUE	28	
WED	29	
THU	30	
FRI	31	
MAY 2024		

Agenda Item 7

JUNE 2024		
SAT	1	
SUN	2	
MON	3	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	4	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) (B)
WED	5	2.00 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD (B) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (S)
THU	6	10.00 SAFER SEFTON TOGETHER (B)
FRI	7	
SAT	8	
SUN	9	
MON	10	6.30 LICENSING AND REGULATORY (B)
TUE	11	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) (S)
WED	12	
THU	13	
FRI	14	
SAT	15	
SUN	16	
MON	17	
TUE	18	4.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (RM) 6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH) (B)
WED	19	3.00 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE (B)
THU	20	10.00 CABINET (S)
FRI	21	
SAT	22	
SUN	23	
MON	24	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	25	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) (B)
WED	26	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (B) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (B)
THU	27	
FRI	28	
SAT	29	
SUN	30	
JUNE 2024		

Agenda Item 7

JULY 2024		
MON	1	
TUE	2	
WED	3	
THU	4	
FRI	5	
SAT	6	
SUN	7	
MON	8	
TUE	9	
WED	10	
THU	11	10.00 SAFER SEFTON TOGETHER (B) 5.00 MEMBERS' BRIEFING – TBC (S) 6.30 COUNCIL (S)
FRI	12	10.00 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PANEL (B)
SAT	13	
SUN	14	
MON	15	
TUE	16	
WED	17	
THU	18	
FRI	19	
SAT	20	
SUN	21	
MON	22	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	23	
WED	24	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (S) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (S)
THU	25	10.00 CABINET (B)
FRI	26	
SAT	27	
SUN	28	
MON	29	
TUE	30	
WED	31	

Agenda Item 7

AUGUST 2024		
THU	1	
FRI	2	
SAT	3	
SUN	4	
MON	5	
TUE	6	
WED	7	
THU	8	
FRI	9	
SAT	10	
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WED	21	
THU	22	
FRI	23	
SAT	24	
SUN	25	
MON	26	SUMMER BANK HOLIDAY
TUE	27	
WED	28	
THU	29	
FRI	30	
SAT	31	
AUGUST 2024		

Agenda Item 7

SEPTEMBER 2024		
SUN	1	
MON	2	6.30 LICENSING AND REGULATORY (S)
TUE	3	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH) (S)
WED	4	3.00 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE (S)
THU	5	10.00 CABINET (S)
FRI	6	10.00 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PANEL (B)
SAT	7	
SUN	8	
MON	9	
TUE	10	4.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (RM) 6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) (B)
WED	11	2.00 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD (B)
THU	12	10.00 SAFER SEFTON TOGETHER (B) 5.00 MEMBERS' BRIEFING - TBC (B) 6.30 COUNCIL (B)
FRI	13	
SAT	14	
SUN	15	
MON	16	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	17	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) (S)
WED	18	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (B) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (B)
THU	19	
FRI	20	
SAT	21	
SUN	22	
MON	23	
TUE	24	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) (S)
WED	25	3.00 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE (B) (SPECIAL MEETING FOR APPROVAL OF 2023/24 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS)
THU	26	
FRI	27	
SAT	28	
SUN	29	
MON	30	
SEPTEMBER 2024		

Agenda Item 7

OCTOBER 2024		
TUE	1	
WED	2	
THU	3	10.00 CABINET (B)
FRI	4	
SAT	5	
SUN	6	
MON	7	
TUE	8	
WED	9	
THU	10	
FRI	11	
SAT	12	
SUN	13	
MON	14	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	15	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH) (B)
WED	16	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (S) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (S)
THU	17	
FRI	18	
SAT	19	
SUN	20	
MON	21	
TUE	22	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) (S)
WED	23	
THU	24	
FRI	25	
SAT	26	
SUN	27	
MON	28	SCHOOL HALF-TERM HOLIDAY WEEK
TUE	29	
WED	30	
THU	31	
OCTOBER 2024		

Agenda Item 7

NOVEMBER 2024		
FRI	1	
SAT	2	
SUN	3	
MON	4	
TUE	5	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) (B)
WED	6	
THU	7	10.00 CABINET (S)
FRI	8	10.00 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PANEL (B)
SAT	9	
SUN	10	REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY
MON	11	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	12	4.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (RM) 6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) (B)
WED	13	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (B) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (B)
THU	14	10.00 SAFER SEFTON TOGETHER (B) 5.00 MEMBERS' BRIEFING- TBC (S) 6.30 COUNCIL (S)
FRI	15	
SAT	16	
SUN	17	
MON	18	
TUE	19	
WED	20	
THU	21	
FRI	22	
SAT	23	
SUN	24	
MON	25	
TUE	26	
WED	27	
THU	28	
FRI	29	
SAT	30	
NOVEMBER 2024		

Agenda Item 7

DECEMBER 2024		
SUN	1	
MON	2	
TUE	3	
WED	4	2.00 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD (B)
THU	5	10.00 CABINET (B)
FRI	6	
SAT	7	
SUN	8	
MON	9	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	10	
WED	11	3.00 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE (B) 5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (S) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (S)
THU	12	
FRI	13	
SAT	14	
SUN	15	
MON	16	
TUE	17	
WED	18	
THU	19	
FRI	20	SCHOOL CHRISTMAS BREAK
SAT	21	
SUN	22	
MON	23	
TUE	24	
WED	25	CHRISTMAS DAY
THU	26	BOXING DAY
FRI	27	COUNCIL OFFICES CLOSED
SAT	28	
SUN	29	
MON	30	COUNCIL OFFICES CLOSED
TUE	31	COUNCIL OFFICES CLOSED
DECEMBER 2024		

Agenda Item 7

JANUARY 2025		
WED	1	NEW YEAR'S DAY
THU	2	COUNCIL OFFICES CLOSED
FRI	3	
SAT	4	
SUN	5	
MON	6	6.30 LICENSING AND REGULATORY (B)
TUE	7	4.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (RM) 6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH) (S)
WED	8	
THU	9	10.00 CABINET (S)
FRI	10	
SAT	11	
SUN	12	
MON	13	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	14	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) (B)
WED	15	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (B) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (B)
THU	16	10.00 SAFER SEFTON TOGETHER (B) 5.00 MEMBERS' BRIEFING – TBC (B) 6.30 COUNCIL (B)
FRI	17	10.00 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PANEL (B)
SAT	18	
SUN	19	
MON	20	
TUE	21	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) (S)
WED	22	
THU	23	
FRI	24	
SAT	25	
SUN	26	
MON	27	
TUE	28	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) (S)
WED	29	
THU	30	
FRI	31	
JANUARY 2025		

Agenda Item 7

FEBRUARY 2025		
SAT	1	
SUN	2	
MON	3	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B)
TUE	4	
WED	5	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (S) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (S)
THU	6	10.00 CABINET (B)
FRI	7	
SAT	8	
SUN	9	
MON	10	
TUE	11	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) BUDGET MEETING (B)
WED	12	
THU	13	10.00 CABINET (BUDGET) (S)
FRI	14	
SAT	15	
SUN	16	
MON	17	SCHOOL HALF-TERM HOLIDAY WEEK
TUE	18	
WED	19	
THU	20	
FRI	21	
SAT	22	
SUN	23	
MON	24	
TUE	25	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH) (B)
WED	26	
THU	27	6.30 BUDGET COUNCIL (B)
FRI	28	
FEBRUARY 2025		

Agenda Item 7

MARCH 2025		
SAT	1	
SUN	2	
MON	3	
TUE	4	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) (S)
WED	5	2.00 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD (B)
THU	6	10.00 CABINET (B)
FRI	7	10.00 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PANEL (B)
SAT	8	
SUN	9	
MON	10	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B) 6.30 LICENSING AND REGULATORY (S)
TUE	11	4.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (RM) 6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) (B)
WED	12	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (B) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (B)
THU	13	
FRI	14	
SAT	15	
SUN	16	
MON	17	
TUE	18	6.30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) (B)
WED	19	3.00 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE (S)
THU	20	
FRI	21	
SAT	22	
SUN	23	
MON	24	
TUE	25	
WED	26	
THUR	27	10.00 SAFER SEFTON TOGETHER (B)
FRI	28	
SAT	29	
SUN	30	
MON	31	
MARCH 2025		

Agenda Item 7

APRIL 2025		
TUE	1	
WED	2	
THU	3	10.00 CABINET (S)
FRI	4	
SAT	5	
SUN	6	
MON	7	10.00 PLANNING VISITING PANEL (B) SCHOOL SPRING HOLIDAY
TUE	8	
WED	9	5.00 PLANNING TRAINING SESSION (S) 6.30 PLANNING COMMITTEE (S)
THU	10	
FRI	11	
SAT	12	
SUN	13	
MON	14	
TUE	15	
WED	16	
THU	17	
FRI	18	GOOD FRIDAY
SAT	19	
SUN	20	EASTER SUNDAY
MON	21	EASTER MONDAY
TUE	22	
WED	23	
THU	24	5.00 MEMBERS' BRIEFING - TBC (S) 6.30 COUNCIL (S)
FRI	25	
SAT	26	
SUN	27	
MON	28	
TUE	29	
WED	30	
APRIL 2025		

Agenda Item 7

MAY 2025		
THU	1	
FRI	2	
SAT	3	
SUN	4	
MON	5	MAY BANK HOLIDAY
TUE	6	
WED	7	
THU	8	
FRI	9	
SAT	10	
SUN	11	
MON	12	
TUE	13	6.00 ANNUAL COUNCIL (VENUE TO BE DETERMINED)
WED	14	
THU	15	6.30 ADJOURNED ANNUAL COUNCIL (B)
FRI	16	
SAT	17	
SUN	18	
MON	19	
TUE	20	
WED	21	5.00 MANDATORY PLANNING COMMITTEE TRAINING SESSION (B)
THU	22	10.00 CABINET (B)
FRI	23	
SAT	24	
SUN	25	
MON	26	SPRING BANK HOLIDAY SCHOOL HALF-TERM HOLIDAY WEEK
TUE	27	
WED	28	
THU	29	
FRI	30	
SAT	31	
MAY 2025		

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Agenda Item 8

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 4 January 2024
Subject:	Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The report provides Cabinet with assurance on the progress made to implement the Council's Health and Safety policy during 2022/23.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet to note the progress on implementing the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy during 2022/23.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

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: (including any Risk Implications)

None.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs - There are no revenue costs arising from this report outside the existing approved budget.

(B) Capital Costs- There are no capital costs arising from the report.

Agenda Item 8

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
There are no resource implications associated with the report.	
Legal Implications:	
There are no legal implications associated with the report.	
Equality Implications:	
There are no equality implications.	
Impact on Children and Young People:	
There is no impact to Children and Young People	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
The report has a neutral impact as it provides a summary of health and safety activity across the Council that has already taken place. There have been no incidents that have been reported that could have detrimentally affected the climate.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Positive.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Positive.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Positive.
Place – leadership and influencer: Positive
Drivers of change and reform: Positive
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Positive.
Greater income for social investment: Positive
Cleaner Greener; Positive

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7449/23.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5549/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer:	David Eden
Telephone Number:	0151 934 4053
Email Address:	david.eden@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

- Annual Health and Safety report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council in accordance with its responsibilities to manage health and safety, approved a Council-wide Corporate Health and Safety Policy in April 2019. The policy sets out the Council’s approach to health and safety, the responsibilities for key staff for managing the system and the arrangements within the Council for monitoring health and safety.
- 1.2 A key objective from the Policy is to clarify and strengthen governance arrangements for health and safety across the Council.
- 1.3 The Policy outlines that the Cabinet has strategic responsibility for employee related health and safety in the Council and that the Audit and Governance committee's responsibilities are to consider the Council's arrangements for health and safety, receive regular assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.
- 1.4 The Policy also states that the Corporate Health and Safety Team is responsible for providing an annual report on Health and Safety to Cabinet on behalf of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services. This report is designed to meet this requirement.

Agenda Item 8

- 1.5 Currently the Audit and Governance Committee receives an update on health and safety performance on a quarterly basis which includes the following information:
- Progress on health and safety actions due to be undertaken during the quarter.
 - Updates on health and safety performance including accidents and incidents.
 - Any emerging legal or health safety related issues.
 - Proposed activity in the next quarter.

2. Annual Report

- 2.1 The Annual Report for Health and Safety is designed to provide assurance to Cabinet of the continued progress to implement health and safety effectively across the Council. The progress update will assist Cabinet meet its strategic responsibility for employee health and safety.
- 2.2 Providing an annual report to Cabinet on health and safety will assist in the achievement of the health and safety objective, including in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy, of improving governance.
- 2.3 The Annual Health and Safety Report is attached at Appendix 1 and includes updates on:
- The organisational arrangements for Health and Safety
 - Consultation and communication
 - Liaison during the year with regulatory authorities
 - Details of the reported accidents and incidents during the financial year
 - Training
 - Risk Assessments
 - Sefton Schools
 - Objectives, KPIs and Priorities for 2022/2023
 - Priorities and challenges 2023/24
- 2.4 The key highlights from the report include:
- 2.5 The Council continues to focus on improving the health and safety management system and support by reviewing existing arrangements and improving governance.
- 2.6 The Corporate Health and Safety Team (the team) has seen considerable change during the reporting period with two staff members leaving and two new staff members appointed. There is an intention to increase the team during the 2023/24 financial year to ensure that the team has sufficient capacity to provide statutory support to nearly 8,000 staff across schools and service areas, plus agency workers, contractors, and volunteers.
- 2.7 The team deliver a range of services across all Council and school premises, including their associated activities. These services can be divided into three main areas, being, policy and communication, operational reactive response, and active monitoring.

- 2.8 The continued relaxation of Covid-19 rules throughout the 2022/23 period saw many areas re-start normal operations thereby increasing the footfall to that which had been experienced in the previous twelve months.
- 2.9 Consultation arrangements continue to work well, with the Corporate Health and Safety Committee playing a key role in conjunction with the Departmental Health and Safety Sub-committees.
- 2.10 The health and safety position within the Council shows early signs of progress, with many sections taking a pro-active stance towards safety management throughout the year. The Council's accident reporting culture is improving and showing signs of increased investigation and implementation of suitable controls, with the online incident reporting system also being better utilised. There are areas that require improvement and therefore work will continue throughout the 2023/24 period to increase usage and encourage better quality reporting.
- 2.11 The Schools Service Level Agreement continues to be reviewed as well as the inspection and audit processes being revitalised.
- 2.12 Health and safety objectives are continually reviewed, and this is managed by the continual review and reshaping of service delivery to assist the Council in meeting its statutory obligations and provide managers and staff with relevant support.
- 2.13 Post pandemic work has included the review of first aid and fire marshalling provision for Sefton Council's buildings, as more staff return to the office, albeit most of them returning on a hybrid basis.

3. Progress since April 2023 on health and safety

- 3.1 The focus for 2023/2024 has been on:
- 3.2 Recruitment to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the team to ensure that the Council meets its statutory responsibility on having sufficient competent advice across the organisation.
- 3.3 The review and updating of the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing policy and testing of the emergency arrangements across Council settings.
- 3.4 Promoting the importance of accident, incident and near miss reporting, improving the quality of information submitted, along with the depth and effectiveness of investigation. We have been improving the availability of the incident reporting system for staff and managers to report incidents. Reducing the numbers of erroneously reported RIDDOR incidents by service areas to the HSE.
- 3.5 Creating improved working channels between health and safety and other departments, such as property services, traded services, and Sefton Arc.

Agenda Item 8

- 3.6 Progress on the completion and review of risk assessments has continued throughout the year, for general workplace hazards. The team are working with Assistant Directors and Service Managers to develop a culture of hazard identification at the earliest opportunity rather than following any change, implementation of planned, suitable internal risk control measures with supporting procedures, consultation, management and staff and training, and effective monitoring of workplaces, activities, and behaviours.
- 3.7 Restructuring the schools health and safety support programme for the 2024/25 school year, ensuring that the programme is fit for purpose and able to compete with outside agencies providing similar services to that covered by the Sefton SLA.
- 3.8 The review and implementation of controls in relation to aggression towards Sefton Council employees.
- 3.9 Introducing a programme of hand arm vibration controls for employees subjected to vibrating equipment.
- 3.10 Delivering an audit programme across Schools and Offices to determine the implementation of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and procedures.

Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Agenda Item 8

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Executive Summary.....	3
3.	Organising for Health and Safety	4
4.	Consultation and Communication	5
5.	Liaison with Regulatory Bodies	5
6.	Accidents and Incidents.....	5
7.	Training	11
8.	Risk Assessment	12
9.	Sefton Schools.....	13
10.	Objectives, KPIs and Priorities 2022/2023.....	13
11.	Priorities and Challenges for 2023/2024	14
	Appendix 1: Health and Safety Performance against Key Objectives	15

Agenda Item 8

1. Introduction

1.1 Sefton Council is required to actively manage and monitor the health and safety of its employees. The primary legal responsibilities for this arise from the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 from which a plethora of subsidiary Regulations, such as the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, are made. This report provides an overview of the Council's health and safety performance from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. Attention is drawn to key issues that have arisen during this period and highlights ongoing priorities to be addressed.

1.2 The priorities for the year 2022/2023 included:

- Embedding risk assessment across Council departments,
- Clarifying and strengthening governance arrangements,
- Improving health and safety risk management by targeting effective training.

1.3 Throughout the report the term 'Health and Safety' is used and should be read within the context of occupational health, safety, and wellbeing issues for which Sefton Council (the Council) has responsibility under both statute and common law.

1.4 The Council's Health and Safety Policy was revised during the 2018/2019 financial year and a further review began in the 2022/23, though the overall number of amendments being made are minimal. Once finalised the reviewed document will again be presented to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee and Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) during 2023/2024 for consultation before being approved by Cabinet.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Council continues to focus on improving the health and safety management system and support by reviewing existing arrangements and improving governance.

2.2 The Corporate Health and Safety Team (the team) has seen considerable change during the reporting period with two staff members leaving and two new staff members appointed. There is an intention to increase the team during the 2023/24 financial year to ensure that the team has sufficient capacity to provide statutory support to nearly 8,000 staff across schools and service areas, plus agency workers, contractors, and volunteers.

2.3 The team deliver a range of services across all Council and school premises, including their associated activities. These services can be divided into three main areas, being, policy and communication, operational reactive response and active monitoring.

2.4 The continued relaxation of Covid-19 rules throughout the 2022/23 period saw many areas re-start normal operations thereby increasing the footfall to that which had been experienced in the previous twelve months.

- 2.5 Consultation arrangements continue to work well, with the Corporate Health and Safety Committee playing a key role in conjunction with the Departmental Health and Safety Sub-committees.
- 2.6 The health and safety position within the Council shows early signs of progress, with many sections taking a pro-active stance towards safety management throughout the year. The Council's accident reporting culture is improving and showing signs of increased investigation and implementation of suitable controls, with the online incident reporting system also being better utilised. There are still, however, areas that require improvement and therefore work will continue throughout the 2023/24 period to increase usage and encourage better quality reporting.
- 2.7 The Schools Service Level Agreement continues to be reviewed as well as the inspection and audit processes being revitalised.
- 2.8 Health and safety objectives are continually reviewed and this is managed by the continual review and reshaping of service delivery to assist the Council in meeting its statutory obligations and provide managers and staff with relevant support.
- 2.9 Post pandemic work has included the review of first aid and fire marshalling provision for Sefton Council's buildings, as more staff return to the office, albeit most of them returning on a hybrid basis.

3. Organising for Health and Safety

- 3.1 The Council has a Corporate Health and Safety department within Corporate Resources and Customer Services who provide health and safety advice to Members, Officers, school governors, headteachers, partner organisations and contractors. The team is based within Risk and Audit which is part of the wider Finance team.
- 3.2 The Health and Safety Model adopted by the Council, detailed in the approved Corporate Health and Safety Policy is that there is a small, centralised team that provides regulatory policies, guidance, monitoring, audit and support. Executive Directors and Assistant Directors are accountable and responsible for the embedding of the policy and operation of health and safety within their service area which is essentially delegated through the management structures within each service area.
- 3.3 The Corporate Health and Safety Team liaise with other services and teams within the Council such as Corporate Personnel, Occupational Health, Workforce Learning and Development, Insurance, Emergency Planning, Building and Property Services and Public Health.

Agenda Item 8

- 3.4 There has been considerable change in the Corporate Health and Safety Team during 2022/23 with two staff members leaving and recruitment has taken place with two new staff members appointed. Recruitment took longer than anticipated due in part to the general tightness in the labour market which all teams in the Council are continuing to experience.
- 3.5 Further resources are planned to be recruited for 2023/24 to ensure that the Council can meet its obligations to have sufficient competent resources in place.

4. Consultation and Communication

- 4.1 Employers have a duty to consult with their employees and representatives on health and safety matters. The process for consultation with Trade Unions and staff in Sefton is direct and through the Health and Safety Committee structure, as outlined in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy.
- 4.2 The overarching Corporate Health and Safety Committee meets quarterly and is chaired by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services with the various Sub-Committees meeting at least quarterly ahead of the main meeting. Similar scheduled meetings are held with Education Excellence and the STJCC (School Teachers Joint Consultation Council) and involve staff, Head Teachers, and Trade Unions.
- 4.3 The draft minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee (CHSC) go to the Strategic Leadership Board for consideration and noting of actions. It is also a requirement that the minutes of the CHSC go to each Service Area's Departmental Management Team meeting for noting the key actions.

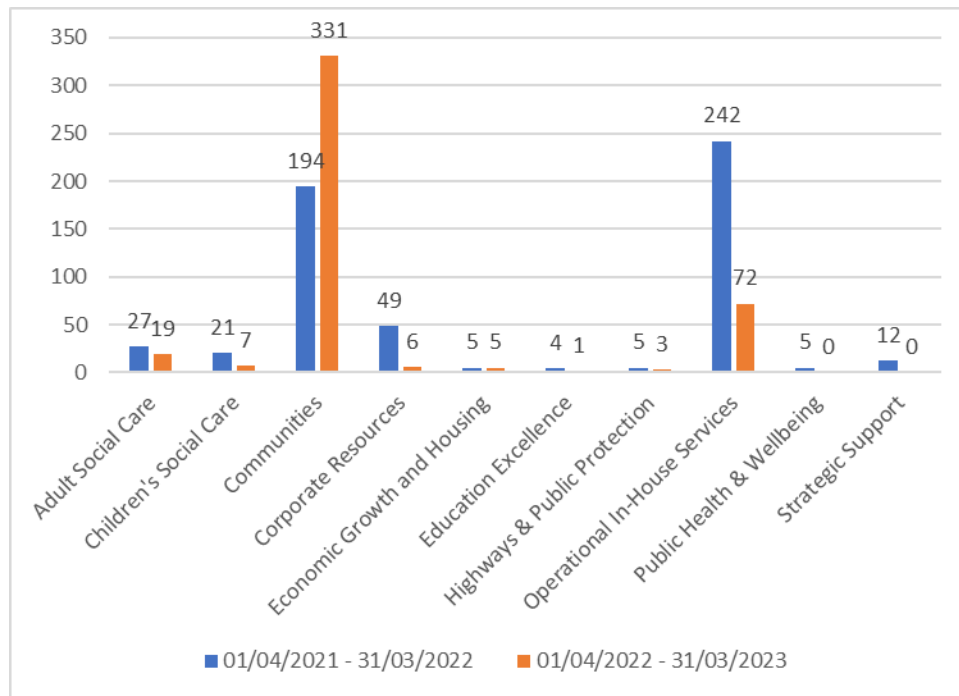
5. Liaison with Regulatory Bodies

- 5.1 The Council has routinely reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) during the reporting period via the submission of RIDDOR related incidents.

6. Accidents and Incidents

- 6.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Team continue to manage the Council's on-line incident reporting system which is used by all service areas.
- 6.2 Reporting of accidents is a legal requirement. The reporting of accidents, incidents and near misses can also identify trends, direct resources, ensure adequate advice and investigation which can lead to the implementation of effective controls and monitoring to prevent reoccurrence. High levels of reporting could demonstrate a positive reporting culture, a busier department with higher risks, or an activity that requires further control to reduce the number of submissions.

6.3 **Graph 1** below shows the accidents and incidents reported between 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023. It also shows the accidents and incidents from the previous financial year (1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022).



*Graph 1 – Accidents and Incidents Reported Across All Service Areas
01 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 and 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023*

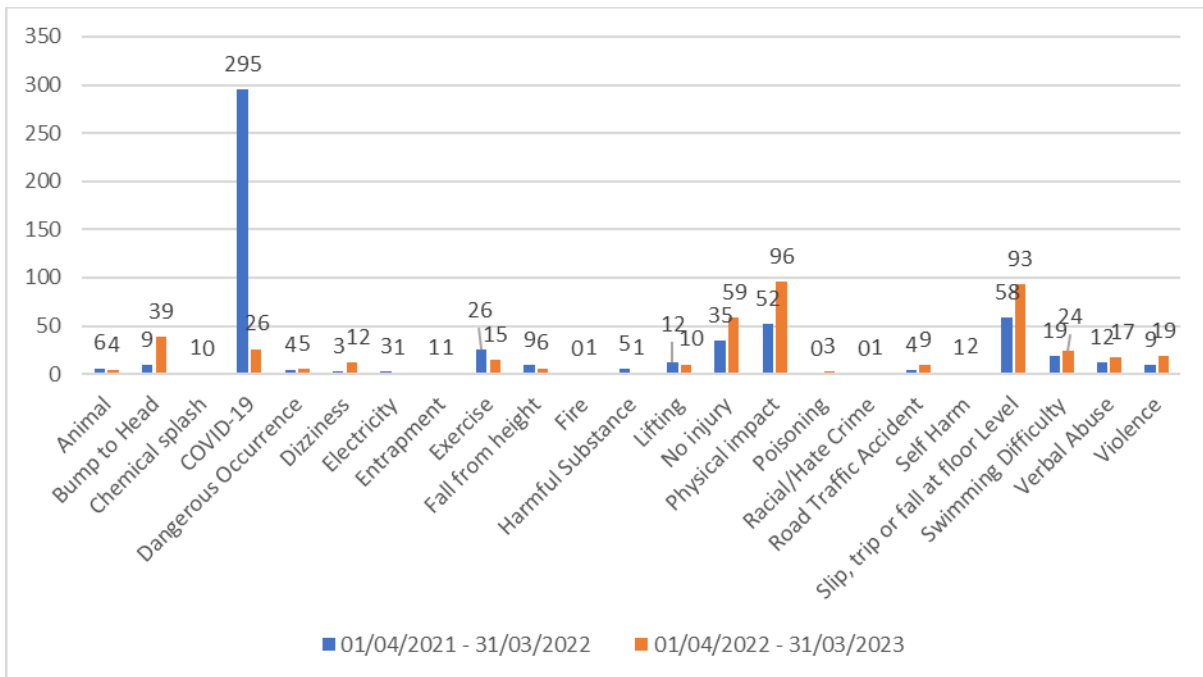
6.4 Accident and incident data are known as lagging factors within health and safety management, as those detrimental events have already occurred. Leading factors are more proactive, preventative measures such as training and risk assessment, which are put in place to reduce risk ahead of it occurring. Nevertheless, lagging factors such as accident data have their part to play in safety management by focussing upon common themes and identifying trends to allow a more targeted approach.

6.5 **Graph 1** notes there is an increase in Communities related accidents. The reopening of leisure facilities following Covid restrictions would have seen increased footfall equating to a greater number of accidents. Such facilities often attract young people and in the case of swimming pools and similar, will contain slippery surfaces. Gyms and exercise classes can involve strenuous exercise routines, so it would be expected that Communities based activities may attract a higher proportion of accidents than others. Higher figures don't necessarily reflect poorly on that department. It is potentially more a case of that department being better at reporting incidents when they do occur more so than others.

6.6 Conversely Operational In-House Services there has been a significant decrease in reporting for the 2022/23 period compared to the year before. This is probably partially due to a higher number of Covid reporting's for the previous year that were eradicated in the 2022/23 period. In addition, there is likely an element of under reporting for the period in question.

Agenda Item 8

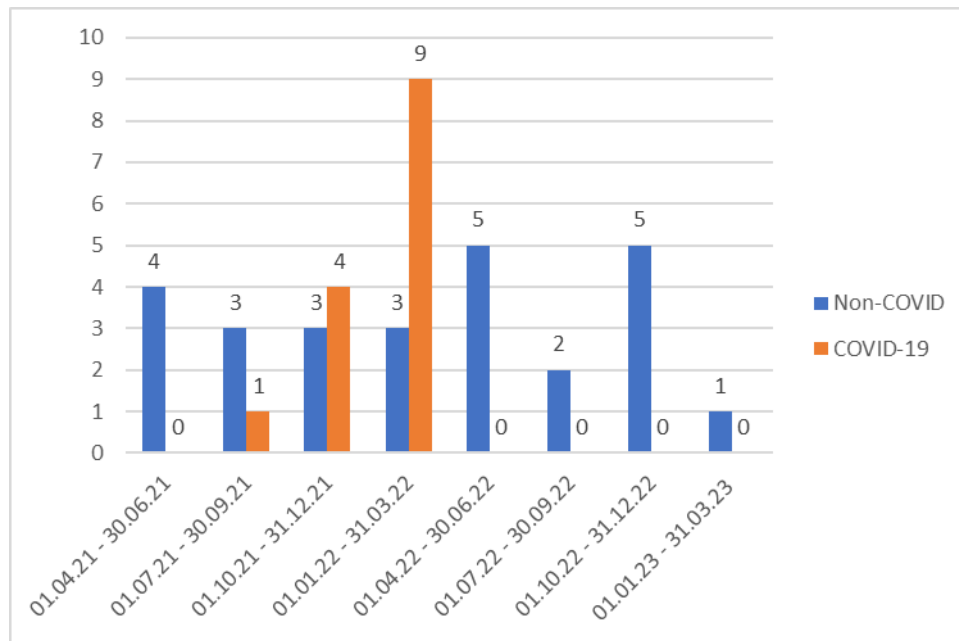
- 6.7 The other departments reported low numbers of incidents for 2022/23 suggest further evidence of under reporting, which whilst there remains a large pool of colleagues working from home, there is still the possibility of incidents that are occurring but are not being identified as reportable.
- 6.8 Both Adult and Children Social Service departments would be expected to be reporting higher numbers of incidents in the reporting period, especially where incidents of aggression from challenging service users are being experienced. This reflects the current culture of some frontline services, where the attitude is one of it *all being in a day's work* or being *part of the job*. This should never be the case and the cumulative effect of such aggression, hostility and intimidation should not be underestimated when considering the mental health and wellbeing of such staff members.
- 6.9 Similarly low figures in the Highways department are likely due to the contracting out of the majority of the highways maintenance, however, this creates potential issues in how we are notified of third-party contractor accidents as and when they occur. As those contractors are working on behalf of Sefton Council's undertaking, the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act makes us jointly liable for the health and safety of those contractors.
- 6.10 Clearly, there are areas for improvement within the coming twelve months to ensure accident, incident and near miss reports are fit for purpose. Health and Safety are leading on a number of initiatives to improve the visibility of the software, improve the reporting, increasing the numbers of managers with access to the system. A promotional campaign will take place during that period.
- 6.11 **Graph 2** below provides an overview of the causes of accidents and incidents raised across the Council service.



