

COUNCIL

**MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE
ON THURSDAY 18TH JANUARY, 2024**

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor June Burns) in the Chair
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Carragher) Vice Chair

Councillors Atkinson, Bradshaw, Brodie - Browne, Brough, Danny Burns, Byrom, D'Albuquerque, Desmond, Dodd, Dowd, Doyle, Evans, Grace, Halsall, Hansen, Hardman, Harrison Kelly, Hart, Harvey, Howard, Keith, John Kelly, John Joseph Kelly, Sonya Kelly, Killen, Lappin, Lloyd-Johnson, Lunn-Bates, Christine Maher, Ian Maher, McGinnity, McKee, Moncur, Morris, Murphy, Myers, O'Brien, Catie Page, Christopher Page, Prendergast, Pugh, Richards, Riley, Robinson, Roscoe, Shaw, Spring, Thomas, Lynne Thompson, Tweed, Veidman, Waterfield, Sir Ron Watson and Webster

74. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carlin, Cluskey, Corcoran, Cummins, Fairclough, Hardy, Roche, Spencer, Anne Thompson and Wilson.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

76. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 16 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

77. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor of Sefton's Gala Charity Ball 2024

Tickets were on sale for the Mayor's Gala Charity Ball which would be held on Saturday, 6th April 2024, at Formby Hall. Tickets are priced at £50.00 which includes a welcome drink, three course meal and entertainment. The Mayor considered it to be an important event as the

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money raised goes towards supporting local charities and organisations who do so much for local communities, and encouraged her fellow Members present to purchase a ticket and attend the event.

Toy Appeal 2023

The Mayor was pleased to report that once again, the Annual Toy Appeal had been a success with an unbelievable number of toys and vouchers being donated.

Through the Appeal, the Council had been able to support 700 families in Sefton, ensuring a memorable Christmas for their children.

The Mayor's sincere thanks went to her fellow councillors, as well as officers and the people and businesses of Sefton, for their generous contributions to the appeal.

Holocaust Memorial Day

A special ceremony will be held for Holocaust Memorial Day to remember the victims of the Holocaust.

The Mayor will be attending the service on Sunday, January 28, at Christ Church, Lord Street, Southport at 1.30pm., and the service will be open to everyone to attend, with refreshments served at the conclusion.

Christmas Light Switch Ons

The Mayor had been privileged to receive numerous invitations to partake in Christmas light switch-on events across Sefton. The Mayor considered that witnessing the Borough aglow with festive lights during this special time of year was a delightful experience.

Death of Former Councillor and Mayor Jim Hayes

It was the Mayor's sad duty to report that former Councillor and Mayor of Sefton, Jim Hayes, had passed away at the end of November 2023. On behalf of the Council, she attended Jim's funeral at Our Lady of Victoria RC Church in Hightown, on Thursday 14 December 2023.

Jim had been elected in May 1992 and was Mayor of Sefton from 1997 to 1998. He served as a Conservative Councillor representing Ainsdale Ward for 8 years, and during his time on the Council, he served on the following Committees:

- Best Value, Consultation and Social Inclusion Ratification Committee
- Contract Services Committee
- Education Committee
- Environmental and Licensing Committee
- Leisure Services Committee

- Planning committee
- Spokesperson for the Conservative on Environmental and Licensing Committee

The Council observed a one-minute silence as a mark of respect in reflecting on the sad passing of Mr Jim Hayes.

78. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

It was moved by Councillor Grace, seconded by Councillor Lappin:

That Councillor Atkinson be appointed as the Leader of the Council for the remainder of a period of four years until the Adjourned Annual Council Meeting in May 2027, or until such time as her term of office expires; and that Councillor Atkinson be appointed as the Sefton representative to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Councillors Pugh, Prendergast, Carragher and Sir Ron Watson thanked the out-going Leader, Councillor Ian Maher, and congratulated Councillor Atkinson on her appointment. Councillors Ian Maher and Atkinson thanked everyone for their support.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Councillor Atkinson be appointed as the Leader of the Council for the remainder of a period of four years until the Adjourned Annual Council Meeting in May 2027, or until such time as her term of office expires; and
- (2) Councillor Atkinson be appointed as the Sefton representative to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

79. MATTERS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC

The Council considered a schedule setting out the written question submitted by:

1.	Mr. Jeffrey Holloway to Councillor Lappin) (Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)
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together with a response given.

The member of the public who had submitted the question was in attendance at the Council meeting and a supplementary question was responded to by the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Councillor Lappin), indicating that a written response would be provided to the member of the public concerned.

RESOLVED:

That the question and response, as set out in the schedule, be noted.

80. QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council considered a schedule setting out the written questions submitted by:

1.	Councillor Prendergast to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)
2.	Councillor Prendergast to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)
3.	Councillor Prendergast to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)
4.	Councillor Prendergast to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)
5.	Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)
6.	Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)
7.	Councillor Lynne Thompson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills (Councillor Atkinson)
8.	Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)
9.	Councillor Pugh to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Councillor Lappin)
10.	Councillor Pugh to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)
11.	Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Hardy)
12.	Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)
13.	Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)
14.	Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Councillor Lappin)
15.	Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)

16.	Councillor Shaw to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)
17.	Councillor Lynne Thompson to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)

together with responses given. Supplementary questions to questions 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14 and 15 were responded to by the Leader of the Council, the former Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

81. PROVISION OF COUNCIL HOUSING AT BUCKLEY HILL LANE, NETHERTON

Further to Minutes Nod. 80 and 83 of the meeting of the Cabinet of 2 November 2023, the Council considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) indicating that a Council Housing Business Plan was approved by the Cabinet in April 2023 which would see the delivery of around 50 new homes over the next 5 years. The report recommended the funding into the capital programme for the acquisition of 18 homes (apartments) for social rent to be acquired from Sandway Homes at Buckley Hill Lane, Netherton.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a Supplementary Capital Estimate of £2,222,783 for the acquisition of new council housing at Buckley Hill Lane, Netherton be approved, to be funded through affordable housing capital receipts, historic right to buy sharing agreement receipts and Homes England grant funding, as recommended by the Cabinet at its meeting on 2 November 2023; and
- (2) the net rental income from the scheme, including that received during the initial payback period, be approved.

82. FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

Further to Minute No. 37 of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee of 13 December 2023, the Council considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services which sought approval for revisions to the Financial Procedure Rules.

As part of the annual review of the Council's Constitution, the Council's Financial Procedure Rules had been the subject of review. A number of key areas were reflected in the updated schedule:

- Commercial Activity
- Loans to Third Parties and Acquisition of Third-Party Interests
- Collection of Income

RESOLVED:

That the amended Financial Procedure Rules, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

83. PAY POLICY 1.4.2024- 31.3.2025

Further to Minute No. 12 of the meeting of the Pay and Grading Committee of 11 January 2024, the Council considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that recommended a Pay Policy for the Council, as required by the Localism Act 2011.

The following annexes were attached to the report:

- Annex A consideration of severance packages which amount to 100,000 or above, statutory guidance entitled *Making and disclosure of Special Severance Payments by local authorities in England*.
- Annex B - Pay Policy for Centrally Employed Teaching Staff

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the proposed Pay Policy at annexe A and annexe B to the report be approved; and
- (2) any changes to the Pay Policy as required because of legislation be delegated to the Pay and Grading Committee.

84. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME AND COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2024/25 AND REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS FOR LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES

Further to Minute No. 107 of the meeting of the Cabinet of 4 January 2024, the Council considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services providing details of the review of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the current year 2023/24, and proposing that there was a change made to the scheme with effect from 1 April 2024 for working-age households, in employment, in receipt of Universal Credit.

The report also proposed the introduction of 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 was 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.

The report also provided an updated Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish area for 2024/25.

The following Annexes were attached to the report:

- 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.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

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

85. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2023/24 TO 2026/27 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2023/24 – ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES

Further to Minutes Nod. 91 (6) and 98 (3) of the meeting of the Cabinet of 7 December 2023, the Council considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that set out supplementary estimates for approval in the Council's Capital Programme, following recommendations by the Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a supplementary capital estimate for £0.148m for ICT Service Developments funded by prudential borrowing be approved; and

- (2) a supplementary capital estimate for £20m for The Strand Shopping Centre Transformation Programme Phase 1A-C fully funded by the DLUHC grant funding, be approved.

86. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – 2024/25 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Further to Minute No. 105 of the meeting of the Cabinet of 4 January 2024, the Council considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking approval of a Programme of Meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

The following Appendices were attached to the report:

- 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

RESOLVED: That

- (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.

87. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES 2023/24

The Mayor reported that the Liberal Democrat Group wished to make changes to the membership of the following Committee:

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

Councillor Dodd to be appointed as the substitute member for Councillor Evans, in place of Councillor Shaw.

Councillor Shaw to remain in place as the substitute member for Councillor D'Albuquerque.

RESOLVED:

That the changes as detailed above be approved.

**88. MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR PRENDERGAST -
REMOVAL OF TEMPORARY CYCLE LANES**

This Notice of Motion was withdrawn.

**89. MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CARLIN - SUPPORT
FOR CALLING A CEASEFIRE IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**

This Notice of Motion was withdrawn.

**90. MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BYROM -
MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

It was moved by Councillor Byrom, seconded by Councillor Grace and
unanimously

RESOLVED:

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

This Council welcomes the latest report of His Majesty's Inspectorate of
Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services into Merseyside Fire and
Rescue Authority, where it has again given Merseyside Fire and Rescue
Service by far the highest assessed marking of any Fire Authority in the
country.

This reflects well on the service provided by the Fire Authority, its staff and
officers in their headline objective to keep Merseyside as the safest part of
Britain.

It also demonstrates that even in structurally, socially and economically
deprived areas such as Merseyside, the best of public services can be
delivered by dedicated staff and determined political action.

**91. MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR LLOYD-JOHNSON - AN
ALCOHOL STRATEGY FOR THE UK**

It was moved by Councillor Lloyd-Johnson , seconded by Councillor Doyle
and unanimously

RESOLVED:

An Alcohol Strategy for the UK

Across the country, many people will be undertaking Dry January or
cutting down their alcohol intake in the new year. For many, this will be a
healthy break from drinking which will be a boost to their health.

However, we know that in our communities, we have residents who consume alcohol regularly at dangerous levels and would meet the description of alcohol dependency. As reported in November 2022, “A quarter of the Sefton adult population have increased risk of harm through consuming more than the recommended levels of alcohol (over