*Graph 2: Causes of Accidents and Incidents Reported
01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022 and 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023*

- 6.12 It is clear to see the impact that Covid had on the accident / incident figures for the preceding year. With the 2022/23 period potentially being more active than 2021/22, it would be fair to expect an upward trend in most injury types, however, interestingly, there were more injuries due to exercise in the restricted period than there were in the 2022/23 period. Similar anomalies occur in relation to falls from height, harmful substances and lifting.
- 6.13 Physical Impact and Slips, Trips and Falls at ground level once again lead the way in this period, as they always tend to do. Greater awareness of the types of slip hazards may contribute to reduced numbers for this aspect. Greater emphasis will be put on this in the 2023/24 period.
- 6.14 Fifty-nine no injury incidents are likely to be near misses, which, across approximately 960,000 working days in the period, demonstrates the potential level of under reporting in this area. Access to the reporting database will be widened in 2023/24 to hopefully encourage greater reporting. For this reporting period, however, it is restricted to team managers to allow control and supervision of accidents and incidents when they occur.
- 6.15 Service Areas are appointing Health, Safety and Wellbeing Coordinators to act as single point of contact on health, safety and wellbeing matters and a key link between that Departmental Management Team, their respective Health and Safety Committee and the Corporate Health and Safety Team. They will be supporting initiatives to drive reporting, investigation and sharing of lessons learnt within their Service Areas, with the aim of improving the culture and performance. This, along with increased communication with the Unions, enhances the number of communication channels available to the health and safety team.
- 6.16 **Graph 3** below details the number of accidents and incidents reported under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) for the period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Agenda Item 8

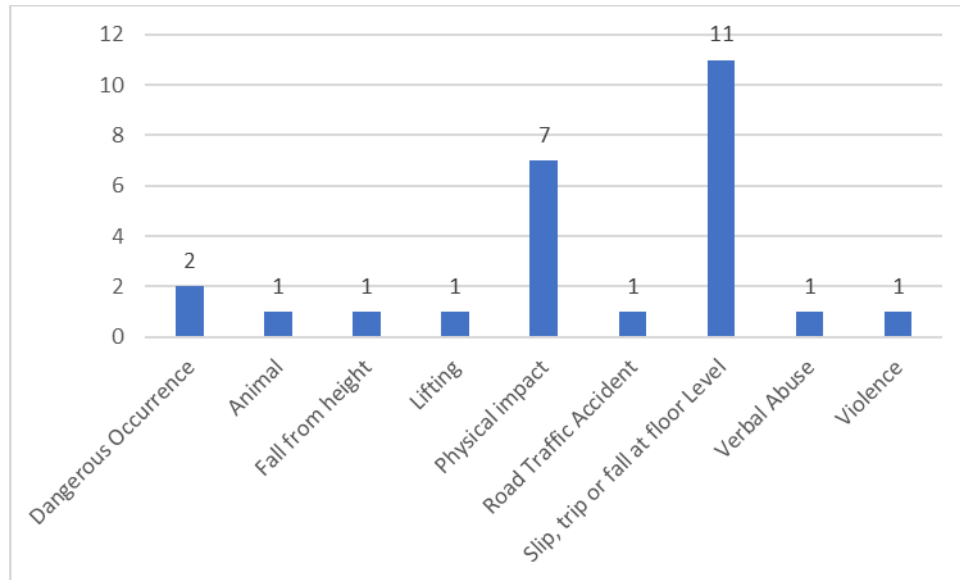


Graph 3 – RIDDOR Reports - Comparisons by Quarter, Highlighting COVID-19 and other reports.
01 April 2021 – 31 March 2023

- 6.17 RIDDOR reports are an extension to the normal channels of accident reporting. Certain types of accident are legally required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013. These include:
- Deaths and injuries caused by workplace accidents:
 - Specified Injuries to workers,
 - Injuries to workers which result in their incapacitation for more than 7 days, whether they remain away from work or attend work but are unable to carry out their 'normal' working for over 7 days,
 - Injuries to non-workers i.e. the public, which result in them being taken directly to hospital for treatment,
 - Occupational diseases,
 - Carcinogens mutagens and biological agents (including COVID-19),
 - Dangerous occurrences, or
 - Gas incidents.
- 6.18 Where such accidents are of a more serious nature (specified injuries) or where an accident leads to seven days or more absence from work, it will likely lead to a RIDDOR report being submitted to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for their information. A key factor in deciding whether an accident is RIDDOR reportable is whether it is work related as opposed to merely happening in work. There appears to be some confusion when it comes to RIDDOR reporting with some reports being submitted by managers to the HSE when there is not a need.
- 6.19 We are currently working with managers to educate them on when to report and to encourage that they speak with the Health and Safety section ahead of submission.

6.20 The number of RIDDOR reports, excluding Covid-19, remains broadly flat over the two comparison years and remains good for the size of the organisation although we believe the figure could be lower if we resolved the over reporting that is discussed above.

6.21 **Graph 4** highlights the causes for non-COVID RIDDOR reports, to assist in the analysis of reports raised.



Graph 4 – RIDDOR Reports Non-COVID Causes of accident and incidents report raised under RIDDOR.

01March 2022 – 31March 2023

6.22 This graph shows the distribution of those accidents and incidents submitted as RIDDOR during the 2022/23 period.

6.23 The table below provides a breakdown of the RIDDOR reports raised in the past two financial years for 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The team is looking to decrease the number of RIDDOR submissions a) via promoting better safety management and b) creating better supervision and training in relation to the RIDDOR reports that are being submitted.

Table 1 – RIDDOR report comparisons for the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23

RIDDOR Reports - Causes	1st April 2021 - 31st March 2022		1st April 2022 - 1st March 2023	
Contact with animal.	Collision with own pet, on walk.	1		1
COVID-19.	Evidence of workplace transmission.	34		0
Electrical accident.	Resulting in burn.	1		0
Fall from height.		4		1
Physical impact.		12		7
Road traffic incident.		0		0
Slip, trip, fall at floor		14		11

Agenda Item 8

level.				
Verbal abuse / physical attack.	x2 Resulting in fractures.	3	Child	2
Falling object.	Heavy metal door fall. No injuries.	1		0
Road traffic accident	None	0		1
Dangerous Occurrence		0	Electrical intake room flooded x2	2
Lifting		0		1

7. Training

- 7.1 Ensuring that there is suitable information, instruction and training to employees remain a significant legal responsibility for the Council. Workforce Learning and Development continue to offer a health and safety programme of both online and classroom-based health and safety courses.
- 7.2 There is a formal health and safety induction process which all staff are required to undertake which includes emergencies and evacuation procedures.
- 7.3 Different sections and departments require distinct training for their staff that reflects their activities and risks. However, there are commonalities in training needs across the Council, for example DSE and Manual Handling. Managers are encouraged to maintain a training matrix to ensure all staff are trained in the key risk areas appropriate for their activities and to flag up any areas that may require refresher training to the Workforce Learning Team.
- 7.4 The Council launched Mandatory Training for all employees during August 2021 on a number of topic areas including one Health and Safety Course. The details are included in the table below. Assistant Directors are provided performance information on all mandatory training on a quarterly basis.
- 7.5 The table below offers a comparison between this reporting period and the last in relation to staff numbers completing online health and safety courses via our Workforce Learning and Development programme.

Table 2 – Details of online training and the comparisons of numbers completing the training during 2021/22 and 2022/23

Course	Completed courses during 2021/22	Completed courses during 2022/23
Asbestos Awareness	4	9
Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health	24	37
Fire Safety at Work	71	84
Food Safety and Hygiene Level 2 in	162	194

Catering		
Manual Handling at Work	60	15
Workplace Risk Assessment	53	46
Workstation and Display Screen Equipment (DSE)	181	77
Mandatory Training Health and Safety	665	1824

- 7.6 The mandatory health and safety training was introduced as part of a package of mandatory training for all staff and managers in August 2021. The population of staff that are due to complete the training can vary from month to month to reflect leavers and new staff. The performance of eligible staff that completed the training at 31 March 2022 was 26.5% and at 31 March 2023 was 73%. The latter figure whilst a significant improvement on March 2022 performance is still sub optimal and reflects some disparities in performance between services. Performance will be monitored through the year by the Corporate Health and Safety Committee as well as the Executive Leadership Team. Assistant Directors have been advised to ensure that their staff members complete the mandatory training in a timely manner.
- 7.7 During this reporting period it was identified that further training on asbestos management will be required to be devised and implemented during 2023/24. Whilst the training issue was initially discovered within the Council's schools, this will be a project that will also be required to be rolled out across the corporate property estate.
- 7.8 With more staff members returning to the office environment during 2022/23, there has been a focus on ensuring that there was sufficient fire marshal and first aid provision across the offices and ensuring that there was relevant training of those volunteering to undertake these roles. Changes in office locations, increases in homeworking and new staff members increased the requirement for training in Display Screen Equipment (DSE).

8. Risk Assessment

- 8.1 With many services suspended, reduced or amended during the pandemic, a return to more normalised working patterns occurred throughout the reporting period. Changes of location, working practices and the introduction of new staff created a requirement for a review and update of operational risk assessments.
- 8.2 The Council, as a result of COVID-19, reinforced the requirement for teams and Service Areas to revise and produce risk assessments on a regular basis which helped to further embed the use of risk assessments. Progress was regularly reported throughout the governance structures. This approach remains an important focus as the pandemic's impact has waned and momentum is still required as not all Service Areas are at the same level of embedding risk assessments.

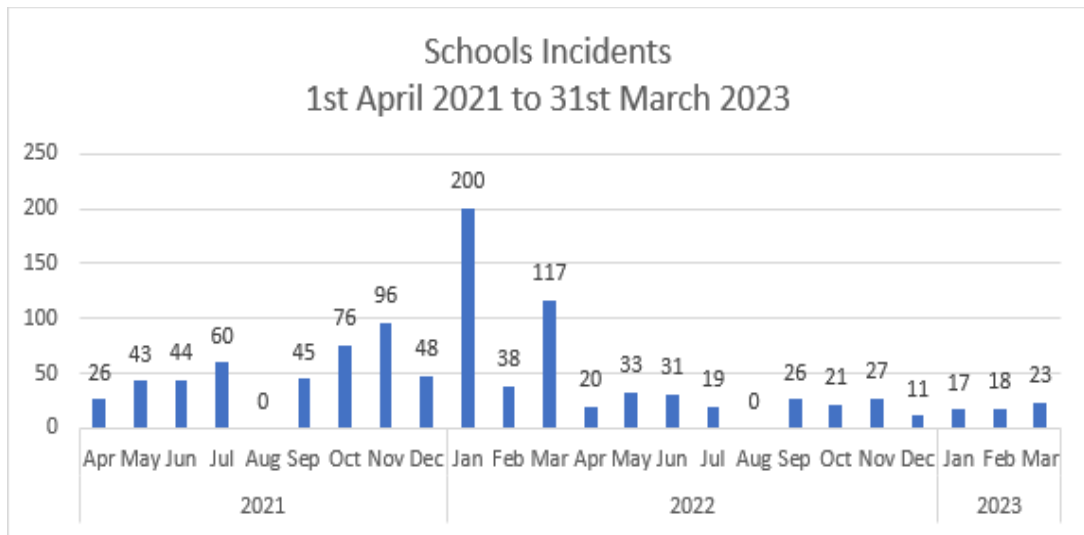
Agenda Item 8

8.3 Responsibilities remain with Directors, Heads of Service, Service Managers, School Governors, Head Teachers, and School Leadership Teams to ensure that robust risk management and emergency arrangements are in place. This includes completion of ‘suitable and satisfactory’ risk assessments, highlighting hazards, the application of appropriate controls and the regular review and update of assessments where required. The Corporate health and Safety team continued during the year to facilitate the completion of risk assessments across the Council providing guidance and support.

9. Sefton Schools

9.1 A revised risk-based auditing regime was carried out on a number of schools with the intention of providing assurance to the school’s governing bodies, as well as the Council, that the schools had an effective health and safety system in place.

9.2 Graph 5 below displays incidents and injuries recorded across Sefton’s schools for the April 2021 – March 2023 reporting periods.



Graph 5 Schools accident and incident figures 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022

9.3 The schools graph shows a generally decreased numbers of reported incidents for the 2022/23 period, having been skewed by a Covid peak in the winter of 2021/22. Most accidents continue to occur as a result of playground type activities where there are higher levels of physical impact and slip, trip and fall type injuries sustained.

10. Objectives, KPIs and Priorities 2022/2023

10.1 The Health and Safety Executive in their guidance entitled HSG65 provides a framework of activity that should be in place to manage health, safety, and wellbeing effectively. One of the areas that should be included within an

organisation's health, safety and wellbeing framework is the defining of performance measures for health, safety, and wellbeing. There are not prescribed, or generic performance indicators included although there is some guidance on assessing how risk are being controlled and if as an organisation it is achieving its health, safety and wellbeing aims.

10.2 There are three Health and Safety objectives included in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy which was approved by Cabinet in April 2020:

- Embedding risk assessments across the Council's functions and service area,
- Clarify and strengthen the governance arrangement for health and safety,
- Improve competence of all staff to improve risk management by targeting effective health and safety training.

10.3 The 2022-2023 health and safety objectives, based on the HSG 65 model, have been aligned to the Council's 2030 Vision and values. The Key Performance Indicators have been developed and tracked to reflect the key current risks within the health, safety and wellbeing framework, the current operating environment in the Council and the delivery of key objectives. The performance against the key objectives is detailed in Appendix 1.

11. Priorities and Challenges for 2023/2024

11.1 The focus for 2023/2024 will include:

- The completion of the activity ensuring that all risk assessments have been reviewed following the pandemic and updated where required.
- Creating improved working channels between health and safety and other departments, such as property services, traded services and Sefton Arc.
- Restructuring the schools programme for the 2024/25 school year, ensuring that the programme is fit for purpose and able to compete with outside agencies providing similar services to that covered by the Sefton SLA.
- The review and implementation of controls in relation to aggression towards Sefton Council employees.
- Introducing a programme of hand arm vibration controls for employees subjected to vibrating equipment.
- Promoting the importance of accident, incident and near miss reporting, improving the quality of information submitted, along with the depth and effectiveness of investigation.
- Reducing the numbers of RIDDOR reports submitted.
- Reviewing current policies and updating the same.
- Evaluating current levels of controls within Sefton Council's buildings and working with relevant departments to implement the required controls – e.g. PAT testing.

Appendix 1: Health and Safety Performance against Key Objectives

Ref.	HSG 65	Policy (Pledge)	Council Objectives	Objective Key Performance Indicators (All Council)	Corp H&S Team OBJ KPIs Actions	Progress 2022/23
OBJ-1	Legal Compliance	We are committed to ensuring risks are identified and appropriate arrangements are in place.	Clarify and strengthen governance arrangements.	Review, update and obtain approval of Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy in accordance with the review timetable.	Review, update and obtain approval of Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy in accordance with the review timetable.	An initial review has been undertaken and will be completed during 2023/24.
					Programme for the design and development of Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing arrangements	Currently on-going
			Examine, monitor, and maintain statutory and mandatory health and safety compliance across premises, property, and activities.	Provide and review programmes and evidence of monitoring of actions to completion.	Maintain and deliver audit programme and provide feedback. Programme to include - Premises (Incl. schools), vehicles, plant and equipment, activities / operations.	Comprehensive Programme was suspended during Covid-19 and has slowly been re-started in line with the lifting of Government restriction. Review and development of the auditing model and generation of a new audit plan. Programme includes - Premises (Incl. schools), vehicles, plant and equipment, activities / operations.
					Support investigations where there is non-compliance and share lessons learnt.	Investigations have been undertaken where issues or incidents have occurred.
OBJ-2	Leadership and Management	Safety, health, and wellbeing is incorporated in every leader's role, planning and	Promote and develop safety, health, and wellbeing personal leadership skills across service areas.	Annual report to be accepted by the Corporate Health and Safety Committee and provided to Cabinet on health and safety performance across the Council.	Design of and seek approval of a health and safety report to Cabinet to ensure that members can discharge their strategic responsibilities for health and safety including building management.	Completed.

Ref.	HSG 65	Policy (Pledge)	Council Objectives	Objective Key Performance Indicators (All Council)	Corp H&S Team OBJ KPIs Actions	Progress 2022/23
Page 97		decision making.			Annual Committee programme.	Communication via corporate and sub-committee annual programmes, with a standard core agenda and formal reports and papers.
					Ensure that Corporate Health and Safety Committee occurs on a quarterly basis to ensure that key activity is undertaken.	Completed
					Ensure that Health, Safety and Wellbeing Sub-Committees are held on a six-monthly basis.	Completed
					Ensure there is a standard core agenda used for all internal health and safety committees within Sefton.	Completed
					Ensure that there are formal reports provided to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee on a regular basis.	Completed
					Support the continued evolution of a positive health, safety a wellbeing culture across Sefton Council.	Engage with programmes to improve perceptions of risk and behaviours.
			Develop and embed health and safety performance indicators (KPIs) across service areas, monitoring the	Through Departmental Management Team (DMT) meetings, monitor health and safety performance and update the improvement plan for the service areas. Provide updates at health and	Support DMTs to deliver KPIs and update improvement plans.	Work has started on the initiative.
					Attend at least one DMT for each service area to appreciate challenges and to provide	This is an ongoing action

Ref.	HSG 65	Policy (Pledge)	Council Objectives	Objective Key Performance Indicators (All Council)	Corp H&S Team OBJ KPIs Actions	Progress 2022/23
			effectiveness of the policies, standards, and control measures.	safety committees, sharing good practice and lessons learnt.	support leadership teams.	
OBJ-3	Risk Profiling	A safe place of work and safe ways of working are established - Risks to the physical and emotional health, safety and wellbeing of staff and others who may be affected are identified and appropriate arrangements are in place.	Embed suitable and sufficient risk assessments across the Council departments.	Promote the implementation of effective preventive and protective measures and engage in a programme of monitoring and review.	Develop and communicate arrangements (policies and guidance) for the implementation of effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures that come from risk assessment.	There is currently sufficient guidance for managers to complete risk assessments. The monitoring of controls is identified through the audit and investigation of incidents.
				Ensure the availability of documented risk assessments and share findings with staff.	Undertake sampling review of risk assessments completed by Managers to confirm availability, suitability, and sufficiency.	Sampled review of risk assessments to confirm availability, suitability, and sufficiency.
			Commit to occupational health monitoring, where applicable, to maintain and promote good health.	Identify and refer staff where occupational health monitoring is a statutory requirement, in response to health and wellbeing need and support initiatives to promote good health and safety behaviours.	Inform where there are statutory and mandatory requirements for occupational health (physical and emotional) monitoring, reasonable adjustments and Council led initiatives / interventions. Signpost where staff may experience health issues - whilst at work, arising from work activities or impacting (i.e., not work related) on work activities.	Work is ongoing on this area.
			Identify local service area risks and the required emergency response.	Provide where required, communicate, and engage with testing of emergency arrangements (plans).	Develop, review and test emergency arrangements across Council settings.	The work is currently ongoing
			Maintain and evaluate accident and incident reports.	Promote reporting of all accidents, incidents and near misses (adverse events), supporting proportionate investigation of these adverse events and implementation of corrective actions to prevent reoccurrence.	Provide, support, and monitor robust accident, incident and near miss (adverse events) reporting, investigation and corrective action plans.	Completed and ongoing

Ref.	HSG 65	Policy (Pledge)	Council Objectives	Objective Key Performance Indicators (All Council)	Corp H&S Team OBJ KPIs Actions	Progress 2022/23
Page 99				Review accidents, incidents, and work-related health conditions, including those reported under RIDDOR.	Provide data, updates, trend analysis for all reports and highlight RIDDOR reporting causes and corrective actions within service areas.	Completed and on-going
				Share 'lessons learnt' from findings of investigations reports, and service area vulnerabilities identified during monitoring, audit, and review processes (SLB, DMT, etc)	Support the communication of data, trend analysis and lessons learnt through H&S committees, staff forums and Risk and Audit reports.	Provision of updates / briefings in a variety of mediums to support communication. In addition, presentations to departmental committees to support sharing of information, trends, legal and policy updates, and feedback and on-going
	Staff Engagement	We actively engage with all staff and anyone who works at or with Sefton Council on health, safety, and wellbeing.	Support effective communication streams to ensure staff, agency workers and contractors are consulted (either directly or through their representatives) on issues relating to their health and safety.	Provide informal (discussion, feedback) and formal opportunities (staff performance reviews, 1to1s, agenda item at every team meeting, DMT, SLB).	Audit meetings to ensure effective engagement is in place.	Informal feedback is provided in a number of ways to Managers and Assistant Directors
				Appropriate levels and forms of information, instruction, supervision, and training are provided to enable staff to work in a safe and healthy manner.	Audit arrangements ensure effective information, instruction, supervision, and training is in place. Provide quarterly updates / briefings in a variety of mediums to support communication. Provide presentations to departmental committees to support sharing of information, trends, legal and policy updates, and feedback.	Audit programme has started to be undertaken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of data, updates, trend analysis for all reports and highlight RIDDOR reporting causes and corrective actions within service areas. • Supporting the communication of data, trend analysis and lessons learnt through H&S

Ref.	HSG 65	Policy (Pledge)	Council Objectives	Objective Key Performance Indicators (All Council)	Corp H&S Team OBJ KPIs Actions	Progress 2022/23
OBJ-5	Competent Workforce	Training and instruction are provided to anyone working at Sefton Council to ensure they understand the health and safety risks and that they can carry out their tasks safely.	Improve the health and safety competence of all Council staff by targeting effective health and safety training across the Council.	Promote collaborative working and staff engagement with health, safety and wellbeing campaigns and initiatives.	Working collaboratively with other service areas and departments, deliver a programme of staff engagement campaigns, working to maintain and improve the health, safety and wellbeing of staff.	committees, staff forums and Risk and Audit reports We have started the initiatives
				Embed a programme of training from induction to specialist hazard management training into service areas, for new starters, or where staff change roles. This is to include changes in any health and safety responsibilities.	Develop the health, safety, and wellbeing aspects of the training needs analysis. Provide progress reports to the Health and Safety Committees and forums.	This piece of work has been started. Completed.
				Key staff / 'responsible persons' undertake appropriate training to enable them to carry out their role.	Identify and communicate training requirements, including frequency of refresher training and monitor for completion.	This is currently being developed.

Agenda Item 9

Report to:	Cabinet Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) Council	Date of Meeting:	4 January 2024 9 January 2024 18 th January 2024
Subject:	Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base for 2024/25 and Review of Council Tax Premiums for Long-Term Empty Properties		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide details of the review of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the current year 2023/24. It also proposes that there is a change made to the scheme with effect from 1st April 2024 for working-age households, in employment, in receipt of Universal Credit.

In addition, the report proposes to introduce new discretionary council tax premiums on 'dwellings left empty for 1 year or more' from 1 April 2024 and on 'dwellings occupied periodically' (second homes) from 1 April 2025.

A summary is provided of the feedback received on recent consultations undertaken on changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and on the proposals to introduce new discretionary council tax premiums along with the associated equality impact assessments.

Finally, the report provides an updated Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish area for 2024/25.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet

Agenda Item 9

1. Note the content of the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the current year, 2023/24.
2. Note the outcome of the public consultation exercise and recommend to Council that a change is made to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working-age households, in employment, also in receipt of Universal Credit with effect from 1st April 2024.
3. Recommend that Council approves the introduction of a 100% council tax premium on dwellings left empty for 1 year or more from 1 April 2024
4. Recommend that Council approves the introduction of a 100% council tax premium on dwellings occupied periodically from 1 April 2025
5. Recommend that Council approves the relevant Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish Area for 2024/25 as set out in Annex A.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services):

That the report be noted.

Council

1. Note the content of the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the current year, 2023/24.
2. Note the outcome of a public consultation exercise and approve a change to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working-age households, in employment and in receipt of Universal Credit with effect from 1st April 2024.
3. Approve the introduction of a 100% council tax premium on dwellings left empty for 1 year or more from 1 April 2024.
4. Approve the introduction of a 100% council tax premium on dwellings occupied periodically from 1 April 2025.
5. Approve the relevant Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish Area for 2024/25 as set out in Annex A of the report.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Each financial year, the Council must consider whether to revise or replace its local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council must approve and adopt the 2024/25 Council Tax Reduction Scheme by 11 March 2024, as set out in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2017.

The report provides an update on key aspects of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the current year, and also provides details of a public consultation exercise that has recently been undertaken to seek views on making a change to the scheme affecting working-age households, in employment, also in receipt of Universal Credit. After consideration of the factors outlined later in the report it is proposed that the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 is changed for working-age households, in employment, in receipt of Universal Credit.

Council Tax Base

In accordance with Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended, the Council is required to set a tax base for both Sefton Council and for each Parish Area for 2024/25 before 31st January 2024.

Introducing a premium on dwellings left empty for 1 year or more

The Council already applies a 100% premium on properties left empty for 2 years or more. Extending this premium to dwellings left empty for 1 year or more would encourage owners of these homes to bring them back into use. Any additional income raised from the premium will help support the provision of Council services.

Introducing a premium on dwellings that are occupied periodically

Introducing a premium on dwellings that are occupied periodically (second homes) would encourage owners of these homes to make these available for sale or rent which would increase the amount of housing available to local residents. Any additional income raised from the premium will help support the provision of Council services.

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

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Council may decide to leave the Council Tax Reduction Scheme unchanged for 2024/25. Without a change to the scheme, households in employment moving from legacy state-benefits to Universal Credit are likely to face frequent changes to their entitlement, with the knock-on effect being frequently changing Council Tax bills and payment-plans, as well as an expected additional administrative burden for the Council.

Introducing a premium on dwellings left empty for 1 year or more

The Council could choose not to introduce the premium; however, this would not provide any additional incentive for owners of these long-term empty homes to bring them back into use. Alternatively, the Council could choose to introduce a lower premium percentage (25%, 50%, or 75%), however, this would provide a lower level of incentive and reduce the amount of additional council tax income available to support local services.

Introducing a premium on dwellings that are occupied periodically

The Council could choose not to introduce the premium; however, this would not provide any additional incentive for owners of these properties to make them available for occupation by local residents. Alternatively, the Council could choose to introduce a

Agenda Item 9

lower premium percentage (25%, 50%, or 75%), however, this would provide a lower level of incentive and reduce the amount of additional council tax income available to support local services.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25

It is difficult to forecast the impact of the proposal to change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, however, it is not anticipated to result in a material increase in the cost of discounts and should reduce the cost of administration.

Introducing a premium on dwellings left empty for 1 year or more

Extending the long-term empty homes premium of 100% to properties that have been empty for one year or more from 1 April 2024 could increase total Council Tax income by approximately £500,000 in 2024/25 (Sefton's share £420,000).

Introducing a premium on dwellings that are occupied periodically

Introducing a 100% premium on second homes from 1 April 2025 could increase Council Tax income by approximately £383,000 in 2025/26 (Sefton's share £320,000).

Council Tax Base

Changes to the council tax base will have an impact on the level of Council Tax income transferred from the Collection Fund to the Council's General Fund in 2024/25. It will also impact on the amounts due to the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Fire and Rescue Service, and the Combined Authority.

The following table shows the estimated increase in council tax income as a result of changes to the tax base between 2023/24 and 2024/25, based on the 2023/24 Council Tax Band D charge:

Council Tax Income	Sefton Council £ million	Police & Crime £ million	Fire & Rescue £ million	Combined Authority £ million
Option A	1.054	0.143	0.050	0.011
Option B	1.474	0.200	0.070	0.015

Option A assumes no change in empty homes premiums in 2024/25.

Option B assumes that an empty homes premium of 100% will be charged on dwellings left empty for 1 year or more in 2024/25.

(B) Capital Costs

No capital costs applicable.

Implications of the Proposals:

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

Changes to both the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax premiums will continue to be administered from existing resources.

Legal Implications:

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

By Section 5 of Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012) for each financial year each billing authority must:

- a. Consider whether to revise its Council Tax Reduction Scheme or to replace it with another scheme.
- b. Make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement is to have effect.
- c. If any revision to a scheme, or any replacement scheme, has the effect of reducing or removing a reduction to which any class of person is entitled, the revision or replacement must include such transitional provision relating to that reduction or removal as the authority thinks fit.
- d. Before revising its scheme or making a replacement scheme, an authority must:
 - i. Consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it.
 - ii. Publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
 - iii. Consult other such persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

Council Tax Premiums

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, introduced new regulations that allow billing authorities to charge a premium of up to 100% on homes that have been empty for one year or more from 1 April 2024, as well as a premium of up to 100% on dwellings that are occupied periodically (second homes) from 1 April 2025. The later date for second homes is because the Act requires authorities to provide 12 months-notice to second homes prior to implementation. These are discretionary powers, and it is up to local authorities to decide what level of premium (if any) is appropriate in their area.

Equality Implications: The equality implications have been identified and mitigated. Equality Impact Assessments are provided at Annexes B and C.

Impact on Children and Young People: Indirectly - in that the changes proposed to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme are intended to provide working-age households/families in employment, also in receipt of Universal Credit, with stability when managing household finances and budgeting for Council Tax payments.

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will

Have a positive impact	N/A
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Agenda Item 9

Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	N/A
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The Council Reduction Scheme proposed for 2024/25 will help to maintain fairness, consistency and an element of stability when managing household finances. The scheme provides support to those experiencing financial hardship as well as supporting those making the transition to Universal Credit.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: the introduction of discretionary Council Tax premiums for empty properties is intended to encourage owners to bring properties back in to use and help to ease housing supply pressures, reduce negative impacts such as anti-social behaviour, reductions in rental & market values on surrounding properties, desirability of an area, and generate revenue that will be used to support essential council services.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable
Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Provide support to those in financial hardship as well as supporting people into work.
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener: Not applicable

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7455/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5555/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel approved proposals to undertake two consultations at its meeting on 8th September 2023 as follows:-

- 1) Proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1st April 2024 for working-age households in employment also in receipt of Universal Credit. This consultation was open for the period 11th September – 13th October 2023, and

- 2) Proposals to introduce new premiums in line with new discretionary powers introduced in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, commenced on 11th September 2023 and ended on 27th October 2023.

In addition, details of the review of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the proposed scheme for 2024/25, the Council Tax Base and the proposed introductions of Council Tax premiums are provided to the precepting bodies, i.e., the Police and Crime Commissioner, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet recommendation to Council and approval by Council on 18th January 2024.

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Appendices:

Annex A: Council Tax Base Report 2024/25

Annex B: Proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25, including consultation summary and equalities impact assessment.

Annex C: Proposed introduction of new council tax premiums on ‘dwellings left empty for 1 year or more’ and on ‘dwellings occupied periodically’, including consultation summary and equalities impact assessment.

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

1.1 Introduction/Background

1.2 Local Council Tax Reduction replaced Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 1st April 2013. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is a discount awarded to households on a low income to help towards Council Tax payments. The amount awarded is based on a person’s household and income. The local scheme rules only apply to working-age Council Taxpayers. Pensioners are protected by legislation and must be provided with the level of Council Tax support specified by the Government.

1.3 The grant transferred to the Council, Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire Service in 2013/14, £24.2M; to fund the local scheme was £3M lower than had previously been provided to fund CTB in 2012/13. The Council therefore had to

Agenda Item 9

introduce changes to the national default Council Tax Support Scheme to ensure that the local scheme was cost neutral. As the Government had specified the level of support that had to be provided to pensioners, the saving requirement had to be met by reducing the level of support available to working age claimants and through changes to Council Tax empty property discounts.

1.4 The Council is required, by law, to review the Scheme each year irrespective of whether it is being amended. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 must be agreed by Council by 11th March 2024.

2. Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24

2.1 To satisfy the requirement to review the Scheme, the following areas have been evaluated:

- Claimant caseload
- Scheme expenditure
- Impact on most vulnerable claimants
- Council Tax collection, including Attachment of Benefits
- Review of the Council's principles for the Scheme
- Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund.

2.2 Claimant Caseload

The table below shows the caseload data at 30th September 2023 compared to caseload data at the end of each year since the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was introduced in 2013/14:

Year	Date	Pensioners	Working Age	Total	Change
2013/14	03.04.14	14,655	16,025	30,680	n/a
2014/15	01.04.15	13,925	15,349	29,274	-1,406
2015/16	31.03.16	13,206	14,886	28,092	-1,182
2016/17	31.03.17	12,541	14,524	27,065	-1,027
2017/18	31.03.18	11,970	14,005	25,975	-1,090
2018/19	31.03.19	11,404	14,160	25,564	-411
2019/20	31.03.20	10,871	14,326	25,197	-367
2020/21	31.03.21	10,491	15,519	26,010	+813
2021/22	31.03.22	10,243	14,917	25,160	-850
2022/23	31.03.23	10,053	14,712	24,765	-395
2023/24	30.09.23	9,970	14,591	24,561	-204

The working age caseload can be split further:

Year	Date	Employed	Other	Total	Change
2013/14	03.04.14	2,874	13,151	16,025	n/a
2014/15	01.04.15	2,748	12,601	15,349	-676
2015/16	31.03.16	2,504	12,382	14,886	-463
2016/17	31.03.17	2,193	12,331	14,524	-362

Agenda Item 9

2017/18	31.03.18	1,900	12,105	14,005	-519
2018/19	31.03.19	1,597	12,563	14,160	+155
2019/20	31.03.20	1,268	13,058	14,326	+166
2020/21	31.03.21	1,070	14,449	15,519	+1,193
2021/22	31.03.22	1,126	13,791	14,917	-602
2022/23	31.03.23	1,081	13,631	14,712	-205
2023/24	30.09.23	1,050	13,541	14,591	-121

2.3 Pensioner Claimants: Since the initial implementation of the scheme in 2013/14 the number of Pensioner Claimants has declined in every year. Pensioner claimant numbers have continued to fall in 2023/24.

2.4 Working Age Claimants: Claimant numbers increased significantly in 2020/21 as a result of the economic impact of Covid-19. Claimant numbers reduced in 2021/22 and 2022/23 and have continued to reduce in 2023/24. However, the current economic climate is uncertain, and we could see this trend reverse.

2.5 Scheme Expenditure

The following table shows the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Expenditure reported in the Revenue Outturn Return compared to the mid-year estimate for 2022/23:

Year	Source	Pensioners £000	Working Age £000	Total £000	Change £000
2013/14	RO Return	13,305	9,907	23,212	n/a
2014/15	RO Return	12,152	10,364	22,516	-696
2015/16	RO Return	11,895	9,760	21,655	-861
2016/17	RO Return	11,540	10,559	22,099	+444
2017/18	RO Return	11,378	10,948	22,326	+227
2018/19	RO Return	11,695	11,069	22,764	+438
2019/20	RO Return	11,790	11,784	23,574	+810
2020/21	RO Return	11,898	13,414	25,312	+1,738
2021/22	RO Return	12,020	13,823	25,843	+531
2022/23	RO Return	12,037	13,585	25,622	-221
2023/24	30.09.23	12,527	14,320	26,847	+1,225

Note:

2023/24 Estimate: The costs recorded at 30 September 2023 have been split based on the Pensioner & Working Age weekly costs recorded on the monthly NEC (Northgate) CTR304 reports.

2.6 Council Tax Collection

The table below shows the amount of Council Tax billed and collected during 2022/23:

Recorded at 31 March 2023	Liability Raised	Received In Year	Collection Rate
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Agenda Item 9

	£000	£000	%
CTRS Cases - Working Age	4,794	3,416	71.3
CTRS Cases - Pensioner Age	1,560	1,857	119.0
Other Council Tax Payers	180,618	172,345	95.4
Total (in-year collection)	186,972	177,618	95.0

The in-year collection rate reduced from 97.2 % in 2012/13 under the council tax benefit system to 96.2% in 2013/14 when council tax support was localised. The in-year collection rate subsequently reduced to 95.0% in 2020/21 and 94.8% in 2021/22 as a result of the impact of Covid-19. Sefton's in-year collection rate remains higher than the average for Metropolitan Districts which was 93.7% in 2022/23.

Current Year Council Tax Collection: 2023/24

As at 31st October 2023, the in-year Council Tax collection figure was 62.24% compared to 62.99% in 2022/23. It should be noted that the collection figure for 2022/23 was inflated due to £150.00 payments made to households as part of the Government's Council Tax Energy payments scheme. Figures for 2021/22 are therefore shown below for more representative comparison.

31/10/23	62.24%
31/10/22	62.99%
31/10/21	62.91%

2.7 Impact on the most vulnerable claimants

The local Council Tax Reduction Scheme continues to address the Council's priorities to minimise the impact on the most vulnerable, by seeking to strike a balance between dealing with Council priorities whilst supporting those experiencing financial challenges. The Council, having recognised the impact on communities, has introduced a range of mitigating actions, including:

- Administration of the Government's Council Tax Support Fund for 2023/24, whereby a payment of £25.00 was made to Council Tax households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction where there was still a remaining payment liability.
- Provision of an Exceptional Hardship Fund (see Section 2.10 below)
- Easing the transition for households claiming Universal Credit by treating notifications received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as a claim for local Council Tax Reduction, thus removing the need for those in receipt of Universal Credit to have to make a separate claim for support towards their Council Tax.
- Continuing to disregard the whole of a war pension as part of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, including War Disablement Pensions, War Widows Pensions, and any corresponding pensions payable to a widower or surviving civil partner. For those claimants also in receipt of Housing Benefit, the Council also fully disregards War Disablement Pension and War Widow's Pension; with the cost of

the first £10 disregard met by the Government as part of the Housing Benefit subsidy claim and the remainder of costs covered by the Council.

- Offering 12-month (rather than 10-month) instalment payments to Council Tax payers and taking a sensitive approach to enforcement action to consider the potential vulnerability of Council Tax Reduction claimants. Before cases are referred to Enforcement Agents a vetting stage has been introduced and cases are dealt with under a separate debt recovery process to minimise potential increases in debt.
- In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the procedures for negotiating payments have been reviewed and updated to include feedback from Sefton Citizen's Advice. In addition, there is a co-ordinated working relationship between the Council's contracted Enforcement Agents and Citizens Advice to support people in debt. Citizens Advice Sefton has direct lines of communication with the Enforcement Agents and can arrange for recovery action to be placed on hold whilst discussing and agreeing affordable payment arrangements.
- The Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) which started on 04th May 2021 gives someone with debt problems the right to legal protections from recovery activity. Standard breathing space lasts for 60-days and can be extended if the customer is receiving mental health crisis treatment. This enables a debt advice provider time to arrange an appropriate debt solution. During the period 1st November 2022 – 31st October 2023, the Council has received notification of 150 customers in Breathing Space of which 116 have now expired. Over 95% of these applications were in respect of Council Tax debt only.

2.8 Attachment of Benefits

Since the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in April 2013 the number of working age claimants falling into arrears continues to grow. One recovery option open to the Council for benefit claimants is to apply for an Attachment of Benefit (AOB) via the courts. Under this option, the following deductions from benefits may be applied:-

- For claimants of Job Seeker's Allowance/Income Support/Employment Support Allowance/Pension Credit the weekly deduction is £4.25.
- For single claimants under 21 on Universal Credit, the deduction is £16.75 per 4 weeks, rising to £18.44 per 4 weeks for those aged over 21.
- For couples over 21 on Universal Credit, the deduction is £28.94 per 4 weeks.
- An AOB cannot be applied without first having taken the debtor to court to obtain a Liability Order. Due to the need to follow the correct legislative timeline for obtaining a Liability Order, payment by AOB cannot commence until part-way through the year. Typically for a bill issued in March the first payments would not be made by the DWP until August of the same year.
- A significant number of customers have arrears for more than one financial year. As only one AOB order may be deducted at a time there has been a significant increase in the number of pending cases. These cases are effectively stacked up until an earlier order is paid. No recovery action may be taken in the interim and the value of such cases is increasing year on year.

Agenda Item 9

- Many new claimants for local Council Tax Reduction have already accrued debts before an AOB can be considered.
- The following table shows the amount of debt being recovered by AOB, and the amount of debt still waiting recovery by AOB as at 31st October 2023: -

	31.10.20	31.10.21	31.10.22	31.10.23
AOB in payment	£1,011,275	£1,170,127	£1,719,777	£2,012,354
Number of cases	4,528	5,002	7,524	7,715
AOB Pending	£4,425,238	£4,868,797	£5,897,664	£7,441,760
Number of cases	18,076	17,101	20,008	22,649

2.9 Review of Scheme Principles

The local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is based on five principles and the review is summarised below:

Principle	CTRS working for non-pensioner claimants?
The Council will continue to support work incentives	Yes – The Council continues to operate a system which disregards certain amounts of money from customers earnings through employment and self-employment when calculating entitlement, and to support those working households making the transition from legacy state-benefits to Universal Credit.
The Council will continue to recognise the additional needs of our most vulnerable residents.	Yes – The Council continues to make additional allowances and give additional support to those receiving certain DWP sickness benefits, disability benefits and benefits for Carers when calculating entitlement. Additionally, the Council continues to disregard certain disability benefits as income when calculating entitlement Procedures are regularly reviewed for the collection of non- payment of Council Tax to ensure non-disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable households. Also budgeting support and advice is made available to all claimants. The Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund is

	available to those in the greatest financial need with fair and transparent criteria for awards.
The Council will continue to recognise the additional needs of families with children	<p>Yes – Child Benefit and Child Maintenance payments are not considered as income when calculating entitlement to CTRS.</p> <p>Additional allowances are given when calculating entitlement for where there is a disabled child in the family.</p> <p>The CTRS takes childcare costs into account for low income working families</p> <p>The Council continues to include the Family Premium when calculating the Council Tax Reduction. This has been removed for all new Housing Benefit claims from 2016. The Council has also chosen not to mirror the Housing Benefit scheme which restricts the amount of support given to families with more than two children within its CTRS:</p>
The Council supports households staying together to make better use of housing in Sefton and reduce homelessness.	Yes - The amount of Council Tax Reduction taken away from a customer when other adults live in the household (known as a non-dependant deduction), was reduced in 2013 and remains at those lower levels.
The Council will continue to have due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant	Yes – War Disablement and War Widows pensions in calculating CTRS, including any Armed Forces compensation in accordance with the covenant is disregarded. This also includes the service attributable element of the armed forces pension could also be disregarded as income when calculating entitlement.

2.10 Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)

The EHF aims to help vulnerable working age people experiencing financial hardship by reducing their Council Tax bill. Each year, EHF of approximately £20,000 is used to fund council tax discounts for care leavers.

The fund is administrated within an agreed policy, the Discretionary Reduction in liability policy, approved by Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

The total fund for 2023/24 is £360,483, this includes the £170,000 annual EHF and agreed carry over from 2022/23. As at 01/11/23, £160,592 has been awarded, leaving £199,891 available for the remainder of the year.

2.11 Summary of local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2023/24

Agenda Item 9

The forecast cost of the scheme has increased by £1.225m (4.8%) in 2023/24 to £26.847m (at 30/09/23). This is largely due to an average council tax increase of 5.11% being offset by a small reduction in claimants.

3. Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Consultation

3.1 A public consultation was carried out during the period 11th September – 13th October 2023 to seek feedback on a proposed change to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from 1st April 2024 affecting working-age households in employment and receiving Universal Credit.

3.2 Working age households in receipt of Universal Credit, which is administered by the DWP, must still claim Council Tax Reduction from their local council. Data-sharing arrangements in place mean that the DWP provide details of Universal Credit entitlement to local authorities to support the administration of Council Tax Reduction. In principle, this arrangement is beneficial as local authorities receive timely notifications of Universal Credit changes but in reality, the majority of changes are small and insignificant meaning that a household can receive multiple revised Council Tax bills and differing amounts to pay towards their Council Tax during the course of the year, e.g., if a claimant earns a different amount each month their Universal Credit will automatically adjust to reflect the amount they earn during that month, triggering a typically minimal change to Council Tax Reduction.

3.3 The Council's Benefits service, responsible for administering Council Tax Reduction, is already dealing with a high volume of work resultant from small, insignificant changes to Universal Credit. As more households move to Universal Credit from legacy DWP-benefits the workload, and administrative demands, will further increase.

3.4 It is proposed to make an administrative change to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from 1st April 2024 for working age households, in employment, in receipt of Universal Credit whereby monthly notifications of small changes in Universal Credit received from the DWP, triggered by a small change in someone's earnings (e.g., they have worked a few hours extra or overtime or less) are not actioned.

3.5 Changes, or representations, notified to the Council by the householder themselves will continue to be accepted and processed as they are currently. Processes will also remain in place to identify and deal with significant changes in Universal Credit entitlement, e.g.,

- Someone stops working.
- Universal Credit payments stop.
- Someone changes jobs or get a second job.
- Someone moves house, or someone joins or leaves a household.

3.6 The proposal is intended to make the level of Council Tax Reduction more stable, making budgeting easier and reduce unnecessary administration and associated costs.

3.7 Details of the consultation are found at Annex B. In summary, 150 responses were received, with 90% of respondents agreeing with the proposal.

4. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Equality Impact Assessment

Department for Communities and Local Government issued a report in February 2014 reminding local authorities of their key duties when deciding on local Council Tax Reduction Schemes:

- Public Sector Equality Duty (The Equality Act 2010)
- Duty to mitigate the effects of child poverty (The Child Poverty Act 2010)
- The Armed Forces Covenant
- Duty to prevent Homelessness (The Housing Act 1996)

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the proposed change for 2024/25, and is available at Annex B. The assessment found that there are no disproportionate impacts; mitigating actions remain effective and valid continuing to support working families and vulnerable residents as follows:-

- The Council continues to provide a discretionary Exceptional Hardship Fund to assist financially vulnerable working age households and families as described in paragraph 2.10 above.
- Procedures and processes for collection of non-payment of Council Tax as set out at paragraph 2.7 above help to ensure that there is no disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable households.
- The Council continues to support the five principles set out for the Scheme as can be seen at the table at paragraph 2.9 above.
- Legislation remains in place to protect low-income pensioners from any reduction in support brought about by the introduction of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

5. Conclusion – Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

As a result of the work undertaken, it is proposed that the Council's local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 will change for working age households in employment in receipt of Universal Credit as described above. The Scheme continues to address the Council's focus to minimise the impact on the most vulnerable households by striking a balance between collecting Council Tax whilst supporting those experiencing financial challenges.

In addition, there would be no additional revenue implications because of a decision to retain the current scheme, with the cost of the current Scheme discounts reflected in the council tax base.

6.0 New Council Tax Premiums

6.1 Background

Agenda Item 9

Since 1st April 2013, Councils have been able to charge a Council Tax premium on unfurnished properties that have been left empty for more than two-years as a means of incentivising owners of these properties to bring them back into use.

The premium cannot be applied to homes that are empty due to the occupant living in armed forces accommodation for job-related purposes, or to annexes being used as part of a main property. Furthermore, the Council Tax system provides statutory exemptions for properties left empty for a specific purpose – for example, when a person goes into care. However, there is no statutory exemption from the premium for properties that are genuinely on the market for sale or letting. Councils also have powers to apply discretionary discounts in cases where homes are empty due to special circumstances – for example, financial hardship, fire or flooding.

The premium may be applied when a property has been empty for two years, irrespective of how long its current owner has owned it. Therefore, it is possible for an individual to buy a property which has already been empty for two years and be liable for the premium immediately. This scenario may occur if, for instance, the individual does not occupy the property immediately because they wish to extend or renovate the property. If the long-term empty property is occupied for a period of 6 weeks or less it is regarded as not having been occupied for the purposes of the two-year period. Occupancy of a long-term empty property for more than 6 weeks “resets the clock” for this purpose.

6.2 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, introduced new regulations that allow billing authorities to charge a premium of up to 100% on homes that have been empty for one year or more from 1 April 2024, as well as a premium of up to 100% on dwellings that are occupied periodically (second homes) from 1 April 2025. The later date for second homes is because the Act requires authorities to provide 12 months-notice to second homes prior to implementation. These are discretionary powers, and it is up to local authorities to decide what level of premium (if any) is appropriate in their area.

6.3 Long-Term Empty Homes

Across the borough there are currently around 2,100 homes that have been empty for six months or longer (excluding those which are exempt from paying Council Tax); of these, nearly 1,400 have been empty for one year or more. In a time when demand for housing is increasing this is a significant wasted resource.

On 31 October 2023, there were 815 long-term empty dwellings paying a premium of at least 100%. Applying the premium on properties that have been empty for one year, rather than two, would mean that a further 570 properties would have to pay a 100% premium unless the owners took action to bring those properties back into use.

As well as charging the empty homes premium, there are other Council initiatives to help bring empty homes back into use, this includes offering advice to owners through sending regular letters and the Council’s property accreditation scheme that helps empty homeowners find tenants for their property. The Council’s Housing Standards Team will also work with owners to bring their properties back into use. However, in some cases enforcement action is required when the property is causing a statutory nuisance and the owner is uncooperative or untraceable.

6.3 Dwellings that are occupied periodically (second homes)

On 3 October 2023, there were more than 405 properties liable for Council Tax in the borough registered as second homes. Such properties are likely to be empty for long periods of the year and, like other empty homes, could be viewed as a wasted resource in a time of high demand for housing.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduces new regulation that allows councils in England to charge a premium of up to 100 per cent on second homes. The legislation requires that a billing authority's first determination under this section must be made at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates. This is required to give second homeowners 12 months' notice of the change. As a result of this clause the earliest date the premium could be applied is 1 April 2025.

6.4 Exceptions

In July 2023, the Government published a consultation which set out a number of exceptions that billing authorities would need to apply when charging a premium under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

These exceptions included in the consultation are highlighted below:

<u>Exception</u>	<u>Applies to</u>
1. Properties Undergoing Probate	Both
2. Properties being actively marketed for sale or let	Both
3. Empty properties undergoing major repairs	long-term empty homes
4. Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling	second homes
5. Job-related dwellings	second homes
6. Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings	second homes
7. Seasonal homes	second homes

It was proposed that exception 1 should apply for a maximum of 12 months and that exceptions 2 and 3 apply for a maximum of 6 months. The exceptions 4, 5, 6, and 7 are not time limited. These exceptions would provide council taxpayers time to sell or let their properties without having to pay the premium. The Government has not yet published the outcome of the consultation.

6.5 Budget Pressures

Due to rising costs as a result of inflation, the energy crisis, and rising demand for services such as caring for vulnerable adults and children, the Council needs to make difficult decisions about increasing income and/or amending service provision. The changes to Council Tax premiums outlined above would raise additional Council Tax income and therefore help the Council to balance its budget in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

6.6 Proposed Change from 1 April 2024

Agenda Item 9

It is proposed that the Council introduce a 100% premium charge on 'properties that have been left empty for 1 years or more' (rather than the current 2 years) in-line with the maximum allowable under the new legislation from 1 April 2024.

The aim of this increase would be to incentivise owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use. This will increase the stock of available housing in the borough, which would assist in achieving the aims of the local development plan. It will also increase the amount of Council Tax income raised from those that continue to leave their properties empty.

This would give the following forecast increase in Council Tax income in 2024/25:

	2023/24 Band D Charge £	Additional Band D Equivalents	2024/25 Additional Income £ million
Sefton Council	1,853.90	226.9	0.420
Police & Crime Commissioner	251.97	226.9	0.057
Fire & Rescue Authority	88.61	226.9	0.020
Combined Authority	19.00	226.9	0.004
Total	2,213.48	226.9	0.500

The forecast assumes a 25% reduction in the number of homes that have been empty for 1 years or more is achieved in 2024/25 and that 25% would be exempt from the premium as a result of Government imposed exceptions. The actual number of properties brought back into use or subject to exceptions could be higher or lower than forecast and will be reflected in future tax base calculations.

6.7 Proposed Change from 1 April 2025

It is proposed that the Council introduce a 100% premium charge on 'dwellings that are occupied periodically' in-line with the maximum allowable under the new legislation from 1 April 2025.

The aim of this increase would be to further incentivise owners of second homes to make these available for sale or let. This will increase the stock of available housing in the borough, which would assist in achieving the aims of the local development plan. It will also increase the amount of Council Tax income raised from those that continue to leave their properties empty.

This would give the following increase in Council Tax income in 2025/26:

	2023/24 Band D Charge £	Additional Band D Equivalents	2024/25 Additional Income £ million
Sefton Council	1,853.90	173.0	0.320
Police & Crime Commissioner	251.97	173.0	0.044
Fire & Rescue Authority	88.61	173.0	0.015
Combined Authority	19.00	173.0	0.003
Total	2,213.48	173.0	0.383

The forecast assumes a 25% reduction in the number of second homes is achieved by 1 April 2025 and that 25% would be exempt from the premium as a result of Government imposed exceptions. The actual reduction in second homes or subject to exceptions could be higher or lower than forecast and will be reflected in future tax base calculations.

6.8 Consultation

The Council undertook a public consultation on proposals to introduce the new discretionary premiums in-line with powers introduced in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, which ran from 11th September to 27th October 2023.

Consultation findings and Equality Impact Assessment can be found at Annex C.

The Cabinet is recommended to consider the outcome of the consultation before deciding whether to recommend to Council the proposed premiums be introduced from 1st April 2024 (Long-Term Empty) and 1st April 2025 (Second Homes).

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SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2024/25

1. Setting the Council Tax Base

- 1.1 The council tax base is the link between the Council’s budget and the level of council tax. The tax base will be used to calculate the council tax in Sefton, once the Council’s budget has been agreed. The Council is required to calculate its own tax base as well as the tax base for each parish council within its boundary and have them approved by the 31 January 2024.
- 1.2 The calculation of the council tax base takes into account many factors such as the rate of new building and the trends in people living on their own (Sole Occupier Discounts).
- 1.3 The tax base calculation assumes a long-term collection rate of 97.25% in 2024/25, which is an increase of 0.25% from the rate assumed in 2023/24.
- 1.4 The Council currently applies a 100% premium on homes left empty for 2 years years or more. The Council has the option to apply this premium on homes left empty for 12 months or more from 1 April 2024. The implications of this option are considered elsewhere in this report. Two alternative tax base figures for Sefton Council and each parish area are presented below:

Option A: the premium continues to apply only after 2 years or more.

Option B: the premium is applied after 12 months or more.

2. Council Tax Base for Sefton Council in 2024/25

- 2.1 An analysis of the changes between the 2023/24 and the 2024/25 tax base is provided in the table below:

Tax Base for Sefton Council		Band D Equivalentents		
		2023/24	2024/25	Change
H	<u>Chargeable Dwellings</u>			
	Dwellings on the Banding List	112,838.2	113,369.8	531.6
	Exempt Dwellings	-2,235.2	-2,426.9	-191.7
	Disabled Persons Reductions	-152.8	-159.7	-6.9
		110,450.2	110,783.2	333.0
Q	Discounts	-10,468.0	-10,593.4	-125.4
E	Empty Homes Premium	898.8	890.2	-8.6
J	Adjustments	-506.0	-398.6	107.4
Z	Council Tax Support Scheme	-12,070.3	-12,019.2	51.1
B	Collection Rate Adjustment	-2,649.1	-2,438.2	210.9
	MOD Properties	8.0	8.0	0.0
	Council Tax Base (Option A)	85,663.6	86,232.0	568.4

Agenda Item 9

	Continued from previous page			
E	Premium of 100% applied on homes left empty for 12 months from 1 April 2024.	0.0	226.9	226.9
	Council Tax Base (Option B)	85,663.6	86,458.9	795.3

2.2 The main reasons for the changes in the tax base are:

Dwellings on the Banding List: The number of properties on the Banding List has increased by 558 (+0.4%) in the year.

Exempt Dwellings (A-W): The number of dwellings subject to an exemption increased by 217 (8.0%). The largest increases were in the number of Class F exemptions (dwellings left empty by deceased persons) and Class E exemptions (an unoccupied dwelling which was previously the sole or main residence of a person who has moved into a hospital or care home).

Sole Occupier & Status Discounts: The number of dwellings receiving a 25% discount due to single occupancy has increased by 361 (+0.7%).

Empty Homes Premium: The number of dwellings left empty for more than two years has reduced by 31 (-3.7%).

Adjustments: The taxbase forecast assumes a lower level of growth in discounts and exemptions over the next year.

Council Tax Support Scheme (CTRS): The number of pension age claimants has reduced over the last 12 months.

3. Council Tax Base in Parish Areas for 2023/24

3.1 There are also new tax base figures for each parish area in 2024/25. The following tables provide details of the proposed new tax base for each parish compared to 2023/24 under both alternative options:

Tax Base for Parish Areas (Option A)	Band D Equivalents			%
	2023/24	2024/25	Change	Change
Parish of Aintree Village	2,056.7	2,073.2	16.5	0.8%
Parish of Formby	9,154.4	9,200.1	45.7	0.5%
Parish of Hightown	867.6	872.5	4.9	0.6%
Parish of Ince Blundell	173.1	173.7	0.6	0.3%
Parish of Little Altcar	434.0	449.6	15.6	3.6%
Parish of Lydiate	2,109.2	2,104.9	-4.3	-0.2%
Parish of Maghull	6,878.1	6,914.3	36.2	0.5%
Parish of Melling	1,098.0	1,117.0	19.0	1.7%
Parish of Sefton	324.7	327.2	2.5	0.8%
Parish of Thornton	778.9	771.1	-7.8	-1.0%

Tax Base for Parish Areas (Option B)	Band D Equivalents			%
	2023/24	2024/25	Change	Change
Parish of Aintree Village	2,056.7	2,079.9	23.2	1.1%
Parish of Formby	9,154.4	9,222.3	67.9	0.7%
Parish of Hightown	867.6	874.0	6.4	0.7%
Parish of Ince Blundell	173.1	174.0	0.9	0.5%
Parish of Little Altcar	434.0	450.5	16.5	3.8%
Parish of Lydiate	2,109.2	2,110.2	1.0	0.0%
Parish of Maghull	6,878.1	6,920.9	42.8	0.6%
Parish of Melling	1,098.0	1,118.2	20.2	1.8%
Parish of Sefton	324.7	327.6	2.9	0.9%
Parish of Thornton	778.9	772.5	-6.4	-0.8%

- 3.2 The tax base calculation for each of the parish areas is based on the same assumptions made in the calculation for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.
- 3.3 The higher percentage increases in Little Altcar and Melling parish areas are due to housing development. The reductions in Lydiate and Thornton Parish Areas are due to growth in exemptions in those areas.

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Main Report from Citizen Space Website...*Page 2*
3. Consultation analysis...*Page 12*
4. Equality Impact Assessment...*Page 14*

Agenda Item 9

1. Introduction

The Council is proposing to make changes to the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in April 2024 for people who are working, but also receiving Universal Credit. Households that are on a low income can apply for Council Tax Reduction. This means that they pay less in Council Tax.

The Government makes the rules for how much Council Tax Reduction that low-income pensioners (people aged 66 or over) could get. Sefton Council makes the rules for how much Council Tax Reduction that working age customers (under 66 years old) on a low income could get under its local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

There are nearly 15,000 people in Sefton getting help with their Council Tax through Council Tax Reduction as they have a low income.

Sefton's local Council Tax Reduction scheme contains rules for many different circumstances that people may have, including those who are:

- Single
- Married or living together as a couple.
- Have children
- Have other people living with them
- a carer
- Living with ill health or have a disability
- Working
- Looking for work
- Claiming Universal Credit
- Claiming other benefits or tax credits.
- Have other types of income (e.g., pensions)

What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a government benefit paid to low-income people that is paid by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), designed to help people on a low income pay for:

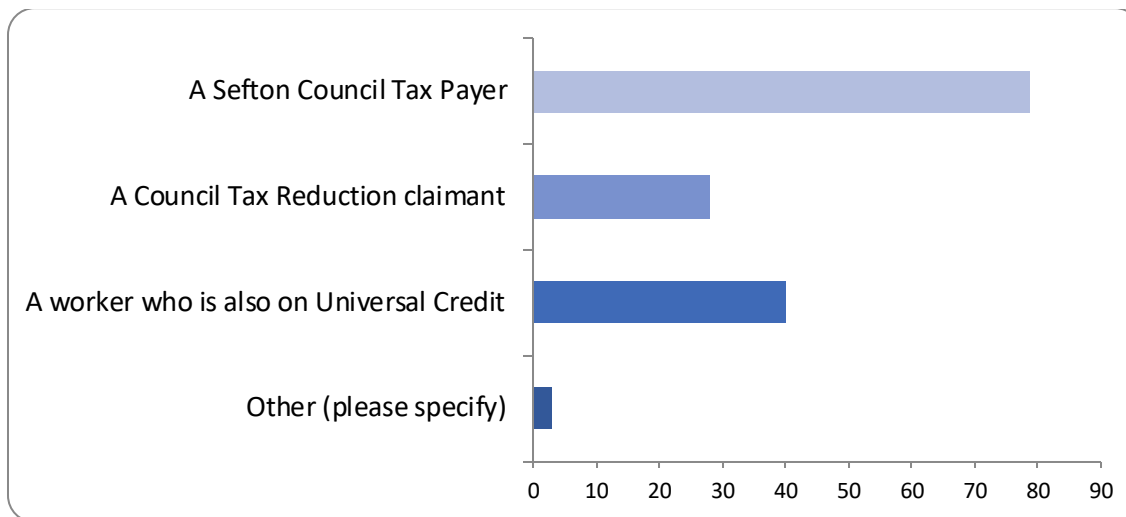
- Daily living costs for the customer and their family such as food and household bills.
- Housing costs such as rent, service charges or mortgage interest.
- Childcare costs
- Most new benefit claims for people under the age of 66 will be for Universal Credit.

Sefton Council carried out a public consultation seeking views from residents from 11th September 2023 to 13th October 2023. This was hosted on the Council's Citizen Space website, with paper copies of the survey available upon request.

2. Main Report from Citizen Space Website showing questions asked and responses received: Proposed changes to Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1 April 2024

Responses to this survey: **150**

1: Are you responding to this survey as?



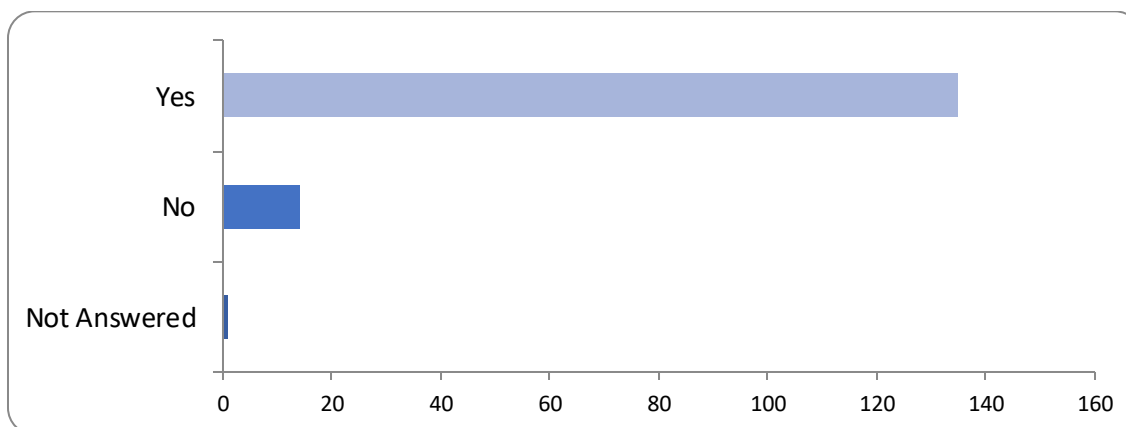
Option	Total	Percent
A Sefton Council Taxpayer	79	52.67%
A Council Tax Reduction claimant	28	18.67%
An elected Member	0	0.00%
A worker who is also on Universal Credit	40	26.67%
A local charity, voluntary or community organisation	0	0.00%
Other (please specify)	3	2.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

2: What is the first part of your home postcode (for example: L20; PR8)?

There were 150 responses to this part of the question detailing various postcodes throughout the borough.

3: Do you agree with proposals?

There were 149 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	135	90.00%
No	14	9.33%
Not Answered	1	0.67%

Any other comments?

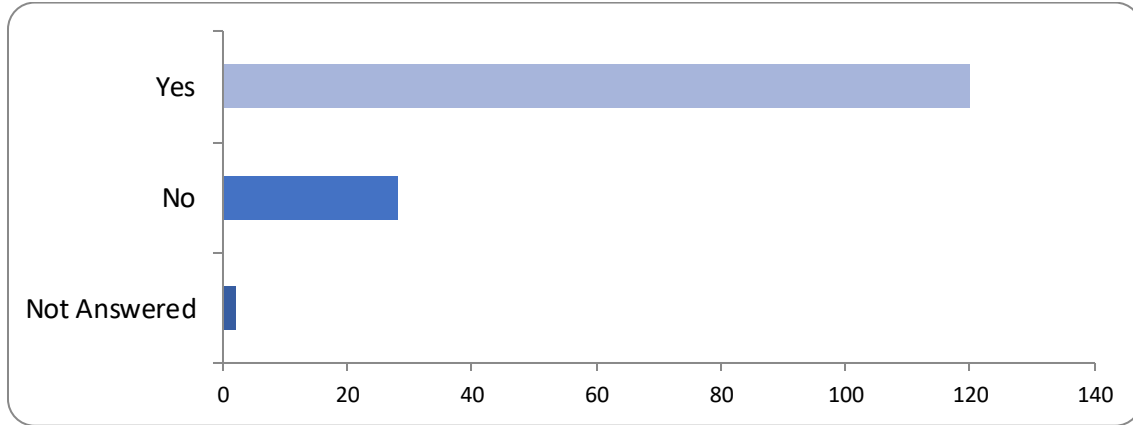
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Agenda Item 9

There were 39 responses to this part of the question. See Page 13 for analysis of these comments.

4: Do you give consent to providing your details, in accordance with the Privacy Notice?

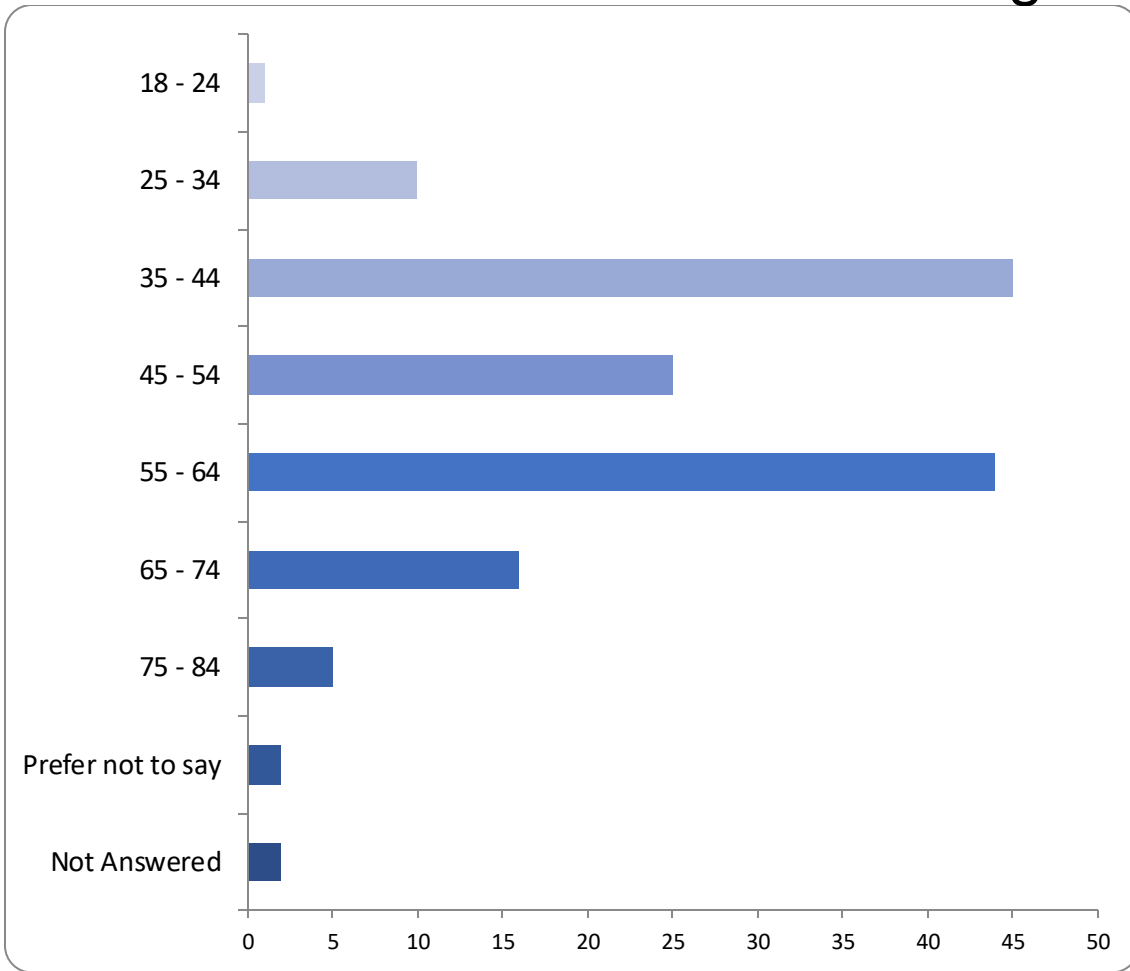
There were 148 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	120	80.00%
No	28	18.67%
Not Answered	2	1.33%

5: How old are you?

There were 148 responses to this part of the question.

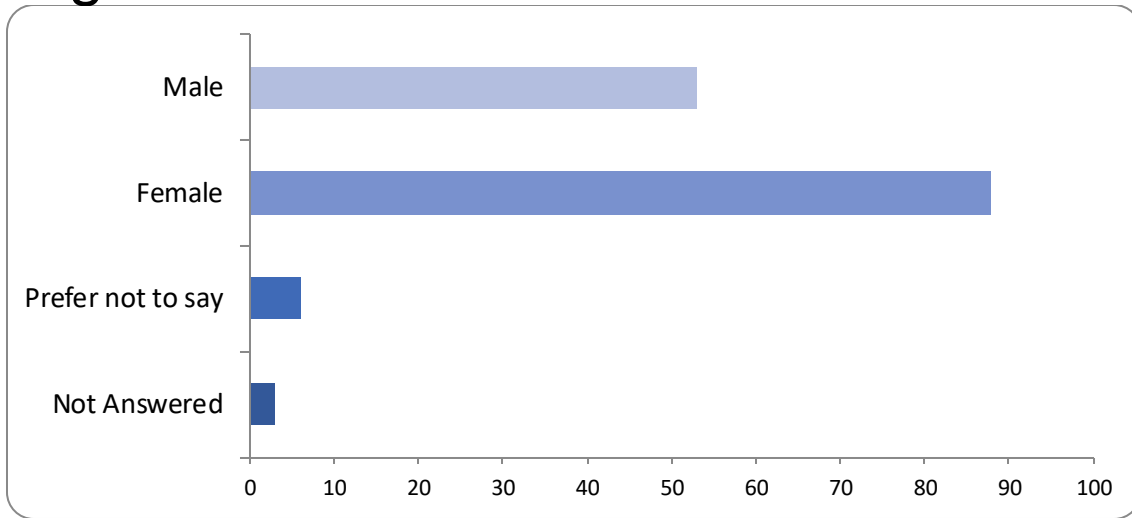


Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	0	0.00%
18 - 24	1	0.67%
25 - 34	10	6.67%
35 - 44	45	30.00%
45 - 54	25	16.67%
55 - 64	44	29.33%
65 - 74	16	10.67%
75 - 84	5	3.33%
85+	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	2	1.33%
Not Answered	2	1.33%

6: What is your sex?

There were 147 responses to this part of the question.

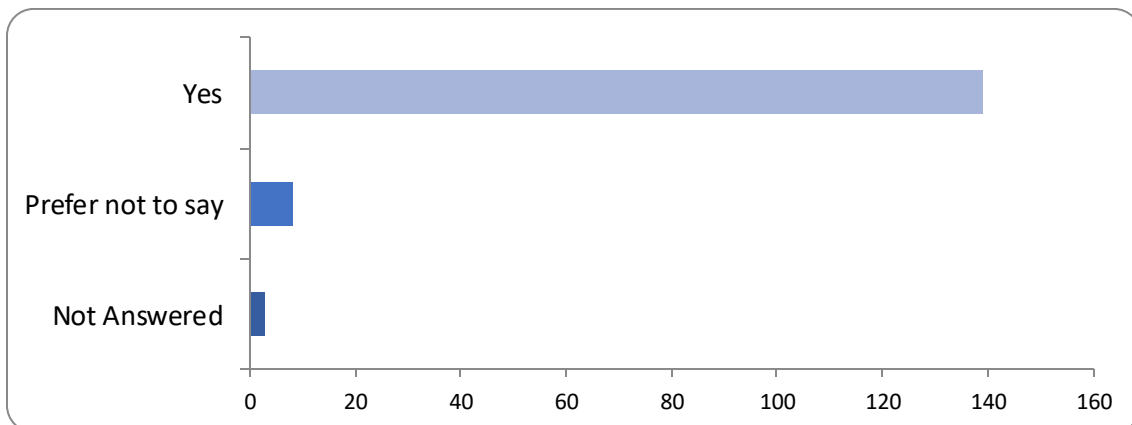
Agenda Item 9



Option	Total	Percent
Male	53	35.33%
Female	88	58.67%
Prefer not to say	6	4.00%
Not Answered	3	2.00%

7: Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

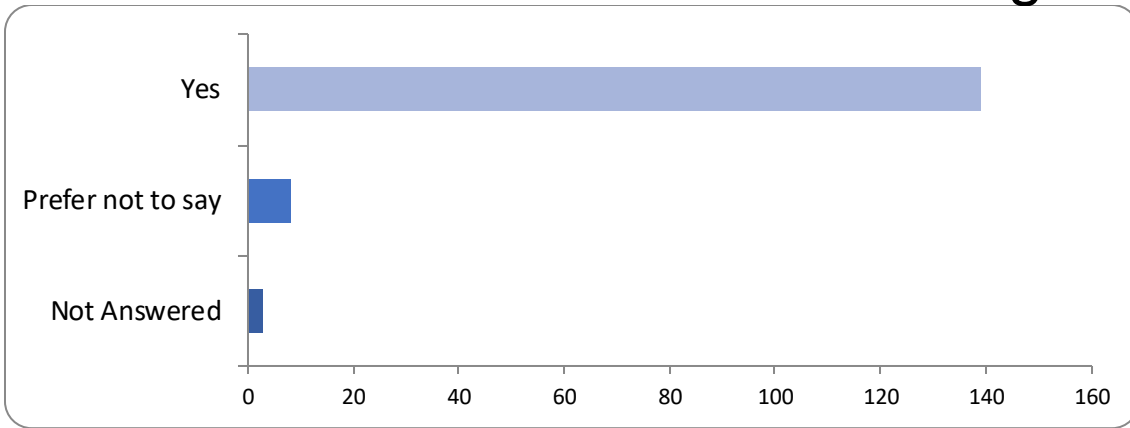
There were 147 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	139	92.67%
No	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	8	5.33%
Not Answered	3	2.00%

8: Do you currently live as your birth sex?

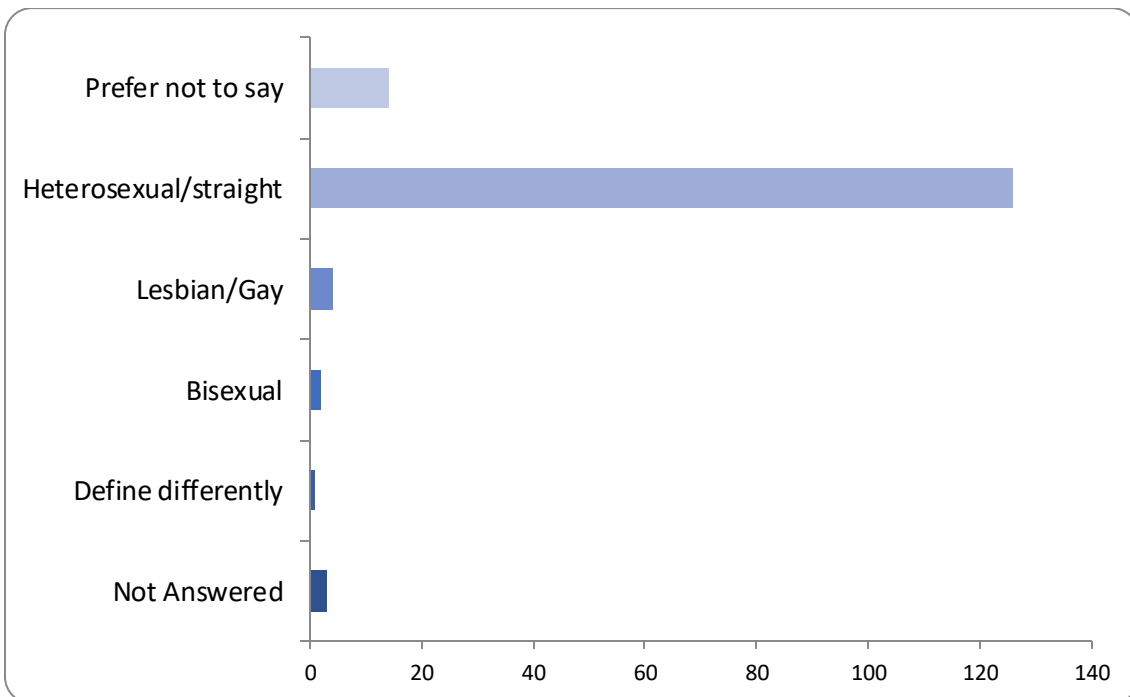
There were 147 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	139	92.67%
No	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	8	5.33%
Not Answered	3	2.00%

9: How would you describe your sexual orientation?

There were 147 responses to this part of the question.

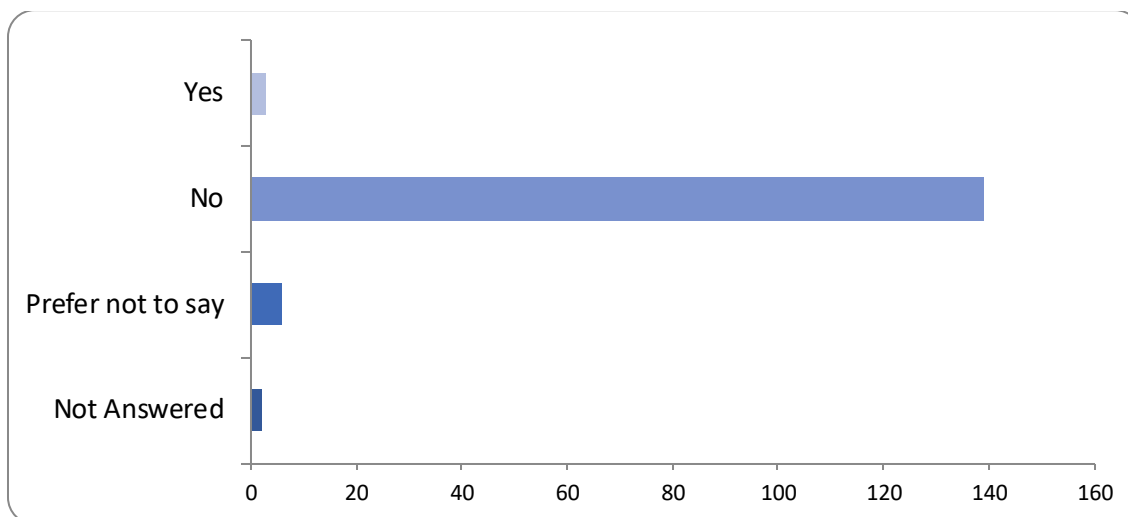


Option	Total	Percent
Prefer not to say	14	9.33%
Heterosexual/straight	126	84.00%
Lesbian/Gay	4	2.67%
Bisexual	2	1.33%
Define differently	1	0.67%
Not Answered	3	2.00%

10: Are you currently cared for by Sefton Council?

Agenda Item 9

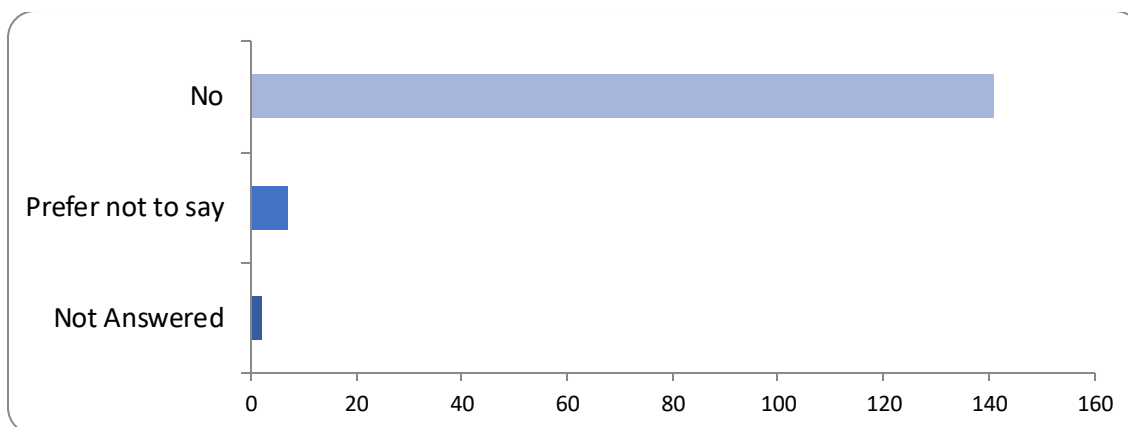
There were 148 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	3	2.00%
No	139	92.67%
Prefer not to say	6	4.00%
Not Answered	2	1.33%

11: Have you ever been cared for as a child by Sefton Council or another Local Authority?

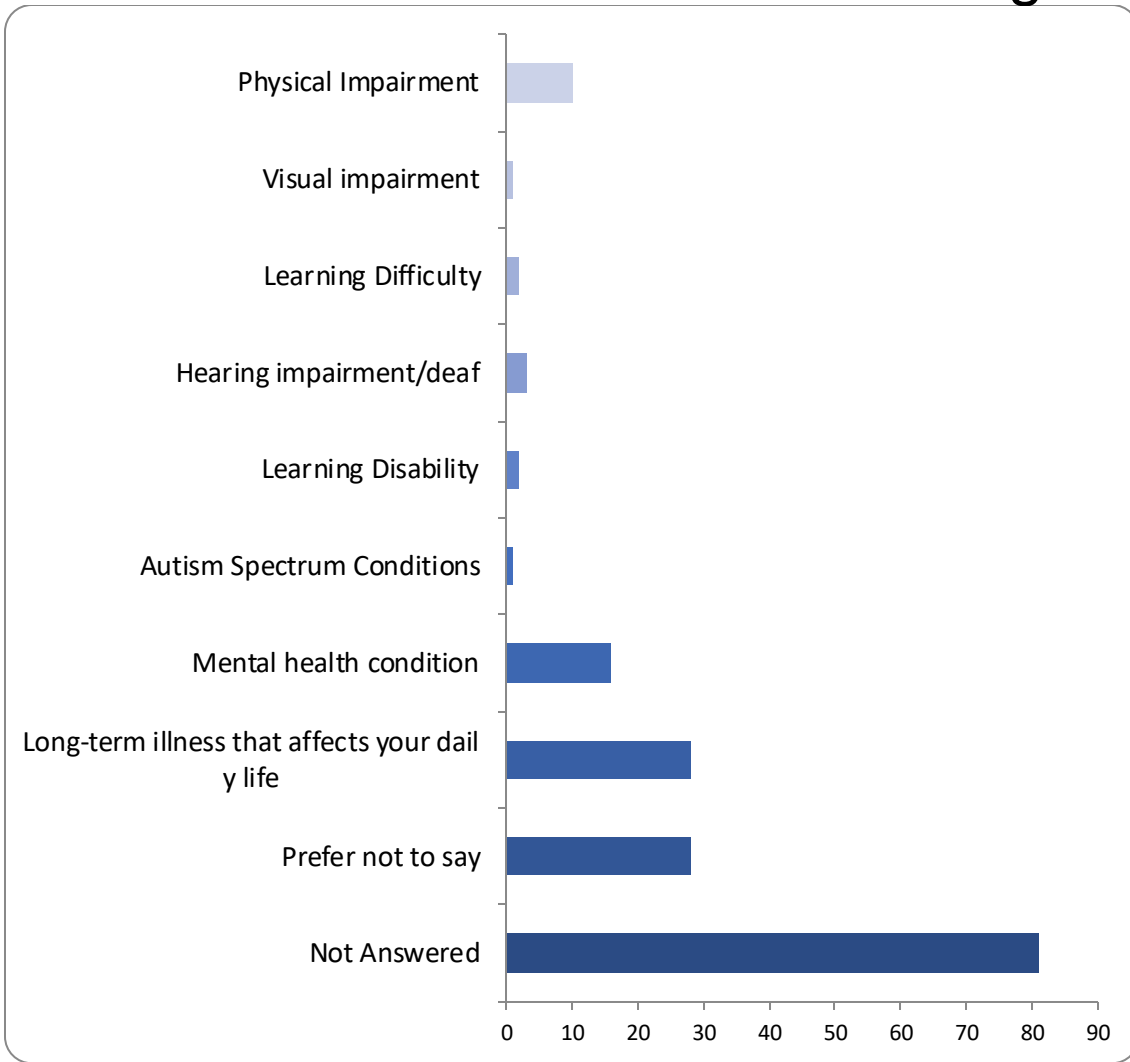
There were 148 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	0	0.00%
No	141	94.00%
Prefer not to say	7	4.67%
Not Answered	2	1.33%

12: Disability: Do you have any of the following (please tick all that apply):

There were 69 responses to this part of the question.

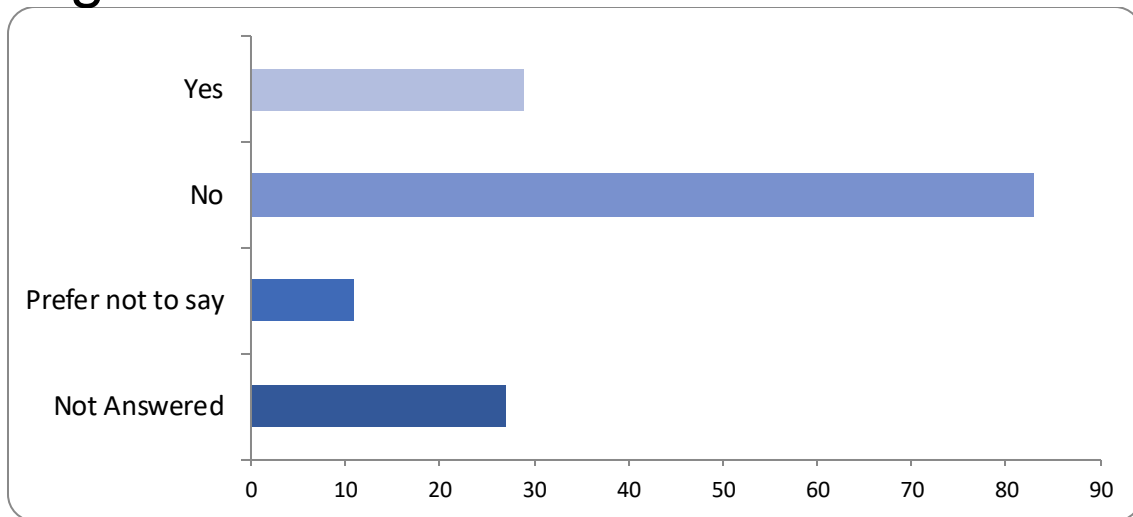


Option	Total	Percent
Physical Impairment	10	6.67%
Visual impairment	1	0.67%
Learning Difficulty	2	1.33%
Hearing impairment/deaf	3	2.00%
Learning Disability	2	1.33%
Autism Spectrum Conditions	1	0.67%
Mental health condition	16	10.67%
Dementia	0	0.00%
Long-term illness that affects your daily life	28	18.67%
Prefer not to say	28	18.67%
Not Answered	81	54.00%

13: If you have ticked any of the boxes above, or you have cancer, diabetes or HIV this would be classed as 'disability' under the legislation. Do you consider yourself to be 'disabled'?

There were 123 responses to this part of the question.

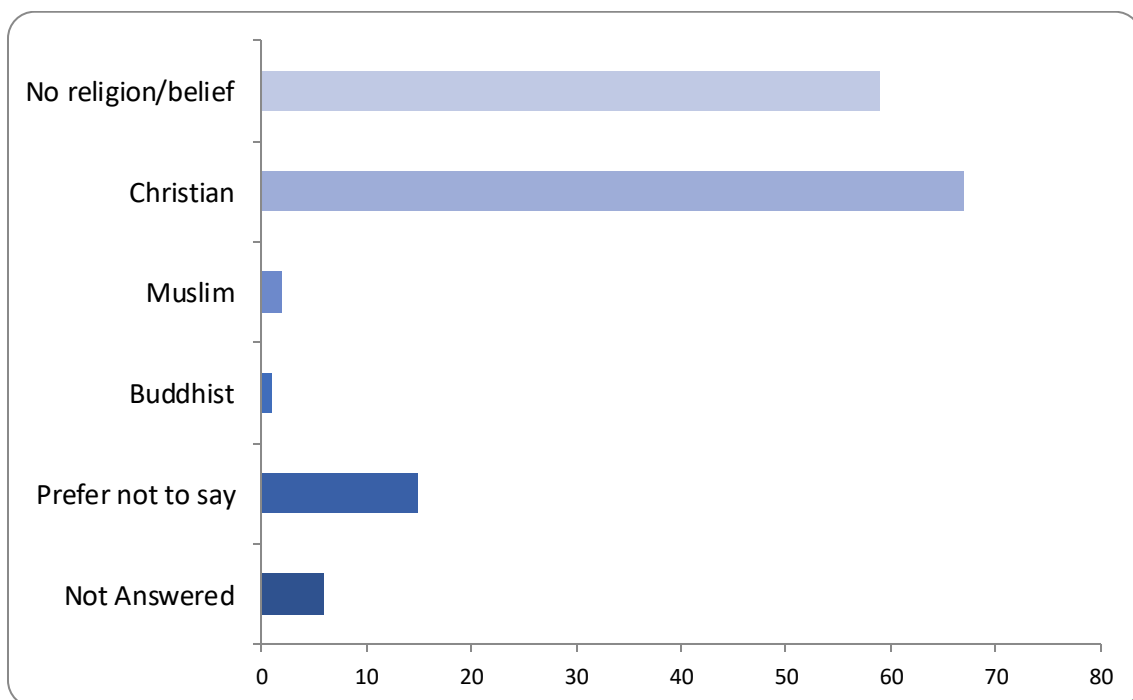
Agenda Item 9



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	29	19.33%
No	83	55.33%
Prefer not to say	11	7.33%
Not Answered	27	18.00%

14: What is your religion/belief?

There were 144 responses to this part of the question.



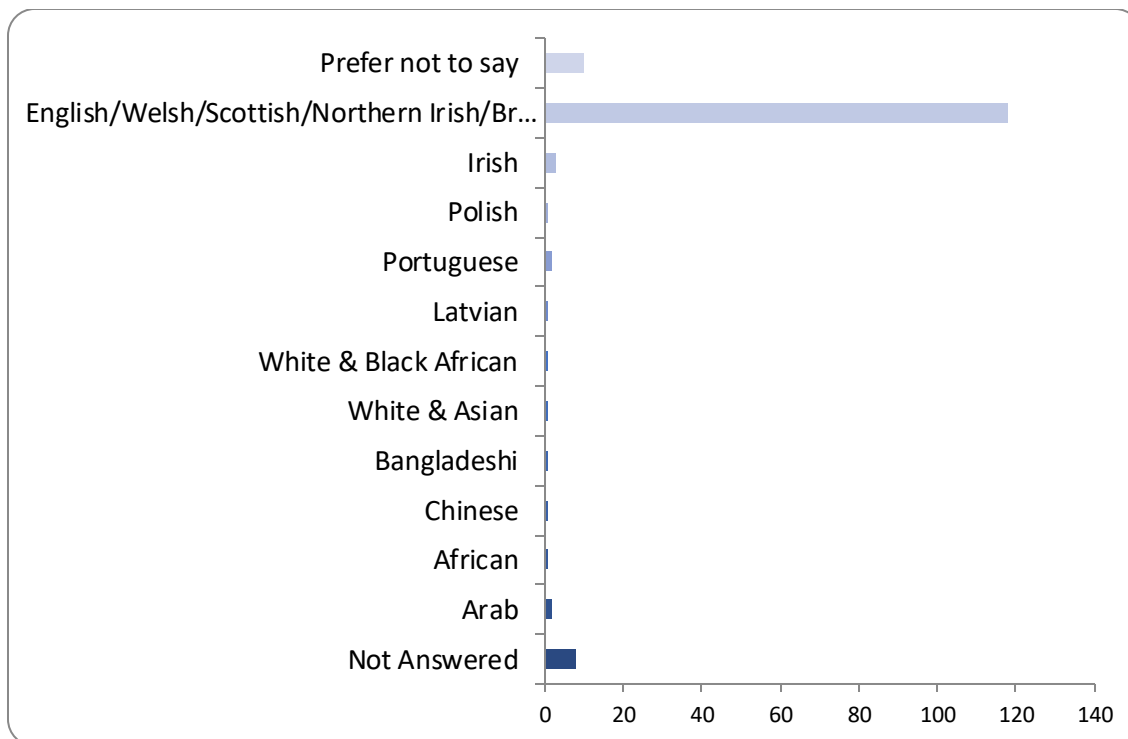
Option	Total	Percent
No religion/belief	59	39.33%
Christian	67	44.67%
Hindu	0	0.00%
Muslim	2	1.33%
Jewish	0	0.00%

Agenda Item 9

Sikh	0	0.00%
Buddhist	1	0.67%
Prefer not to say	15	10.00%
Not Answered	6	4.00%

15: Race/Ethnicity (please note that Sikh and Jewish are collected in the Religion/Belief Section above) – do you identify as:

There were 142 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Prefer not to say	10	6.67%
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	118	78.67%
Irish	3	2.00%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller or Roma	0	0.00%
Polish	1	0.67%
Portuguese	2	1.33%
Latvian	1	0.67%
Lithuanian	0	0.00%
White and Black Caribbean	0	0.00%
White & Black African	1	0.67%
White & Asian	1	0.67%
Indian	0	0.00%
Pakistani	0	0.00%
Bangladeshi	1	0.67%
Chinese	1	0.67%

Agenda Item 9

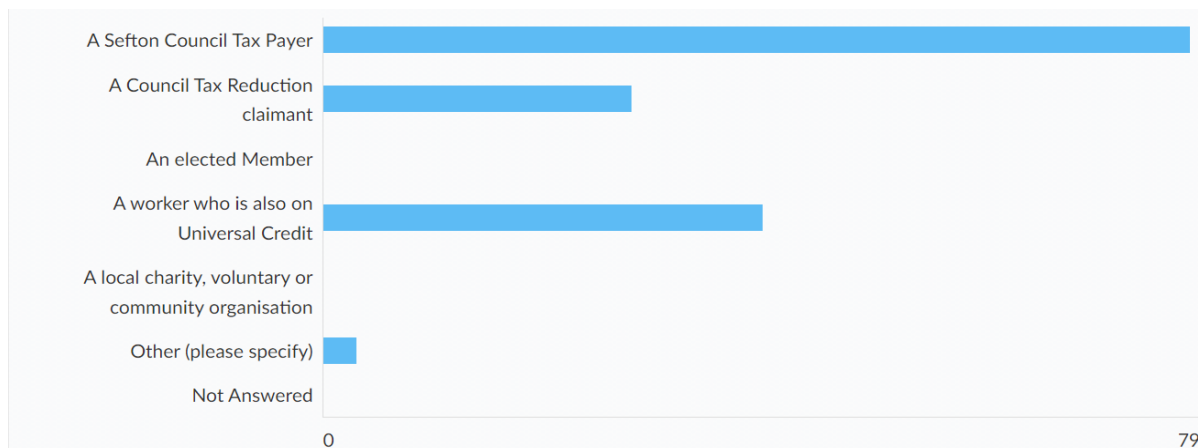
African	1	0.67%
Caribbean	0	0.00%
Arab	2	1.33%
Not Answered	8	5.33%

3. Consultation Analysis

CTRS Consultation Summary

Total of 150 submissions. 135 (90.00%) agreed with the proposal, with 1 (0.67%) not responding at all before submitting.

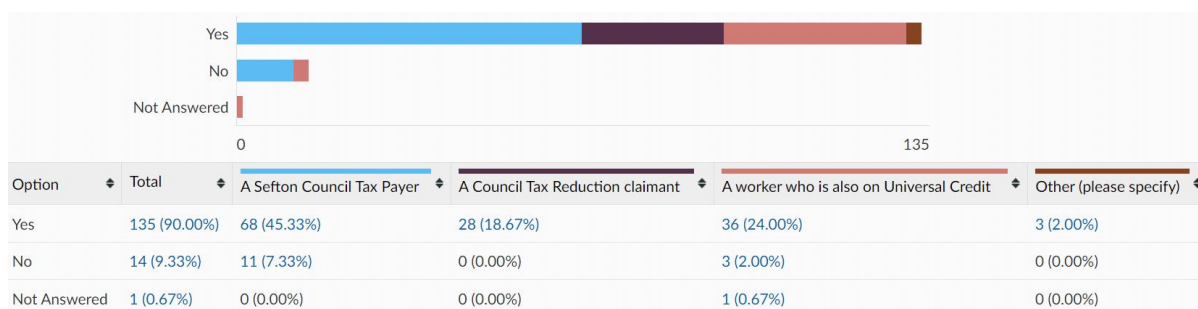
Respondents answering Question 1 identified themselves as:



The percentage breakdown of these respondents is as follows:

Option	Total	Percent
A Sefton Council Tax Payer	79	52.67%
A Council Tax Reduction claimant	28	18.67%
An elected Member	0	0.00%
A worker who is also on Universal Credit	40	26.67%
A local charity, voluntary or community organisation	0	0.00%
Other (please specify)	3	2.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

The specific Agree/Disagree answer each respondent submitted was broken down into their separate groups.



- The biggest response was from Council Tax Payers answering the question 'Do you agree with Proposals' seeing 79 in total. Of these 79 respondents, 68 (45.33% of total respondents) agreed with the proposal.

Agenda Item 9

- Second biggest number of responses were from Workers in receipt of UC, totalling 40. Of this amount, 36 (24.00% of total respondents) agreed with proposals.
- The third biggest number of responses was from 28 CTR claimants, all of whom agreed with the proposal (18.67% of total respondents).
- Finally, 3 responded as 'Other' ('Exempt from Council Tax', 'Retired Pensioner' and 'Independent man'), all of whom agreed (2.00% of total respondents).

Of those 14 who did not agree with the proposals (9.33%), the biggest number came from 'Council Tax Payers' with 11 (7.33% of total respondents) and a further 3 from 'Workers in receipt of UC' (2.00% of total respondents).

The reasons for CT Payers selecting 'No' included concerns over:

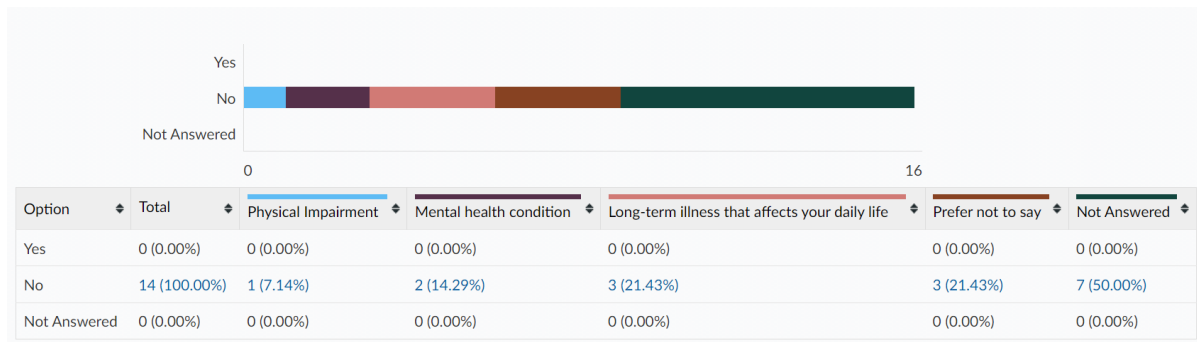
- properties only being empty because of probate,
- it being a bad time to sell,
- people who claim CTR contributing less and people being able to hide their earnings.

Analysis shows that several of these comments are related to concerns over Council Tax for these individuals, rather than the proposed changes to the CTR scheme as detailed in this consultation.

It therefore appears that some customers have applied their comments to the incorrect consultation; the proposed changes to the CTR Scheme, rather than the concurrent Exempt and Empty properties consultation.

Further analysis of these responses (where the customer also gave permission to share their details via the privacy notice) shows several disabilities also detailed.

Please note that this question allowed multiple responses, so there appears to be extra 'No' responses (16) than the previously stated 14.



There is only 1 comment related to this specific question for those who indicated a disability:

Answer

I'm responsible for Council Tax on my late father's property. It's a bad time to sell. I can't afford increased charges on his empty flat. It's in probate. It isn't my fault that the property is empty.

It therefore could be possible through this specific instance and cross referencing them with the wider number of 'No' comments that a number of these responses were made in error through customers misunderstanding the question and mistaking this consultation for another.

Agenda Item 9

4. Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Analysis Report – Changes to Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25

Details of proposal: Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25

Sefton Council is looking to make a change to its established local Council Tax Reduction scheme regarding how it processes some changes in circumstances for working-age Universal Credit households, in employment, that also claim Council Tax Reduction. The change, if agreed, will be effective from 1st April 2024.

What the change is/what's proposed

Council Tax Reduction currently supports just under 25,000 Sefton households who are on a low income with the cost of their council tax.

Around 14,500 claimants are of working age (60% of households using the scheme) and the remaining 10,000 (40%) are pension age.

There are almost 1100 working-age people in Sefton who are in low paid work and who are also claiming Universal Credit to top up their wages.

The Council Tax Reduction scheme is a means tested discount. It should be noted that pension age recipients are protected from any reduction in support under rules that are set out in national regulations.

Ramifications of Proposal:

Summary of Council Tax Support available to assist Council Taxpayers who are in receipt of a low income for 2024/25

Sefton Council's local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is based on five principles: -

1. The Council will continue to support work incentives
2. The Council will continue to recognise the additional needs of our most vulnerable residents.
3. The Council will continue to recognise the additional needs of families with children
4. The Council supports households staying together to make better use of housing in Sefton and reduce homelessness
5. The Council will continue to have due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant

The proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from 1st April 2024 have been considered mindful of those principles and the Council's equalities duties.

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

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

Age (working age)

The Council's local Council Tax Reduction scheme affects working age people and has a financial impact on households who already have a low income.

The proposed change will affect working age households in employment in receipt of Universal Credit. It is proposed that with effect from 1st April 2024 minor changes in the amount of the Universal Credit award will not be actioned. It is intended that this change will introduce more financial stability to these households when budgeting for Council Tax payments, as opposed to Council Tax bills payments changing each time there is a minor change in the amount of the Universal Credit award.

Examples of when recalculations will take place include when a customer:

- stops working.
- has their Universal Credit payments stop.
- changes jobs or get a second job.
- moves home, or someone joins or leaves their household.

Age (Pensionable age)

People over pensionable age are supported with Council Tax Reduction, but this is via the national prescribed scheme and local authorities are not permitted to change this. The proposed change to Sefton's Council's scheme from 1st April 2024 will only affect working-age households, and so will have no effect on people of pensionable age.

People with a Disability

In Sefton, around 53% of pensioners receiving Council Tax Reduction have a disability income, and 41% of working aged people receiving Council Tax Reduction have a disability income.

The Council recognises that additional expenses may be incurred relating to disability and has put the following mitigations in place: -

- Continuing to make additional allowances and give additional support to those receiving certain DWP sickness benefits, disability benefits and benefits for Carers when calculating entitlement.
- Disregarding certain disability benefits as income when calculating entitlement.
- Providing signposting and support to people to claim other reductions of Council Tax liability where appropriate, e.g., discount in respect of severe mental impairment, disabled banding reductions

The proposed changes will have no impacts specific to this equality group.

Gender Reassignment

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Race

No impacts identified specific to this equality group. Calculation of entitlement to Council Tax Reduction does not refer to race and is not impacted by it.

Agenda Item 9

Religion or Belief

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Sex

Women are generally more likely to be single parents in the first place (84%) according to ONS 2021.

The proposed changes will have no impacts specific to this equality group.

Sexual Orientation

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Pregnancy and Maternity

We do not have sufficient evidence, but females are disproportionately affected and are more likely to be single parents.

Mitigation in place to support the additional needs of households with children includes:

- Deciding that the Council's local Council Tax Reduction scheme for working-age families should not replicate the rules that are in place in the national Housing Benefit scheme and the Council Tax Reduction Pensioner scheme whereby the removal of the family premium and the "2-child" rule restrict the level of award.
- Child Benefit and Child Maintenance payments are not taken into account as income when calculating entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.
- Additional allowances are given when calculating entitlement for where there is a disabled child in the family.
- The scheme also mirrors provisions in the Housing Benefit scheme by taking childcare costs into account for low income working families.
- The Council continue to include the Family Premium when calculating the Council Tax reduction.
- Procedures are regularly reviewed for the collection of non-payments of Council Tax and signposting to Exception Hardship Fund to ensure non-disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable household.

The proposed changes will have no impacts specific to this equality group.

Mitigations in place to support the Council's principals of the scheme

Financially Vulnerable People:

The Council has put the following mitigation in place: -

- Provision of a discretionary Exceptional Hardship Fund to provide additional support to those financially vulnerable to struggling to pay Council Tax
- For working age people, allowing a Universal Credit notification, received from the DWP, to be treated as a claim for local Council Tax Reduction thus removing the need for those in receipt of Universal Credit to have to make a separate claim for support towards their Council Tax.
- Making provision in the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for awards to be backdated for up to 6-months for working-age vulnerable claimants.
- Offering 12-month (rather than 10-month) instalment payments to Council Tax payers to help ease payment difficulties.
- Adopting a sensitive approach to enforcement action to consider the potential

vulnerability of Council Tax Reduction claimants. Before cases are referred to Enforcement Agents a vetting stage is in place and cases are dealt with under a separate debt recovery process to minimise potential increases in debt.

- Establishing a co-ordinated working relationship between the Council's contracted Enforcement Agents and Citizens Advice Sefton to support people in debt, ensuring that Citizens Advice Sefton has direct lines of communication with the Enforcement Agents and can arrange for recovery action to be placed on hold whilst discussing and agreeing affordable payment arrangements.
- Putting an escalation process in place for the debt advisor based at South Sefton foodbank to contact nominated Council Tax staff to request a hold on recovery action or discuss affordable payment arrangements.
- Participating in the Council's Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty Partner's Group – staff from the Council's Council Tax and Benefit team, work with partner organisations and other Council services to support residents suffering financial vulnerability, this includes signposting customers to emergency support for food, heating, essential household goods and provide practical support such as signposting claimants for winter coats, school uniforms.
- The Council attends various customer representative events and hard to reach groups to raise awareness of Council Tax support available, i.e., Pensioner and Disability forums, Sefton Citizens Advice surgeries.

Care Leavers

The Council provides up to 100% Council Tax discount to support young people leaving local authority care up to the date of their 25th birthday.

Armed Forces Covenant

The Council has identified that there are 16 households in Sefton claiming support from Council Tax Reduction and in receipt of War Disablement, War Widows pension including any Armed Forces compensation. The Council fully disregards this income when calculating entitlement. Also disregarded is the service attributable element of the armed forces pension.

Supporting Households to Stay Together, Making Better Use of Housing and Reducing Homelessness

- The Council has decided that the amount of Council Tax Reduction taken away from a customer's entitlement when other adults live in the household (known as a non-dependant deduction), should remain at a reduced level.
- The Council uses the powers available to it to charge a premium on long-term empty properties to encourage owners to bring them back into use. The premium cannot be applied homes that are empty due to the occupant living in armed forces accommodation for job-related purposes. Also, the Council Tax system makes provision for statutory exemptions for properties left empty for a specific purpose, e.g., when a person goes into care.

Consultation:

A public consultation has been carried out to seek views on the proposed change. The consultation run from 11/09/2023 to 13/10/2023, and it was hosted on the Council's Citizen Space Website with alternative paper copies available on request.

The consultation had 150 responses. Of these 90% agreed with the proposal, with 9.33% disagreeing. A further 0.67% stated they didn't know.

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

Agenda Item 9

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

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

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

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

The Council has set out in the sections above how it meets its equalities duties in relation to the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

What actions would follow if proposal accepted by Cabinet and Council?

As a result of the consultation, monitoring, and analysis undertaken, it is proposed that a change is made to the Council's local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2024/25, regarding working-age Universal Credit income households in employment. The change is designed to make the CTRS calculation more stable and consistent for households by ignoring some of the information provided by the DWP relating to Universal Credit income. The change includes ignoring when a customer:

- Works a few extra hours one month.
- Receives a back-dated pay rise.

Applying these changes to the scheme will ensure that it will:

- Make it more straightforward for low-income households to budget household finances for Council Tax payments
- Reduce confusion for customers, and
- Reduce the council's administration costs.

The Council will continue to monitor and analyse the support provided by the local Council Tax Reduction scheme to ensure that it remains relevant to support low-income households.

Annex C: Consultation – proposal to introduce new Council Tax Premiums for Empty Properties and those Periodically Occupied (second homes)

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Main Report from Citizen Space Website...*Page 2*
3. Consultation analysis...*Page 14*
4. Equality Impact Assessment...*Page 19*

Agenda Item 9

1. Introduction

The Government is bringing in new rules to allow councils to introduce new discretionary Council Tax premiums affecting properties that have:-

- been left empty for a year or more (known as long term empty properties).
- properties that are only lived in sometimes (known as second homes or holiday homes).

It is proposed that changes for properties that have been empty for a year or more will happen from 1st April 2024, and the proposed changes for properties that are only lived in sometimes will happen from 1st April 2025.

The new discretionary rules mean that :-

- Councils can charge double Council Tax on properties that have been left empty for 1 year. (This is called a premium charge of an extra 100% on top of the normal charge).
- Councils can charge double Council Tax for properties that are only lived in sometimes. (This is called a premium charge of an extra 100% on top of the normal charge).

A public consultation seeking views from residents about the introduction of these charges was carried out from 11th September 2023 to 27th October 2023.

The consultation was hosted on the Council's Citizen Space website, with paper copies of the survey available upon request. In addition, it should be noted that approximately 1,500 direct mailshot letters were issued to owners of empty properties (as people potentially directly affected by the proposal) to alert them to the consultation for them to provide their feedback if they wished.

Long Term Empty Properties and Secondary Homes

This consultation was about properties that have no furniture or only a small amount of furniture in them (called 'empty properties') and homes that are furnished but not lived in (called 'second homes').

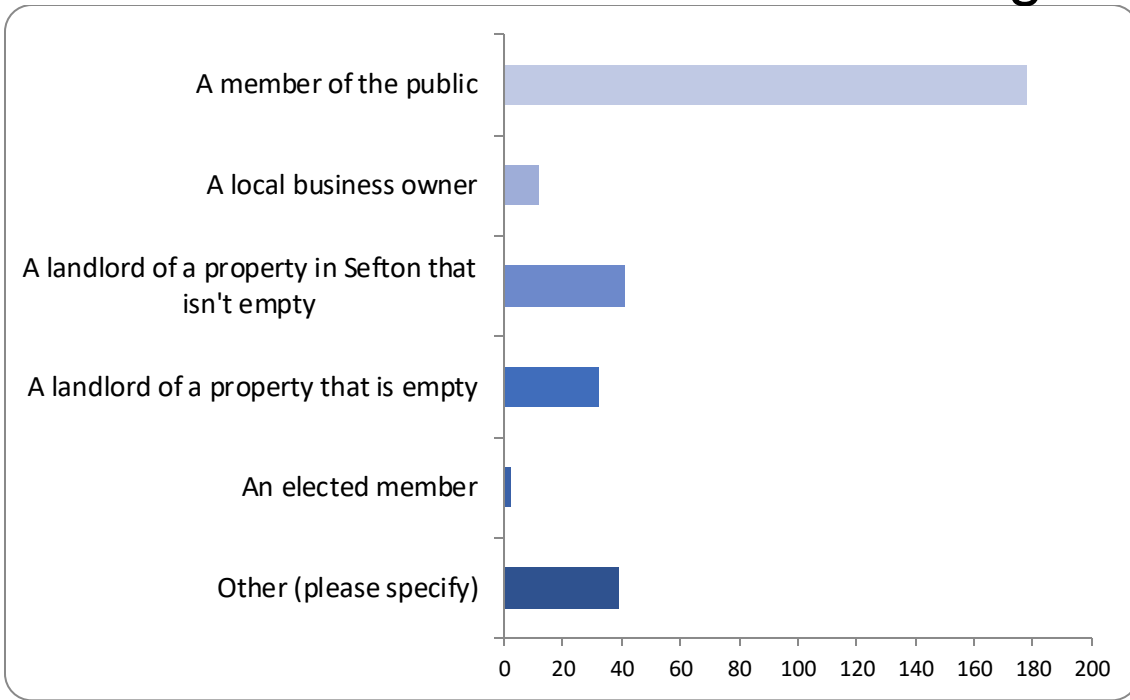
Currently, if a long-term empty property has been left empty for 2 years or more, the Council Tax charged is doubled. The consultation asked if the Council Tax should be doubled if the property has been left empty for 1 year instead of the 2 years it is now.

The consultation also asked should the Council Tax be doubled for secondary homes.

2. Main Report – Citizen Space Website

Responses to this survey: **264**

1: Are you responding to this survey as?



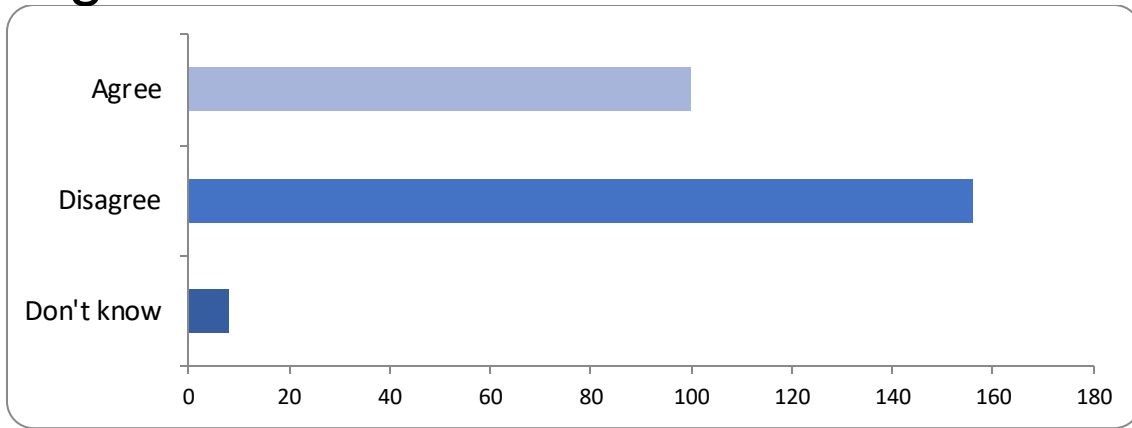
Option	Total	Percent
A member of the public	178	67.42%
A local business owner	12	4.55%
A landlord of a property in Sefton that isn't empty	41	15.53%
A landlord of a property that is empty	32	12.12%
An elected member	2	0.76%
A local charity, voluntary or community organisation	0	0.00%
Other (please specify)	39	14.77%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

2: What is the first part of your home Postcode (for example: L20; PR8)?

There were 264 responses all detailing several various postcodes across the borough.

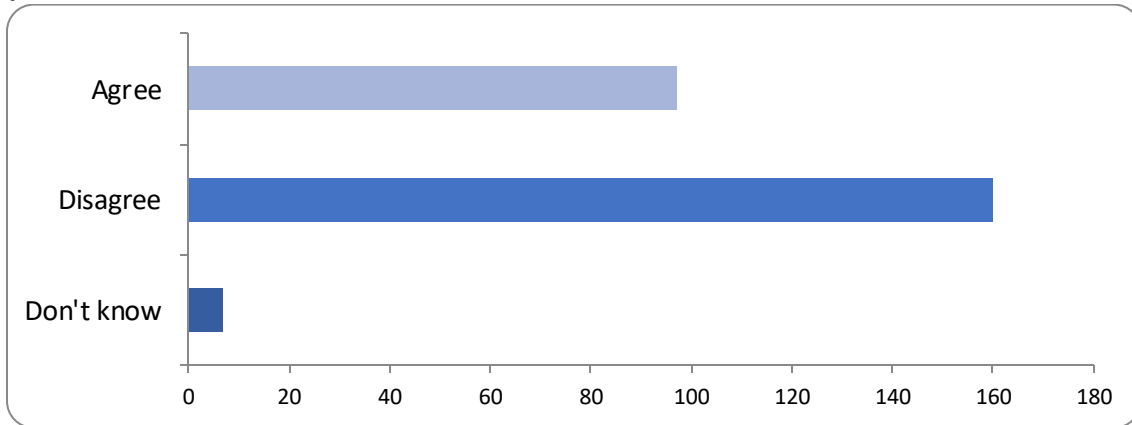
3: Do you think the extra 100% Council Tax should be charged for homes that are empty after 1 year instead of the 2 years it is now?

Agenda Item 9



Option	Total	Percent
Agree	100	37.88%
Disagree	156	59.09%
Don't know	8	3.03%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

4: Do you think that an extra 100% Council Tax should be charged on homes that are empty but furnished after 1 year



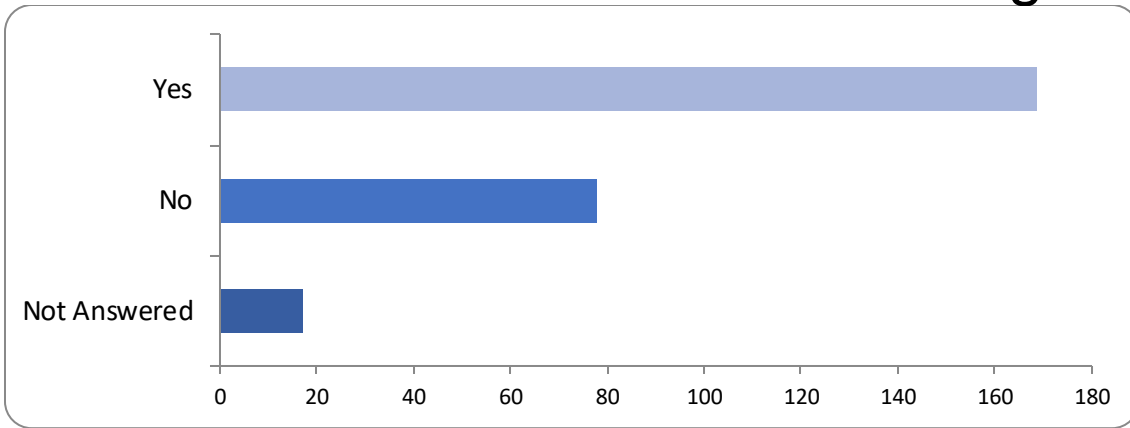
Option	Total	Percent
Agree	97	36.74%
Disagree	160	60.61%
Don't know	7	2.65%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

5: Do you have any comments related to this proposal?

There were 190 responses to this part of the question. Analysis of these comments can be found on Page 15.

6: Do you give consent to providing your details, in accordance with the Privacy Notice?

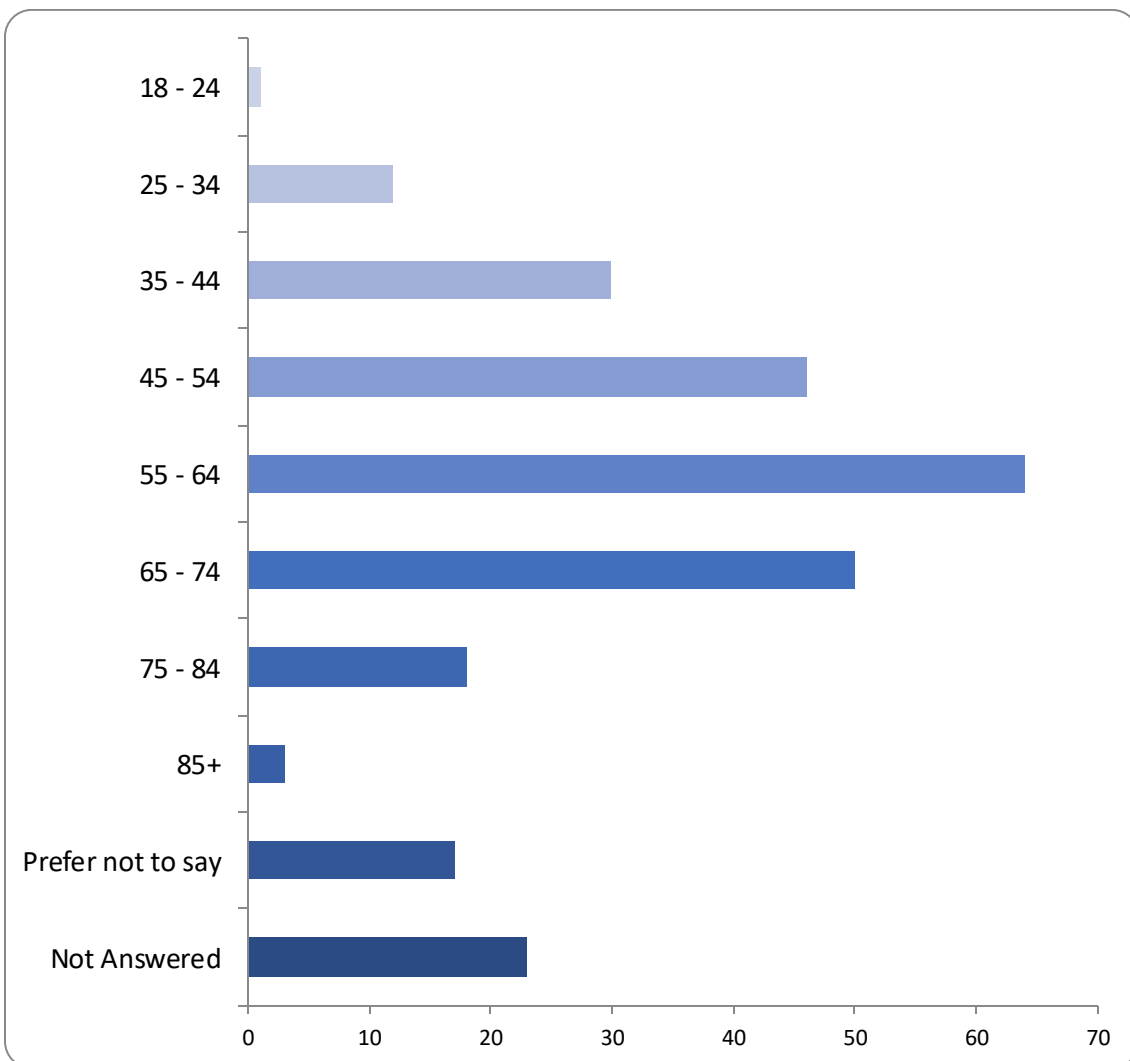
There were 247 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	169	64.02%
No	78	29.55%
Not Answered	17	6.44%

7: How old are you?

There were 241 responses to this part of the question.



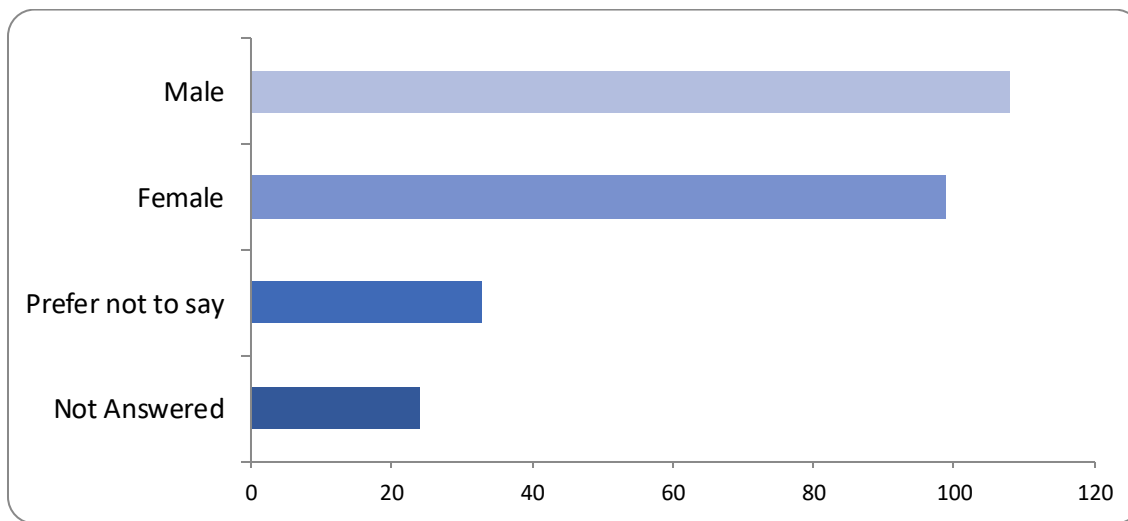
Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	0	0.00%

Agenda Item 9

18 - 24	1	0.38%
25 - 34	12	4.55%
35 - 44	30	11.36%
45 - 54	46	17.42%
55 - 64	64	24.24%
65 - 74	50	18.94%
75 - 84	18	6.82%
85+	3	1.14%
Prefer not to say	17	6.44%
Not Answered	23	8.71%

8: What is your sex?

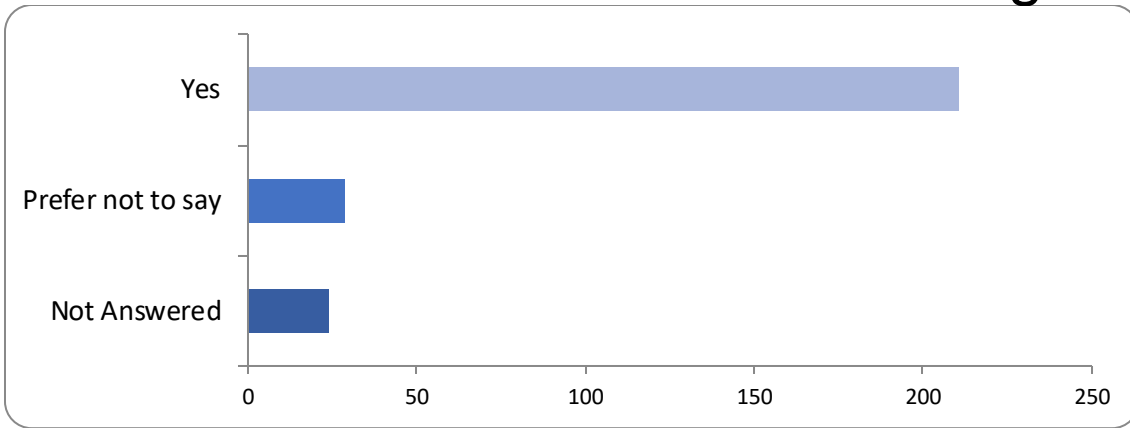
There were 240 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Male	108	40.91%
Female	99	37.50%
Prefer not to say	33	12.50%
Not Answered	24	9.09%

9: Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

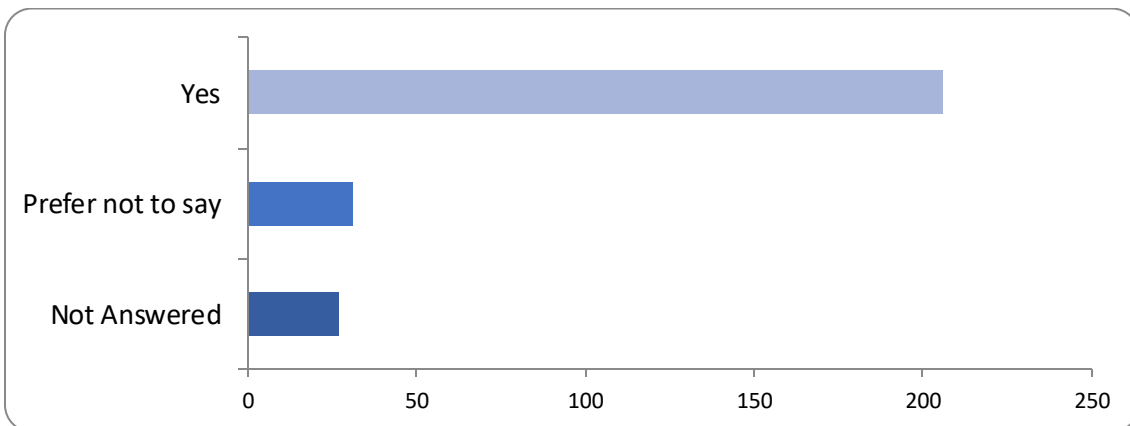
There were 240 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	211	79.92%
No	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	29	10.98%
Not Answered	24	9.09%

10: Do you currently live as your birth sex?

There were 237 responses to this part of the question.

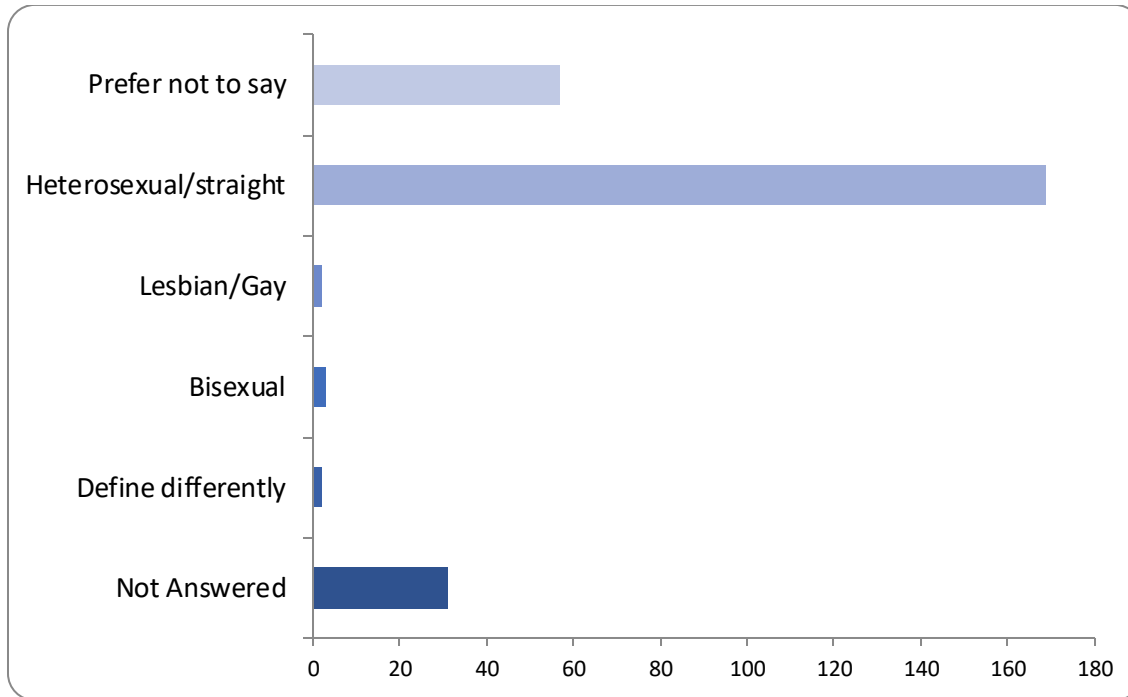


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	206	78.03%
No	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	31	11.74%
Not Answered	27	10.23%

Agenda Item 9

11: How would you describe your sexual orientation?

There were 233 responses to this part of the question.

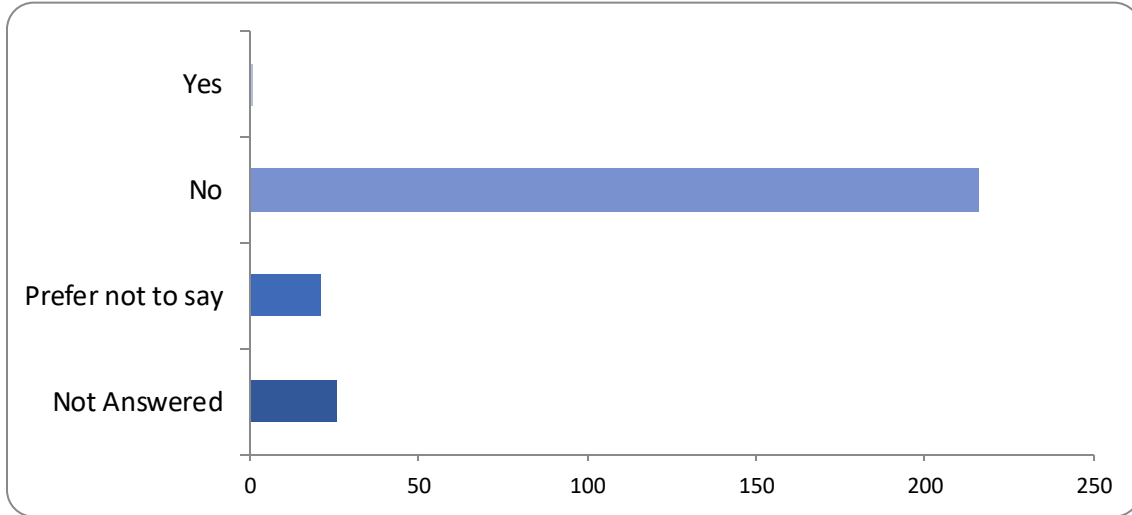


Option	Total	Percent
Prefer not to say	57	21.59%
Heterosexual/straight	169	64.02%
Lesbian/Gay	2	0.76%
Bisexual	3	1.14%
Define differently	2	0.76%
Not Answered	31	11.74%

12: Are you currently cared for by Sefton Council?

Agenda Item 9

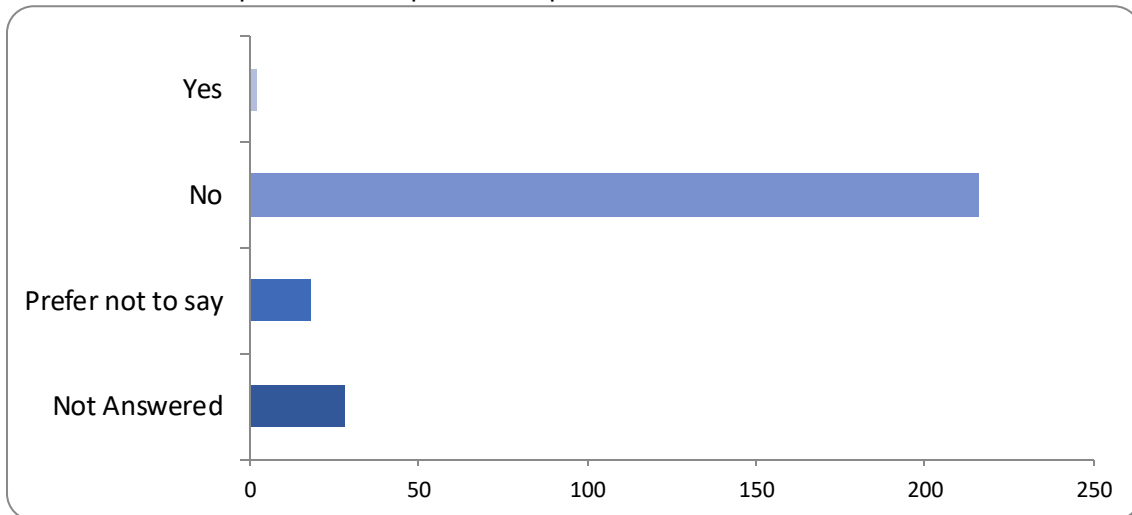
There were 238 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	1	0.38%
No	216	81.82%
Prefer not to say	21	7.95%
Not Answered	26	9.85%

13: Have you ever been cared for as a child by Sefton Council or another Local Authority?

There were 236 responses to this part of the question.

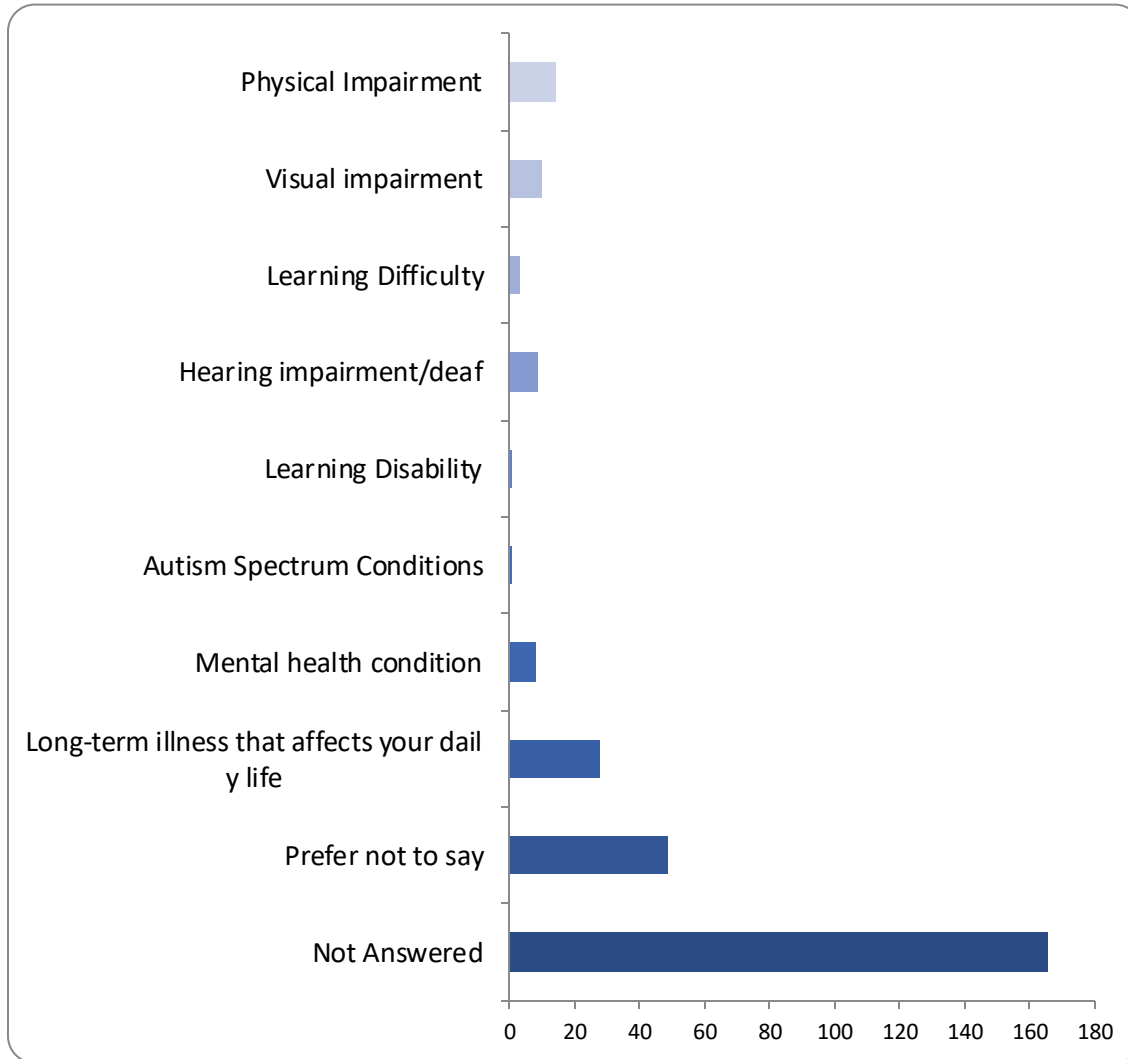


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	2	0.76%
No	216	81.82%
Prefer not to say	18	6.82%
Not Answered	28	10.61%

Agenda Item 9

14: Disability: Do you have any of the following (please tick all that apply):

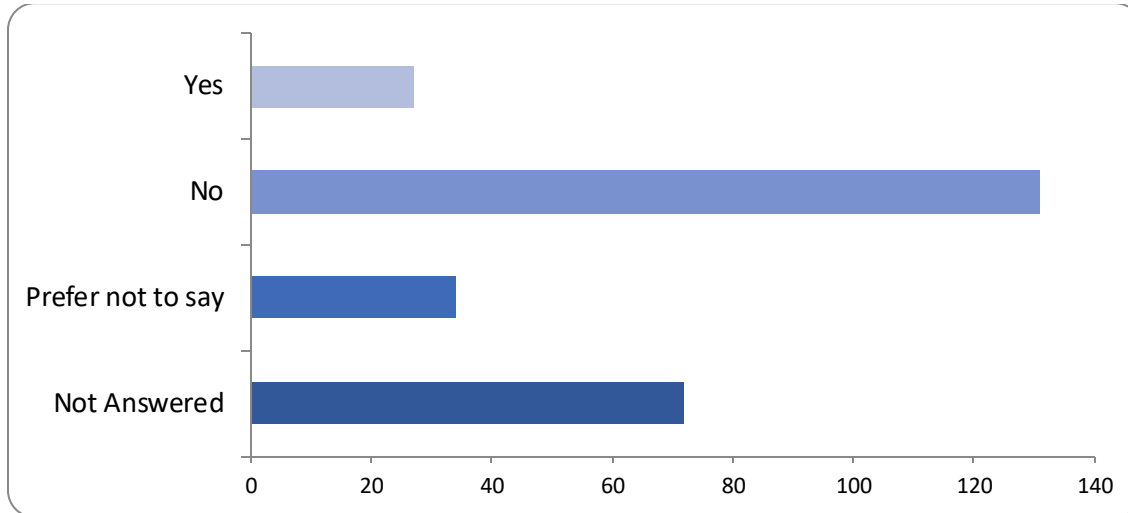
There were 98 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Physical Impairment	14	5.30%
Visual impairment	10	3.79%
Learning Difficulty	3	1.14%
Hearing impairment/deaf	9	3.41%
Learning Disability	1	0.38%
Autism Spectrum Conditions	1	0.38%
Mental health condition	8	3.03%
Dementia	0	0.00%
Long-term illness that affects your daily life	28	10.61%
Prefer not to say	49	18.56%
Not Answered	166	62.88%

15: If you have ticked any of the boxes above, or you have cancer, diabetes, or HIV this would be classed as 'disability' under the legislation. Do you consider yourself to be 'disabled'?

There were 192 responses to this part of the question.

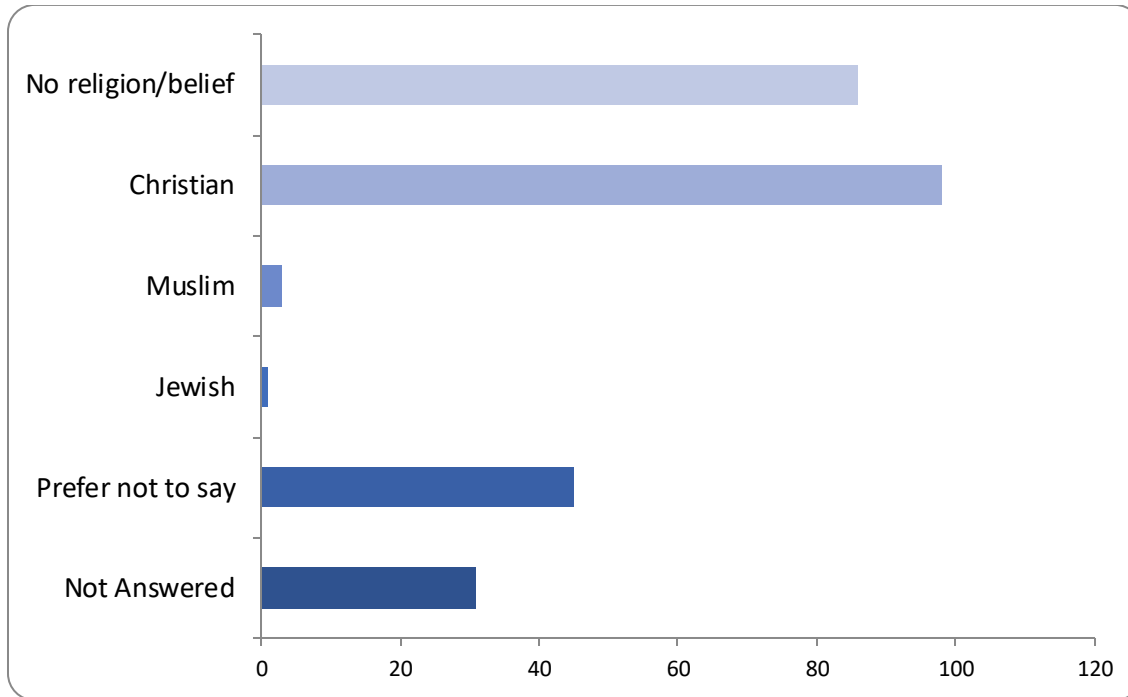


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	27	10.23%
No	131	49.62%
Prefer not to say	34	12.88%
Not Answered	72	27.27%

Agenda Item 9

16: What is your religion/belief?

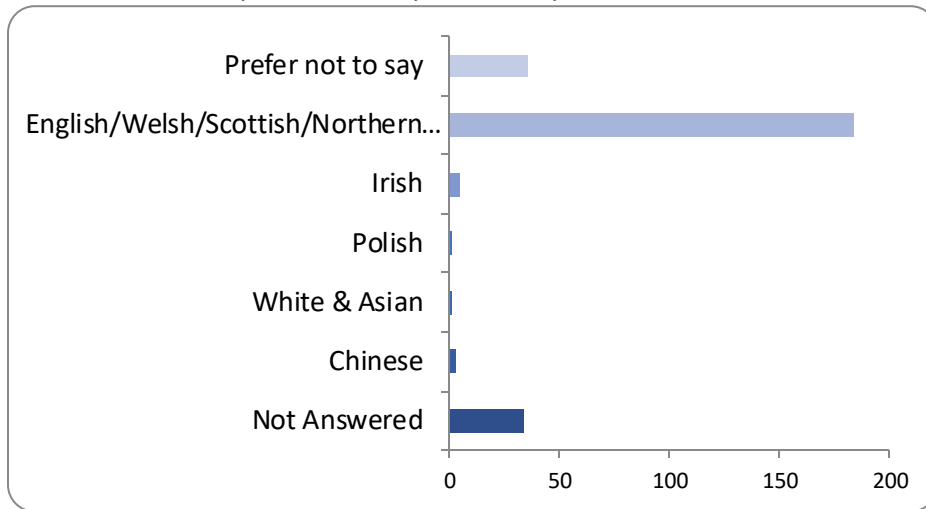
There were 233 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
No religion/belief	86	32.58%
Christian	98	37.12%
Hindu	0	0.00%
Muslim	3	1.14%
Jewish	1	0.38%
Sikh	0	0.00%
Buddhist	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	45	17.05%
Not Answered	31	11.74%

17: Race/Ethnicity (please note that Sikh and Jewish are collected in the Religion/Belief Section above) – do you identify as:

There were 230 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Prefer not to say	36	13.64%
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	184	69.70%
Irish	5	1.89%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller or Roma	0	0.00%
Polish	1	0.38%
Portuguese	0	0.00%
Latvian	0	0.00%
Lithuanian	0	0.00%
White and Black Caribbean	0	0.00%
White & Black African	0	0.00%
White & Asian	1	0.38%
Indian	0	0.00%
Pakistani	0	0.00%
Bangladeshi	0	0.00%
Chinese	3	1.14%
African	0	0.00%
Caribbean	0	0.00%

Agenda Item 9

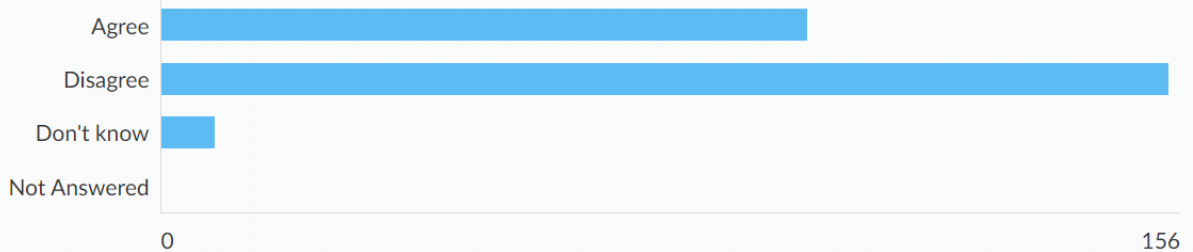
Arab	0	0.00%
Not Answered	34	12.88%

3. Consultation Analysis

The consultation received 264 responses. For analysis purposes, this document has separated the responses for Q3 and Q4.

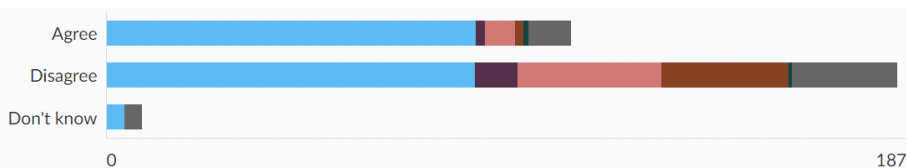
Focus on Q3

Question 3: Do you think the extra 100% Council Tax should be charged for homes that are empty after 1 year instead of the 2 years it is now?



Option	Total	Percent
Agree	100	37.88%
Disagree	156	59.09%
Don't know	8	3.03%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

For Q3 only, the breakdown of respondents was as follows:



Option	Total	A member of the public	A local business owner	A landlord of a property in Sefton that isn't empty	A landlord of a property that is empty	An elected member	Other (please specify)
Agree	100 (37.88%)	87 (32.95%)	2 (0.76%)	7 (2.65%)	2 (0.76%)	1 (0.38%)	10 (3.79%)

- Based on answers, the highest number of Agree responses came from 'members of the public' with 87 (32.95% of total respondents).
- Second highest number of Agree responses was 10 from those who listed themselves under 'Other' (3.79%).
- Thirdly, 7 of those who listed themselves as 'Landlord of a Property in Sefton that isn't empty' (2.65%) agreed with Q3.
- The fourth highest number of agreements came jointly from 'Local Business Owners' and 'Landlord of a Property that is empty' with 2 each (0.76%).
- Finally, a single 'Elected Member' agreed (0.38%).

Agenda Item 9

Option	Total	A member of the public	A local business owner	A landlord of a property in Sefton that isn't empty	A landlord of a property that is empty	An elected member	Other (please specify)
Disagree	156 (59.09%)	87 (32.95%)	10 (3.79%)	34 (12.88%)	30 (11.36%)	1 (0.38%)	25 (9.47%)
Don't know	8 (3.03%)	4 (1.52%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (1.52%)

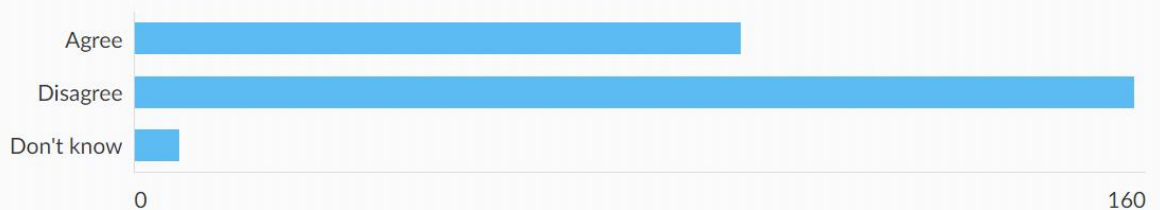
- Moving on to those who disagreed with the proposal, the highest number came from 87 'Members of the public' (32.95%). As noted above, this is the same number of the public who agreed with the proposal.
- The second highest number came from 34 of those who identified as 'Landlord of a property in Sefton that isn't empty' (12.88%).
- This was closely followed in third by 'Landlord of a Property that is empty' with 30 (11.36%).
- 25 respondents identified as 'Other' (9.47%).
- The fifth highest number was from 10 'Local Business Owners' (3.79%).
- Finally, 1 Elected Member disagreed with the proposal (0.38%).

In addition, there was 8 respondents (3.03%) who selected 'Don't Know'. This was 4 apiece of 'Members of the Public' and 'Other' (1.52% each).

Although an even split among members of the public, a high proportion of collective 'landlords' disagreed with the proposals than those landlords who agreed with it.

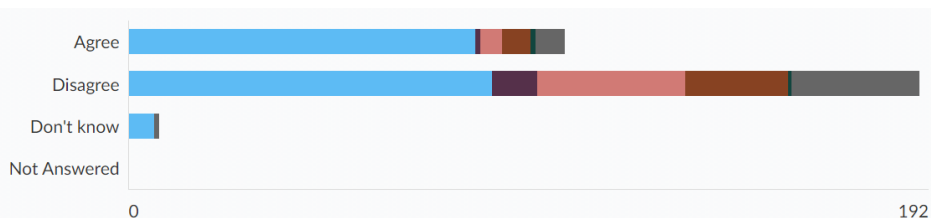
Focus on Q4

Question 4: Do you think that an extra 100% Council Tax should be charged on homes that are empty but furnished after 1 year?



Option	Total	Percent
Agree	97	36.74%
Disagree	160	60.61%
Don't know	7	2.65%

For Q4 only, the breakdown of respondents was as follows:



Option	Total	A member of the public	A local business owner	A landlord of a property in Sefton that isn't empty	A landlord of a property that is empty	An elected member	Other (please specify)
Agree	97 (36.74%)	84 (31.82%)	1 (0.38%)	5 (1.89%)	7 (2.65%)	1 (0.38%)	7 (2.65%)

- The highest number of respondents came from 'Members of the Public' with 84 in agreement (31.82%).

Agenda Item 9

- The joint second highest came from ‘A landlord of a property that is empty’ and those listed as ‘other’ with 7 apiece (2.65%).
- Thirdly, ‘Landlord of a property in Sefton that isn’t empty’ came in with 5 (1.89%).
- Finally, 1 ‘Elected Member’ and 1 ‘Local Business Owner’ agreed (0.38%).

Option	Total	A member of the public	A local business owner	A landlord of a property in Sefton that isn't empty	A landlord of a property that is empty	An elected member	Other (please specify)
Disagree	160 (60.61%)	88 (33.33%)	11 (4.17%)	36 (13.64%)	25 (9.47%)	1 (0.38%)	31 (11.74%)
Don't know	7 (2.65%)	6 (2.27%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.38%)

- For those that disagreed, the highest number came from ‘Members of the Public’ with 88 (33.33%).
- The second highest number came from 36 ‘Landlords of a property in Sefton that isn’t empty’ (13.64%).
- Following in on third was those listed as ‘Other’ with 31 (11.74%).
- The fourth highest was from ‘Landlords of a Property that is empty with 25 (9.47%).
- The fifth highest was from ‘Local Business Owners’ with 11 (4.17%).
- Finally, there was 1 ‘Elected Member’ (0.38%) in disagreement.

In addition to the above, there was also 6 ‘Members of the Public’ (2.27%) and 1 ‘Other’ (0.38%) who did not know whether to agree or disagree.

Comments

Disagreement

For those in Disagreement with Q3 & Q4, common themes could be seen among the groups...

Examples of the concerns of Members of the public included:

Don't like this idea think second homes not an issue in this area and this would just hit people who have had to move and struggling to sell.
If no one living in house then not using council services so why should they be charged double.

100% is excessive!!, even the rich in Abersoch are charged 50%. the levy is meant for problem areas like Cornwall, which sefton isn't. You need affordable housing what if the house exceeds the average affordability bracket?.

Council tax surely is based on usage of services by the residents of a property. Why would you charge double for services which are not being used in the first place?

If homes are not lived in the owners are not accessing local facilities .

Council just wanting more money as council tax is expensive enough as it is.

Why pay more when no one's living there ? We've just bought a house. Completely had to renovate it while still living at home with parents. No water no toilets no walls nothing in the house but we still have to pay £200 a month!

Why pay a charge when they are not using any services. It's like paying for gas and electricity and not using it

Seeking to tax unfairly people who have holiday or 2nd homes and who can bring in money and support the community, will back fire – they can sell up and leave. Sefton should be attracting people, not driving them away.

Common themes in the concerns of members of the public were centred around personal budgets and potentially increased council tax bills for individuals, together with the cost of services available to the public and whether they offer value or not.

Examples of the concerns left in the comments from 'Landlords in Sefton with a property that isn't empty' included:

So this seems like a financial penalty for those with a little bit of extra assets and income. What are the 525 homes as a percentage of the total number of homes in Sefton? Why don't you build more homes ?

I believe Landlords are having a very difficult time with the interest rate uo. Most landlords do try to fill an empty property as quickly as possible, they can not afford to refit the property to a rentable position??

If we purchase a property that has been empty, a premium could start straightaway and more likely if you shorten the time. Need protection where we are actively selling, advertising let and carrying out works, including scope and quote.

My holiday home brings income to area. Mortgage trebled, struggling, proposals will destroy business. Run maintained, realistically priced rental properties. Takes time to prepare properties & find tenant. Landlords will sell up.

The council doesn't appear to take into consideration landlords and developers taking dilapidated or empty properties that need long periods of construction into account with CT exemption.

Common themes include fears of the impact those proposals could have on their business, both economically and in the viability of investing in new properties within the Sefton area.

Examples of the concerns left in the comments from 'Landlord of a property that is empty':

I can't sell my late xhusband flat, lost 2 offers. Im a pensioner and pay CT, service charge, utility bills out of my pension. I think its very unfair to expect double council tax as my flat is empty and costing the council nothing.

Very penal on probate sales

Why should Sefton charge more when owners are already paying Council Tax? If a house is empty there are no residents using any of the Councils services and yet the Council is already receiving substantial revenue from that property.

The property is empty because of no fault of mine.. the last tenants trashed it and I'm trying to make it rentable again .. the cost of this is huge and as my husband recently passed away it's a slow process

Yes if property has been inherited and need time to grieve should consider the current housing market making it v.hard to sell, why should you be penalised for over 1yr
cost of living crisis that extra amount could send someone into debt

Concerns in this area stem from having increased bills at times of unforeseen circumstances determining if a property is empty (such as passing of a relative or tenants unexpectedly vacating). In addition there are similar concerns to 'Members of the public', such as paying more for local services, or local services not being used.

Agreement

For those in Agreement with Q3 & Q4, common themes could be seen within groups:

Members of the public...

The revenue raised could offset the CT reduction scheme for locals who contribute permanently to the local economy. We have 2 affordable properties perfect for young locals just lying idle as little-used second homes/investments.

Anyone who has left their home unattended because they are caring for someone else in their own home should not be included in this; they shouldn't be penalised for their kindness/sense of duty.

Agenda Item 9

I live next door to a property that is derelict and been empty for almost 4 years. It has been used as a cannabis farm. I am sick to death of it. Charge as much as possible

According to Shelter there are 250,000 homeless people in the uk & 1 million empty homes.

I fully support any measure designed to tackle these issues & prevent profiteering from people's misfortune & misery.

Too many properties are standing empty. We wouldn't have to build so many new houses if empty houses could be brought into use by making it too expensive to just leave them to rot.

There is a housing shortage for families who need a residence, this is worsened by Rich people who buy homes as accessories-This needs to stop!

I support the council gaining some needed funds by taxing this wealthy strata of society.

Common themes for the public stem from the potential for charges to be used to improve areas suffering from anti-social behaviour due to empty properties attracting crime, and freeing up empty homes to tackle issues such as homelessness via the council gaining funds through the proposals to improve services.

Landlords in Sefton with a property that isn't empty...

As a landlord I am required to pay council tax after 1 month once the residential poroeprty becomes vacant.

Why not other landlords who abuse the system for profit

Same rules should apply to commercial premises on our high streets.

I feel there should be a flexible approach from Sefton council, after 12 months empty, pending on circumstances and valid reasons for a property remaining empty.

Analysis of this smaller number of submitted comments indicates a common theme of 'fairness' being applied for landlords who agree with the proposals.

Landlord of a property that is empty...

Discretion given to rental properties up for sale but not selling after 12 months.

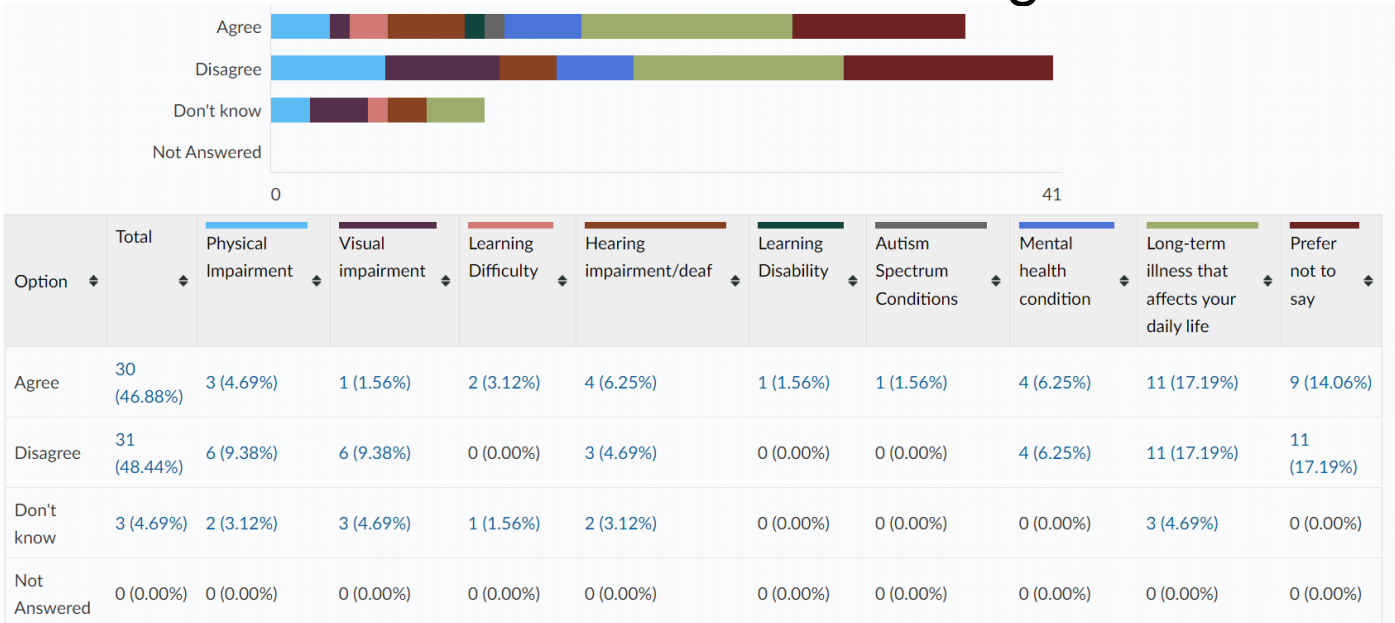
Not applicable for properties where work is being undertaken to update/improve for say 3 months?

Only 1 comment supplied from this group. Although agreeing to the proposals, they feel there should be scope for ensuring there are certain exceptions based on specific circumstances. This is similar to landlords who disagreed, in that they were worried that the proposals were unfair to properties in specific circumstances.

Equalities

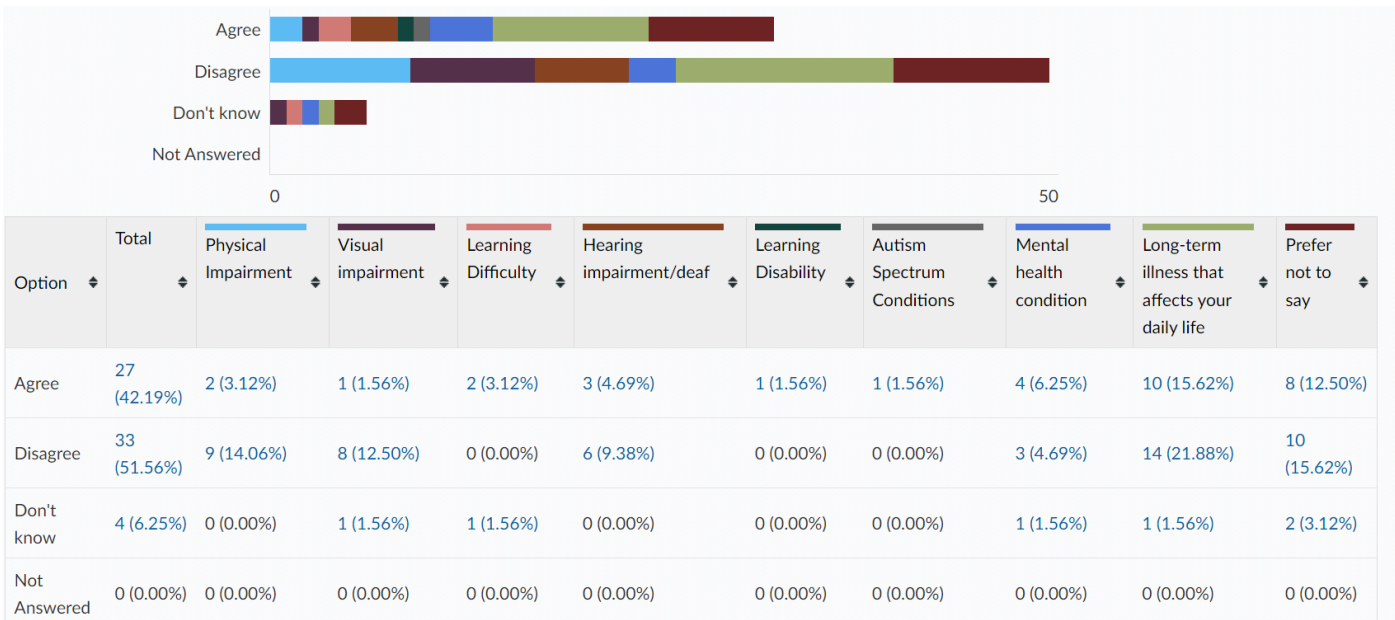
Out of the 264 responses, 64 responses (where permission was given to share information from the Equalities Questionnaire) detailed a disability. For Q3 this was broken down into the following:

Agenda Item 9



Agree and disagree were close in comparison with 30 to 31 respectively (46.88% and 48.44%).

For Q4, and for the same 64 as gave permission in Q3, agree/disagree was broken down as follows:



33 respondents (51.56%) disagreed with the proposal to 27 (42.19%).

4. Equalities Impact Assessment

Equality Analysis Report – Empty Properties and Council Tax

Details of proposal: Proposal to introduce new discretionary Council Tax Premiums on Empty Properties and Periodically Occupied Properties

Council Tax is a local tax on domestic properties which helps to pay for local services, such as social services and refuse and recycling collections, as well as contributing towards police

Agenda Item 9

and fire services. The amount payable depends on the property banding. There is also a range of discounts and exemptions available to reduce payable liability.

The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwelling) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2012 have allowed billing authorities in England, to decide what level of Council Tax to charge owners of empty property from April 2013.

The Local Government Finance Act 2012 was also amended from April 2013, enabling billing authorities to charge an empty homes premium in respect of properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for two years or more.

Across Sefton there are currently around 2,100 homes that have been empty for six months or longer (excluding those which are exempt from paying Council Tax); of these, nearly 1,400 have been empty for one year or more. In a time when demand for housing is increasing this is a significant wasted resource.

On 31 October 2023, there were 815 long-term empty dwellings paying a premium of at least 100%. Applying the premium on properties that have been empty for one year, rather than two, would mean that a further 570 properties would have to pay a 100% premium unless the owners took action to bring those properties back into use.

On 3 October 2023, there were more than 405 properties liable for Council Tax in the borough registered as second homes. Such properties are likely to be empty for long periods of the year and, like other empty homes, could be viewed as a wasted resource in a time of high demand for housing.

The proposed new premiums give local authorities a legislative tool to incentivise owners to bring unoccupied dwellings back into use.

Ramifications of Proposal:

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill received Royal Assent in October 2023, and gives additional discretionary powers to billing authorities to:

- Reduce the time period in which a Council Tax premium can be charged on empty homes from 2 years to 1 year from April 2024
- Charge a premium in respect of empty properties that are unoccupied and furnished (often referred to as second homes) from April 2025.

The proposals to exercise the new discretionary powers put forward as part of this annual review of Sefton's Council Tax Discount Schemes for 2024/25, has the following key aims:

- To encourage empty properties back in to use
- Ease housing supply pressures
- Reduce negative impacts, such as anti-social behaviour, reductions in rental & market values on surrounding properties, desirability of an area.
- Generate additional revenue that will be used to support the provision of council services.

Exceptions:

In July 2023, the Government published a consultation which set out a number of exceptions that billing authorities would need to apply when charging a premium under the Levelling Up

and Regeneration Act 2023.

These exceptions included in the consultation are highlighted below:

Exception	Applies to
1. Properties Undergoing Probate	Both
2. Properties being actively marketed for sale or let	Both
3. Empty properties undergoing major repairs	long-term empty homes
4. Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling	second homes
5. Job-related dwellings	second homes
6. Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings	second homes
7. Seasonal homes	second homes

It was proposed that exception 1 should apply for a maximum of 12 months and that exceptions 2 and 3 apply for a maximum of 6 months. The exceptions 4, 5, 6, and 7 are not time limited. These exceptions would provide council taxpayers time to sell or let their properties without having to pay the premium. The Government has not yet published the outcome of the consultation.

The proposal to introduce new discretionary Council Tax Premiums has been carried out mindful of the Council's equalities duties.

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

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

Age (working age)

A range of statutory Council Tax discounts and exemptions are available including means tested support, single person discounts, disabled persons relief. These are not within the scope of these changes and so will continue to be awarded in respect of occupied properties, along with those that are relevant to homes that have been left empty, for example to provide or receive care.

Discretionary support may be available where hardship is demonstrated under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund policy.

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Age (Pensionable age)

See above.

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

People with a Disability

With consideration given to people with disabilities, there is no evidence which would suggest that the changes will have a disproportionate impact on this group.

Gender Reassignment

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Agenda Item 9

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Race

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Religion or Belief

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Sex

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Sexual Orientation

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Pregnancy and Maternity

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Mitigation factors to minimise negative impacts

The Council has put the following mitigation in place:

- Provision of a discretionary Exceptional Hardship Fund that may provide additional support to those financially vulnerable to struggling to pay Council Tax
- Offering 12-month (rather than 10-month) instalment payments to Council Tax payers to help ease payment difficulties.
- Establishing a co-ordinated working relationship between the Council's contracted Enforcement Agents and Citizens Advice Sefton to support people in debt, ensuring that Citizens Advice Sefton has direct lines of communication with the Enforcement Agents and can arrange for recovery action to be placed on hold whilst discussing and agreeing affordable payment arrangements.
- As well as charging the empty homes premium, there are other Council initiatives to help bring empty homes back into use, this includes offering advice to owners through sending regular letters and the Council's property accreditation scheme that helps empty homeowners find tenants for their property. The Council's Housing Standards Team will also work with owners to bring their properties back into use. However, in some cases enforcement action is required when the property is causing a statutory nuisance, and the owner is uncooperative or untraceable.

Care Leavers

The Council provides up to 100% Council Tax discount to support to young people leaving local authority care up to the date of their 25th birthday.

No further impacts identified specific to this group.

Armed Forces Covenant

Provisions exist for members of the armed forces who live in and pay Council Tax for a property which their employer requires them to occupy, and they are liable for Council Tax on a second furnished property, a discount of 50% may apply. The job related second home discount will apply to either:

- The job-related dwelling if it is the second home of the householder or their spouse/civil partner (not their main home), or
- Another dwelling if the job-related dwelling is the main residence of the householder or their spouse/civil partner and they have another dwelling that is therefore a second home.

One of the properties must also fall into the following class:

- C – i.e., in the armed forces and have their main residence in the UK in Ministry of Defence accommodation which is exempt from Council Tax under Class O.

Members of HM forces are sometimes obliged through the nature of their occupation to reside in accommodation provided by their employers, both in the UK and whilst serving overseas.

Current Council Tax legislation does provide for taxpayers to be liable at more than one address. Living accommodation for UK armed forces, including barrack and other accommodation, which is owned by the Secretary of State is exempt from Council Tax and contributions in lieu of Council Tax (CILOCT) are payable by the Ministry of Defence to broadly match the amount of Council Tax that would otherwise have been payable. These contributions are passed on by the MOD through averaged additions to the accommodation charges of service personnel.

No further impacts identified specific to this equality group.

Consultation:

A public consultation has been carried out to seek views on the proposed change. A direct mailshot was issued to the owners of approximately 1,500 empty properties in Sefton to alert them to the consultation for them to provide their views if they wished.

The consultation ran from 11/09/2023-27/10/2023. It was hosted on the Council's Citizen Space Website with alternative paper copies available on request.

There were 264 responses to the consultation, with the questions broken down as follows.

Question 3 – 'Do you think the extra 100% Council Tax should be charged for homes that are empty after 1 year instead of the 2 years it is now' had an agreement rate of 37.88% and a disagree rate of 59.09%, with 3.03% who did not know.

Question 4 – 'Do you think that an extra 100% Council Tax should be charged on homes that are empty but furnished after 1 year' had an agreement rate of 36.74% and a disagree rate of 60.61%, with 2.65% who did not know.

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

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

1. *Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*

Agenda Item 9

2. *Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*
3. *Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*

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

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

The Council has set out in the sections above how it meets its equalities duties in relation to the proposed introduction of new discretionary Council Tax Premiums for empty properties and those periodically occupied.

What actions would follow if proposal accepted by Cabinet and Council?

Applying the premium on properties that have been empty for one year, rather than two, would mean that a further 570 properties would have to pay a 100% premium unless the owners took action to bring those properties back into use.

A premium of up to 100 per cent will be applied on second homes. The legislation requires that a billing authority's first determination under this section must be made at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates. This is required to give second homeowners 12 months' notice of the change. As a result of this clause the earliest date the premium could be applied is 1 April 2025.

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 4 th January 2023
Subject:	Financial Management 2023/24 to 2026/27 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2023/24 – January Update		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To inform **Cabinet** of:

- 1) The current position relating to the 2023/24 revenue budget.
- 2) The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2023/24.
- 3) The monitoring position of the Council’s capital programme to the end of November 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.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is recommended to:

Revenue Budget

- 1) Note the current position relating to the 2023/24 revenue budget.
- 2) Note the actions being taken to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced position.
- 3) Recognise the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2023/24 revenue budget and acknowledge that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed, and remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved.

Capital Programme

- 4) Note the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 7.1).

Agenda Item 10

- 5) Note the latest capital expenditure position as at 30 November 2023 of £21.514m (paragraph 7.5); the latest full year forecast is £55.117m (paragraph 7.6).
- 6) Approve a supplementary capital estimate of £0.534m for the Childcare Expansion Capital Grant provided by the Department of Education (paragraph 7.4.).
- 7) Note that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council (paragraphs 7.9-7.11).

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the current position in relation to the 2023/24 revenue budget.

To provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2023/24 and agreed allocations for future years.

To progress any changes that are required in order to maintain a relevant and accurate budget profile necessary for effective monitoring of the Capital Programme.

To approve any updates to funding resources so that they can be applied to capital schemes in the delivery of the Council's overall capital strategy.

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

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The report indicates that for 2023/24 following the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report that an overspend position of £2.184m is currently forecast and that further work is being undertaken to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced position. Further mitigating actions are proposed in this report to ensure the Council returns to a balanced forecast outturn position-if these actions are not available within the approved budget, existing reserves and balances may need to be used.

(B) Capital Costs

The Council's capital budget in 2023/24 is £55.191m. As at the end of November 2023 expenditure of £21.514m has been incurred and a full year outturn of £55.117m is currently forecast.

Implications of the Proposals:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): Currently an overspend position of £2.184m is currently forecast for 2023/24, pending further work to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies. Further mitigating actions are proposed in this report to ensure the Council returns to a balanced forecast outturn position. However, it should be noted that significant pressure and risk remains in a number of areas, particularly relating to Adult and Children’s Social Care. If budgets experience further demand and inflationary pressure during the remainder of the year further corresponding savings or financial contributions will need to be identified and approved by members.</p>								
<p>Legal Implications: None</p>								
<p>Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.</p>								
<p>Impact on Children and Young People: Yes The report highlights the current financial position relating to services provided for Children and Young People.</p>								
<p>Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will</p> <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> <p>The allocations of capital funding outlined in section 7 may be spent on projects that will have a high climate change impact as they could relate to new build, rebuild, refurbishment, retrofit and demolition proposals. Environmental consideration will be taken into account when specific projects are designed and tendered – which will help to mitigate negative impacts.</p>	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:

Effective Financial Management and the development and delivery of sustainable annual budgets support each theme of the Councils Core Purpose.

<p><u>Protect the most vulnerable:</u> See comment above</p>
<p><u>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</u> See comment above</p>
<p><u>Commission, broker and provide core services:</u></p>

Agenda Item 10

See comment above
<u>Place – leadership and influencer:</u> See comment above
<u>Drivers of change and reform:</u> See comment above
<u>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</u> See comment above
<u>Greater income for social investment:</u> See comment above
<u>Cleaner Greener:</u> See comment above

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Services is the author of the report (FD 7475/23)

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer has been consulted and has no comments on the report (LD 5574/23).

(B) External Consultations

N/A

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer:	Paul Reilly
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 4106
Email Address:	paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendix is attached to this report:

APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 2 March 2023, Members approved the Budget for the financial year 2023/24. This budget was developed throughout the preceding nine months and took account of all known issues. Within that report, and as with previous years, the inherent financial risk within the budget, especially with respect to Children's Services, was identified. This was further reflected within the reserves' strategy for the Council, as reported in the Robustness Report also presented to Budget Council.
- 1.2 This report is the sixth of the Council's monthly budget monitoring reports and updates the revenue forecast outturn position for all services, including the pressures that have materialised since the budget was set.
- 1.3 The report also outlines the current position regarding key income streams for the Authority, namely Council Tax and Business Rates. Variations against expected receipts in these two areas will also affect the Council's financial position in future years.
- 1.4 The capital section of the report informs Members of the latest estimate of capital expenditure for 2023/24 and forecast expenditure for 2024/25 and 2025/26. The capital budget to date is presented in paragraph 7.1. Paragraphs 7.2 to 7.8 review progress of the capital programme, including additional capital schemes. Finally, paragraphs 7.9 to 7.11 confirm that there are adequate levels of resources available to finance the capital programme.

2. Revenue Budget 2023/24 – Forecast Outturn Position as at the end of November 2023

- 2.1 Members are provided with updates of the Council's forecast financial revenue position each month during the financial year from July. As would be expected as the forecast develop through the year, they become more robust and can inform decision making. The Council adopted this approach by developing its in year remedial budget actions on the back of the mid-year review position and this report builds on that.
- 2.2 As at the end of November 2023, the forecast outturn shows a net overspend on services of **£6.979m**, the majority of which relates to potential additional pressure within Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care and Education Excellence as well as the impact of the local government pay award. It should be noted that the majority of services are reporting a balanced position or are implementing local remedial actions to return a balanced position at this stage. As with all organisations at this time, the Council is operating in a very challenging financial environment. However, it is vital that the Council achieves a balanced forecast outturn position to ensure its financial sustainability. Actions to meet some of the forecast overspend were approved as part of a previous report in November. These totalled £4.795m so the net overspend position is £2.184m.
- 2.3 The table below highlights the variations across services that make up the £2.184m forecast overspend, including approved mitigating actions:

Agenda Item 10

	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Variance to October
	£m	£m	£m	£m
<u>Services</u>				
Strategic Management	3.936	4.036	0.100	0.001
Adult Social Care	110.394	111.394	1.000	0.000
Children's Social Care	80.150	85.183	5.033	0.000
Communities	11.494	11.359	-0.135	0.000
Corporate Resources	6.196	5.986	-0.210	0.000
Economic Growth & Housing	6.410	6.410	0.000	0.000
Education Excellence	15.303	16.732	1.429	-0.075
Health & Wellbeing	19.620	18.837	-0.783	0.000
Highways & Public Protection	10.679	10.577	-0.102	-0.055
Operational In-House Services	16.182	16.325	0.143	0.064
Energy Costs	4.200	4.200	0.000	0.000
Additional Pay Award Provision	4.333	5.833	1.500	0.000
Total Service Net Expenditure	288.897	296.872	7.975	-0.065
Mitigating Actions approved in November	0.000	-4.795	-4.795	0.000
Council Wide Budgets	14.113	13.117	-0.996	-0.164
Levies	36.193	36.193	0.000	0.000
General Government Grants	(84.086)	(84.086)	0.000	0.000
Total Net Expenditure	255.117	257.301		
<u>Forecast Year-End Deficit</u>			<u>2.184</u>	<u>-0.229</u>

2.4 The key areas relating to the outturn position are as follows:

- **Adult Social Care** – The previous forecasts assumed that the Adult Social Care budget will break-even during 2023/24. However, there are a number of significant assumptions and uncertainties that could impact on this position before the year-end. The service has also committed to a number of efficiencies and savings that amount to £5.7m, in order to meet the savings approved as part of the approved 2023/24 budget plus additional savings to meet the additional budgetary pressures arising from the increases in provider fees approved at Cabinet meetings in June 2023. The achievement of these savings will be carefully monitored throughout the year. At this time over £5m of the £5.7m of savings have been delivered.

Like all councils, the Service is experiencing growth pressure with demand for services and are seeking to meet the cost of this within the resources available,

including taking account of the additional funding from Central Government that is being made available to councils to meet increases in demand and financial pressure including those that maybe experienced during winter and in respect of discharges. Given the pressures being faced a forecast overspend of £1.000m was reported last month. However, a number of upward pressures within the Service have continued and could result in the forecast overspend position increasing by a further £1.6m. Further work is being undertaken to understand the pressures and refine forecasts. Work will also continue to explore options to ensure that any potential overspend is reduced. As would be expected with a budget of this size and volatility, this remains a key risk during the current year.

- **Children's Social Care** – The current forecast for the service shows a potential overspend of £5.033m. However, there are a number of significant assumptions and uncertainties that could impact on this position before the year-end. A number of upward pressures within the Service have materialised and could result in the forecast overspend position increasing by a further £0.7m. Further work is being undertaken to understand the pressures and refine forecasts.

Members will be aware that the 2023/24 approved budget included an additional £21m of investment in the service based on the requirement for additional staffing (including temporary funding for additional agency costs whilst more permanent staff are recruited to, including International Social Workers and from staff coming through the social work academy) as well as additional resources to reflect the number of packages at the time, some potential growth as well as resource for inflationary pressures.

The current forecast for staffing is an overspend of £0.660m. This will require robust monitoring through the year. There are a clear set of assumptions driving this forecast in terms of when expensive project/court teams will leave the Council as new staff are onboarded from the International Social Worker cohort and the academy. If these assumptions change then the forecast will be revised with additional pressure being experienced. At present the forecasts reflect that position but this is continually being reviewed and is the key risk area for the Council, therefore if this position previously reported to members changes then this will need to come back for further decision. This is also a key aspect of budget setting and medium-term financial planning.

Certain areas of accommodation and support packages are forecast to overspend by £3.472m, partly due to additional packages in the late part of 2022/23 and early part of 2023/24. As mentioned in reports last year, packages initially have been at a higher cost than previously seen. However, recently improvements in practice have resulted in more children being placed in more appropriate settings at a lower cost. This is expected to continue throughout the year. Work is currently being undertaken to review forecasts for all types of care settings based on a number of children being in higher cost settings for shorter periods, which is expected to significantly impact on the forecast. In addition, where numbers and costs of Children with Disabilities has increased, specialist work is being undertaken to ensure health are making the appropriate contributions to the cost of care.

This is the key aspect of this financial forecast- the service is stabilising and as this takes place the review of placements will also be undertaken. At present the assumption is that all support, unless known otherwise, will continue for the whole

Agenda Item 10

of the financial year and for a number of placements this will not be the case. Senior managers are reviewing these, and the forecast will be updated accordingly.

Members will recall that in the budget reports it was advised that a tolerance of 5% on the budget could be expected based on advice from the DfE commissioner-based on the service budget that would amount to £4m. This current forecast is slightly higher than that at present before the outcome of the additional reviews is to be built in.

In considering this forecast, work will also be undertaken to determine if any of this pressure is temporary or permanent in nature and needs reflecting in future budget setting processes. At present as a lot of this pressure arose from 22/23 and the start of the financial year it is estimated that the future years impact is modest at this stage, but this will be the subject of further review as the budget setting process continues.

- **Corporate Resources** – The service had previously forecast a balanced position. However, in light of the overall budget position, the Service reviewed budgets further to identify areas where savings could be made. The forecast was therefore revised last month to an underspend of £0.210m. Based on the latest information, functions within the service are therefore forecasting an underspend of £0.834m. However, there is pressure within the ICT budget from inflation on contracts that is in excess of the provision made and a loss of income from School SLAs as a result of a change in the contractual arrangement enforced by the provider for which the Council has no control. These two pressures amount to £0.624m, which is offset by the underspends across the Service. As stated, all services are underspent, and significant cost control will continue to be required between now and the year end to deliver the current forecast position.
- **Economic Growth and Housing** – The service is showing a balanced position. However, based on the latest information, functions within the service are forecasting an overspend of £0.490m, although the service are currently examining forecasts. Additional cost control will be required between now and the year end to deliver that balanced position and this position will be updated in future reports.
- **Education Excellence** – The current forecast shows a potential net overspend of £1.429m, this relates to the provision of additional SEND staff and Home to School Transport. The service is reviewing all forecasts to identify areas that will offset costs of the additional SEND staff. Members will recall that in the budget substantial funding was added to the Home to School Transport budget, but this budget has come under further pressure due to the increase in the number of EHCPs being completed and the resulting pressure in the Service.
- **Operational In-House Services** The current forecast shows a potential overspend of £0.143m which is a slight worsening on the previous month. This relates to a number of areas across the Service, but mainly in Catering and the security service. The service is reviewing all forecasts to identify areas that may be able to offset these additional pressures, including from recharging additional costs being incurred.

- **Additional Pay Award Provision** – The approved Base Budget included a provision for the 2023/234 pay award of around 4.5%. This was line with most other local authorities who had budgeted for similar amounts. The offer from the National Employers for local government services body is for a fixed increase of £1,925, with a minimum of 3.5% (similar to the increase in 2022/23). For Sefton, this equates to an increase in the pay bill of about 6.0% or an additional £1.500m above the amount included in the 2023/24 budget. It should be noted that this offer has now been accepted by trade unions.

3. **Revenue Budget Summary 2023/24**

- 3.1 An overspend of **£2.184m** is currently forecast. However, as mentioned in section 2, this is a forecast based on a number of uncertainties and assumptions, particularly around Adult and Children’s Social Care which it is estimated could add £2.3m to the current forecast. Additional work will continue to be undertaken across service areas to refine the forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced budget position. In Children’s Social Care forecasts will be refined to take into account the improvements in practice that have seen children being placed in more appropriate settings, as well as the anticipated reduction in the number of Looked After Children, however the key risk is the staffing budget with the timing of transition between project/court teams and new permanent staff that will support a skilled and stable workforce the key variable that could impact the budget.
- 3.2 As mentioned, the Council must achieve an overall balanced position to ensure its financial sustainability. As an overall forecast overspend remains a remedial action plan to meet the residual balance has been produced and is presented below for members’ approval.

Proposed Remedial Actions

- 3.3 After the mitigating actions approved by Cabinet in November 2023 there is still a forecast overspend of **£2.184m**. It is proposed to undertake a number of remedial actions, including the adoption of financial principles used in previous years, to enable a balanced forecast outturn position to ensure its financial sustainability. This will include cost control in relation to recruitment, non-essential expenditure and no further growth items / additionality.

Summary 2022/23

- 3.4 An overspend of **£2.184m** is currently forecast. As mentioned above, there is further potential pressure of £2.3m on Adult and Children’s Social Care. The Council is reviewing a number of areas that would generate one-off mitigating measures of £2.6m – if the social care pressures materialise then a balance estimated at up to £2.0m will remain to be funded. However, this represents the current position that has been forecast to the year end- in the event that further pressure is experienced, further remedial action will be required. As a result of using the options above, there is no flexibility left for the use of existing reserves or general balances- as a result this pressure, and any further pressure, will need to be met from within the existing Council budget and delivery monitored carefully and reported to Cabinet.
- 3.5 Should there still be a residual overspend at year end, this will need to be funded by general balances and as part of the budget process for 2024/25 the Council will need increase these back to the previous level taking into account the risks faced

Agenda Item 10

by the Council and the assessment of their adequacy as described in the S151 Officer's Robustness report. As stated, further work will be carried out on the remedial plan and a detailed position will be reported in the next cycle.

4. **Council Tax Income – Update**

- 4.1 Council Tax income is shared between the billing authority (Sefton Council) and the three major precepting authorities (the Fire and Rescue Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Combined Authority – Mayoral Precept) pro-rata to their demand on the Collection Fund. The Council's Budget included a Council Tax Requirement of £160.236m for 2023/24 (including Parish Precepts), which represents 84% of the net Council Tax income of £191.139m.
- 4.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of November 2023 is a surplus of £0.109m. This variation is primarily due to: -
- The surplus on the fund at the end of 2022/23 being higher than estimated (-£0.314m).
 - Gross Council Tax Charges in 2023/24 being higher than estimated (-£0.492m).
 - Exemptions and Discounts (including a forecasting adjustment) being higher than estimated (+£0.697m).
- 4.3 Due to Collection Fund regulations, the Council Tax surplus will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2023/24 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.
- 4.4 A forecast surplus of £2.045m was declared on the 17 January 2023 of which Sefton's share is £1.716m (83.9%). This is the amount that will be recovered from the Collection Fund in 2023/24. Any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in 2024/25 and future years.

5. **Business Rates Income – Update**

- 5.1 Since 1 April 2017, Business Rates income has been shared between the Council (99%) and the Fire and Rescue Authority (1%). The Council's Budget included retained Business Rates income of £62.388m for 2023/24, which represents 99% of the net Business Rates income of £63.018m. Business Rates income has historically been very volatile making it difficult to forecast accurately.
- 5.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of November 2023 is a surplus of -£10.797m on Business Rates income. This is due to:
- The surplus on the fund at the end of 2023/24 being higher than estimated (-£9.916m).
 - Reduction in the gross charge on rateable properties (+£0.167m).
 - A number of reliefs announced for 2023/24 were assumed in the NNDR1 return with the loss of income as a result of these reliefs covered by Section 31 grant

payments. It is now forecast that the value of these reliefs will be less than anticipated (-£0.494m).

- Adjustments relating to prior years (-£0.554m)

5.3 When taking into account the lower Section 31 grants due on the additional reliefs, a net surplus of £9.857m is forecast.

5.4 Due to Collection Fund regulations, a Business Rates deficit will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2023/24 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.

5.5 A forecast surplus of £12.836m was declared in January 2023. Sefton's share of this is £12.708m. This is the amount that will be distributed from the Collection Fund in 2023/24. Any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in 2024/25 and future years.

6. High Needs Budget

6.1 Cabinet and Council have agreed to receive quarterly reports from the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education and the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education) with regard to the High Needs budget and the changes that are proposed, details of sufficiency planning, the Council's engagement on the Delivering Better Value Programme and the current high needs deficit and the risk around future central government decision making in respect of this deficit.

6.2 The latest report was presented to Cabinet in July, providing detail on the current monitoring position relating to the High Needs budget. A further report will be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet at the start of 2024.

7. Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26

Capital Budget

7.1 The Capital Budget and profile of expenditure for the three years 2023/24 to 2025/26 is as follows:

2023/24	£55.191m
2024/25	£47.922m
2025/26	£47.141m

7.2 The following updates have been made to the capital programme budget since the previous budget report to Cabinet in December:

- **Communities** – a new £0.120m project to replace windows to improve energy efficiency at The Atkinson has been added to the programme under delegated authority and is fully funded by grant from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

Agenda Item 10

- **Economic Growth & Housing** – £0.712m has been phased to 2024/25 for the Enterprise Arcade project. The cashflow forecast has been amended to reflect the selected contractor's projected spend profile for the works. Strip out works are due to commence in the new year rather than late 2023 as original anticipated. This impacts the expenditure profile for 2023/24. The contractors programme assumes a nine-month contract period with the main refurbishment work elements reprofiled into the 2024/25 financial year.
- **Education Excellence** – £0.368m has been phased to 2024/25 for ground works and a two story four classroom mobile block at Holy Family High School.
- **Operational In-House Services** - £0.382m has been phased from 2024/25 to 2023/24 for the purchase of new vehicles and equipment.

Capital Funding for Childcare Expansion

- 7.3 The Department for Education has in November confirmed Sefton's allocation of Childcare Capital Expansion Grant for 2023/24. The funding can be used to increase the physical capacity of early years and wraparound provision in local areas where demand is likely to exceed existing supply. It has been apportioned at a national level with £80m for the early years' entitlement and £20m for wraparound provision.
- 7.4 As reported to Cabinet in December, planning is underway in Sefton to, in the first instance, increase the finance support with the increase in entitlements. In the longer term, resources will be put in place to support childminders and start up nurseries. Sefton's capital allocation for 2023/24 is £534,202 and Cabinet is therefore recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

Budget Monitoring Position to November 2023

- 7.5 The current position of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of November 2023 is shown in the table below. It should be noted that budgets are profiled dependent upon the timing of when works are to be carried out and the anticipated spend over the financial year. The budget to date in the table below reflects the profiles of each individual scheme.

	Budget to November	Actual Expenditure to November	Variance to October
	£m	£m	£m
<u>Services</u>			
Adult Social Care	3.560	3.158	-0.402
Children's Social Care	0.284	0.357	0.073
Communities	0.454	0.469	0.015
Corporate Resources	1.502	1.531	0.029
Economic Growth & Housing	4.802	4.349	-0.453
Education Excellence	2.959	3.174	0.215
Highways & Public Protection	8.045	7.962	-0.083

Operational In-House Services	0.479	0.513	0.034
<u>Total Programme</u>	22.086	21.514	-0.572

Capital Programme Forecast Outturn 2023/24

7.6 The current forecast of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of 2023/24 and the profile of budgets for future years is shown in the table below:

	Budget 2023/24	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Budget 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
<u>Services</u>					
Adult Social Care	7.505	7.501	-0.004	2.675	1.850
Children's Social Care	0.602	0.727	0.125	0.100	-
Communities	2.009	2.049	0.040	0.405	-
Corporate Resources	2.597	2.523	-0.073	0.023	-
Economic Growth & Housing	10.640	10.614	-0.025	22.481	43.977
Education Excellence	8.755	8.597	-0.157	8.253	-
Highways & Public Protection	20.234	20.242	0.008	8.453	0.322
Operational In-House Services	2.850	2.863	0.013	5.532	0.993
<u>Total Programme</u>	55.191	55.117	-0.073	47.922	47.141

A full list of the capital programme by capital scheme is at **appendix A**.

7.7 The current 2023/24 budgeted spend is £55.191m with a budgeted spend to October of £22.086m. The full year budget includes exceptional items such as £8.544m for Growth and Strategic Investment projects, £1.082m for the Brownfield Housing Development fund, £0.760m for Sustainable Warmth Schemes, £1.300m for the Local Authority Housing Fund, £1.583m for Sporting Betterments at Schools, a £1.000m project for Southport Pier Decking, and a scheme to upgrade to LED Street Lighting (£3.606m).

7.8 Typically, on an annual basis the capital programme spends in the region of £25-30m. Given this typical annual level of spend, and although in 2023/24 there are a number of exceptional items as described above, it is likely that reprofiling of spend into 2024/25 will occur as the year progresses.

Programme Funding

7.9 The table below shows how the capital programme will be funding in 2023/24:

<u>Source</u>	£m
Grants	42.610
Prudential Borrowing	5.454
Capital Receipts	4.874
Contributions (including Section 106)	2.252
<u>Total Programme Funding</u>	55.191

Agenda Item 10

- 7.10 The programme is reviewed on an ongoing basis to confirm the capital resources required to finance capital expenditure are in place, the future years programme is fully funded, and the level of prudential borrowing remains affordable.
- 7.11 The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services will continue to manage the financing of the programme to ensure the final capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council.

APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26

<u>Capital Scheme</u>	Budget		
	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £
Adult Social Care			
Disable Facilities Grants – Core Grants (DFGs)	3,000,000	-	-
Occupational Therapy Support for DFGs	663,774	-	-
ICT Development & Transformation	927,573	307,067	2,708
ICT Connectivity in Care Homes and Support Living	65,000	35,000	-
Fall Prevention Schemes	45,000	-	-
Care Home Improvements	475,449	200,000	-
Changing Places	51,327	-	-
Integrated Health and Wellbeing on the High Street	-	400,000	-
Short Term Assessment Unit	506,846	1,213,154	1,847,000
New Directions Programme	200,038	201,000	-
Technology Enabled Care	329,449	124,184	-
Community Equipment Provision	400,000	-	-
Double to Single Handed Care Equipment Provision	150,000	-	-
Community Equipment – Specialist Projects	232,435	-	-
Community Equipment Stores Improvements	65,000	-	-
Programme Support	122,922	-	-
Digitising Social Care	260,000	195,000	-
Community Based Falls Equipment	10,200	-	-
Children’s Social Care			
Support for Fostering Placements	99,370	100,000	-
Community Equipment Provision	270,000	-	-
ICT Development & Transformation	133,545	-	-
Springbrook Refurbishment	28,923	-	-
Springbrook Vehicle	70,000	-	-
Communities			
Atkinson Arts Centre – Infrastructure & Windows	24,553	170,993	-
Leisure Centres – Essential Works	293,748	103,000	-
Libraries Projects	309,623	131,017	-
Neighbourhoods Projects	80,886	-	-
Local Authority Housing Fund	1,300,000	-	-
Corporate Resources			
Council Wide Essential Maintenance	1,762,785	23,000	-
Sustainable Warmth Schemes	760,092	-	-
ICT Transformation	73,812	-	-
Economic Growth & Housing			
Cambridge Road Centre Redevelopment	227,069	-	-
Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment	673,935	33,219	-
Strategic Acquisitions – Ainsdale	350,000	526,303	-
Marine Lake Events Centre	4,863,327	16,770,090	43,205,556
The Strand – Maintenance and Improvements	110,000	305,000	75,000
Enterprise Arcade	521,691	1,105,078	-

Agenda Item 10

	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £
Transformations de Southport	303,937	1,500,000	696,063
Bootle Canal Side Business Plan	813,867	-	-
The Strand – Repurposing Programme	680,000	-	-
Housing Investment	-	33,960	-
Social Housing Allocations Scheme	13,590	-	-
Brownfield Fund for Housing Development	1,082,336	-	-
Southport Pier	1,000,000	2,148,267	-
Town Centre Vacant Sites	-	58,764	-
Education Excellence			
General Planned Maintenance	365,605	30,249	-
Schools Programme	3,336,810	7,098,925	-
Sporting Betterment of Schools	1,583,215	-	-
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities	3,469,082	1,123,624	-
Highways and Public Protection			
Accessibility	668,143	-	-
Healthy Lifestyles	387,263	-	-
Road Safety	157,638	-	-
A565 Route Management and Parking	1,114,674	-	-
A59 Route Management Strategy	1,065,000	2,100,426	322,000
Strategic Planning	4,041,090	-	-
Traffic Management and Parking	67,000	-	-
Highway Maintenance	6,329,191	-	-
Bridges and Structures	475,000	1,900,000	-
Drainage	443,181	-	-
Street Lighting Maintenance	326,823	-	-
LED Street Lighting Upgrade	3,605,580	3,662,630	-
Urban Traffic Control	1,513,249	-	-
Completing Schemes and Retentions	40,000	-	-
Transport Growth Programme	-	789,813	-
Operational In-House Services			
Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management	1,342,664	1,924,673	898,000
Countryside Stewardship	11,659	-	-
Crosby Marine Lake Improvements	10,803	-	-
Parks Schemes	301,430	955,107	-
Tree Planting Programme	222,565	190,764	94,879
Golf Driving Range Developments	2,197	280,280	-
Ainsdale Coastal Gateway	438,186	427,989	-
Green Sefton – Vehicles, Plant & Machinery	48,335	101,152	-
Refuse Collection & Recycling	-	345,000	-
Vehicle Replacement Programme	472,166	1,307,328	-
<u>Total Programme</u>	55,190,651	47,922,056	47,141,206

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

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Agenda Item 14

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	4 January 2024
Subject:	Sefton New Directions		
Report of:	Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Adult Social Care		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No, Appendix A 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:

Sefton New Directions is a wholly owned Council company. The purpose of this report is to report to Cabinet the initial outcome of the services review of the company.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is recommended to consider the contents of this report and:

- (1) Note that the Sefton New Directions services review was completed within a shorter time period than originally agreed and planned, in order to meet the Council budget setting time framework and as a result actions and proposals being recommended from the services review will need to be delivered during a future twelve-month change and review programme which will commence in January 2024;
- (2) Note that in order for Sefton New Directions services to be affordable, viable, sustainable and provide quality services, a significant transformation programme of work will be required across both health and social care partners, with a stronger focus on the role of community partners within the review of services, which will be delivered in the design of 18 new service specifications;
- (3) Approve the recommendation that decisions on the transformation programme and any associated recommendations and decisions arising from the outcome of the programme are delegated to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care; and
- (4) Note that further reports will be submitted to Cabinet to provide updates on the transformation work and implemented decisions.

Agenda Item 14

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To report on the initial outcome of the review of Sefton New Directions and to outline the next steps relating to the required transformation work.

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

There are no alternative options to be considered, given that it was previously agreed that the findings of the review would be reported back to Cabinet and that the outcomes of the review result in recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Sefton New Directions are funded through a block contract with the Council of an annual value of £7.9m plus additional funding for ad-hoc contracts which is £0.9m. The contract was established in 2007.

The transformation programme, which will be co-designed, will ensure that the cost of service delivery is contained within the available budget set by the Council.

All key financial issues in relation to the company and potential future contractual and commissioning arrangements are included within Appendix A.

(B) Capital Costs

The Council does continue to fund some of the reactive and planned maintenance costs associated with most of the buildings from which Sefton New Directions deliver services from, as these remain in the ownership of the Council.

All key capital costs issues are included within Appendix A.

Implications of the Proposals:

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

Any resource implications to take forward the outcomes of the review and proposed next steps will be addressed.

Legal Implications:

Sefton New Directions operate services that support the Council's legal duties and obligations under the Care Act 2014, pertaining to the delivery of services to Residents of Sefton, who from a Care Act assessment and review of need, require these important services.

Sefton New Directors also support the Council through a trusted partners role and responsibility, meaning they support with Care Act assessment and review activity, working closely with the Council's adult social care Staff.

<p>Equality Implications:</p> <p>There are no equality implications directly from this report, however equality implications and duties were reflected in the review conducted and will continue to be reflected in the ongoing work to implement the findings and recommendations from the review.</p> <p>Further work to complete Equality impact assessment is being undertaken by Sefton New Direction and will follow as part of the development of a programme of change and improvement including the development of 18 service specifications.</p>								
<p>Impact on Children and Young People: No</p>								
<p>Climate Emergency Implications:</p> <p>The recommendations within this report will</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Have a positive impact</td> <td style="padding: 2px; text-align: center;">No</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Have a neutral impact</td> <td style="padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Have a negative impact</td> <td style="padding: 2px; text-align: center;">No</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td> <td style="padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Yes</td> </tr> </table> <p>There will not be any positive or negative impacts relating to the recommendations in this report.</p>	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:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable:</p> <p>The review provided an independent review on adult social care services provided for those who are most vulnerable within the borough.</p> <p>Sefton New Directions are a Provider contracted to deliver care and support services to vulnerable people in order to meet their assessed care and support needs.</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</p> <p>Supporting communities and ensuring the adoption of a strength-based approach was a key aspect of the review.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services:</p> <p>The Council has a contractual arrangement with Sefton New Directions and the review informs how Sefton New Directions will support the Council to deliver its strategic objectives and future commissioning intentions.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer:</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform:</p>

Agenda Item 14

The Review process is a key part of the regional sector led improvement programme and is an important part of planning for inspection.
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 (FD7424/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5624/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Consultation and engagement with Sefton New Directions has taken place throughout the 12-week duration of the review and with respect to the formulation of this report.

Further work to engage with people who access, and use services is planned to take place in November and December, however Sefton New Direction undertake robust Customer Satisfaction surveys, that showcase a high level of customer satisfaction.

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

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Appendices:

Appendix A – Executive summary of review.

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

Agenda Item 14

- 1.1 Sefton New Directions (SND) was set up as a wholly owned company by the Council in 2007, as a private company limited by shares. Under procurement law the company is regarded as a Teckal Company which means that the Council can make direct awards of contracts to the company without going through a procurement process. In turn the company is bound by the Public Contract Regulations. Teckal rules are also clear that SND forms part of the adult social care department, delivering important Care Act 2014 services.
- 1.2 The Council's Constitution provides that Cabinet has authority to manage and safeguard any shareholding the Council owns in a company.
- 1.3 As 100% shareholder in the company there are matters reserved for the Council to decide upon, for example, to make any material change to the nature of the business.
- 1.4 In 2019, a Partnering Charter was agreed which outlines how the Council and ND will work together to provide quality services to local people. With respect to the New Directions 2022-25 Strategic Business Plan and 2021/22 Finance Plan, this was submitted by Adult Social Care to Cabinet on 23rd June 2022.
- 1.5 Since 2007 New Directions deliver on behalf of the Council, important care services, that come under the Care Act 2014 supporting adults aged 18+ with a range of care and support needs, these services include:
 - Four Day Services (Community Hubs)
 - Reablement Service
 - Crisis Response Services
 - Four Care Homes (including Residential and Enabling Support)
 - Four Supported Living schemes (People with a Tenancy Agreement with a Landlord)
 - Trusted Assessors Support (who complete functional assessments that support people to live and age well in Sefton)
 - Shared Lives (People living with shared lives carers)
 - Respite/Short-term/Intermediate Care Beds (Supporting discharge to assessment pathways)
 - Mental Health Recovery Services (Supporting people home, after a period of enablement and recovery)
- 1.6 It should be noted that governance arrangements were set out under an Article of Association at the point of inception 2007, subject to be monitored and reviewed thereafter. These were reviewed and updated in 2020 in consultation with the Shareholder at which point it was agreed further monitoring and reviews would take place.
- 1.7 On the 6th March 2023, the Council's Executive Director of Adult Social Care (DASS), set out in writing the requirement that New Directions would be subject to a significant review of services.
- 1.8 The key elements of the review were jointly agreed with by all partners at the start of the process and formalised through agreement of the high-level plan with the SND Board in July 2023.

Agenda Item 14

- 1.9 A report was also submitted to Cabinet in July 2023 setting out the draft high-level plan for the review and to highlight key concerns regarding the viability and sustainability of SND.

2. Key Elements of the Review

- 3.1. The main purpose of the review was to look at the case for change and recommendations that follow, including the preferred way forward and options which optimise value for money, assess sustainability, affordability and which demonstrates that the proposed options presented through service specification of change, are viable for delivery both over the next twelve month but also longer-term.

4. Findings of the Review

- 4.1. An executive summary of the findings of the review are within Appendix A.
- 4.2. The review has identified that both the Council and SND board have agreed there needs to be improved governance between both parties to strengthen the strategic approach. This partnership 'resetting' will be based on equity, co-production, evidence-based decision making and support local strategies such as early help and prevention.
- 4.3. SND remains in a position to have an essential role in supporting the Council and Health Partners with the delivery of key strategic objectives as outlined in the Council's Market Position Statement and Market Sustainability Plan and other strategies such as the joint Intermediate Care Strategy and Sefton Place Plan.
- 4.4. The review has identified that in order to deliver the above, then a significant programme of transformation needs to be undertaken over the next 12 months, to align both commissioning requirements of the Council with available resource to fund the company as its single shareholder.
- 4.5. A key element of this transformation programme will the delivery of an initially developed Workforce Strategy, which will be updated by the work of the transformation programme.

5. Next Steps / Recommendations

- 5.1. It is proposed that from January 2024 onwards a twelve-month transformation programme is implemented to take forward the findings of the review.
- 5.2. Cabinet is asked to approve the recommendation that decisions on the transformation programme and any associated recommendations and decisions arising from the outcome of the programme are delegated to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care.

- 5.3. Further reports will be submitted to Cabinet to provide updates on the transformation work and implemented decisions.

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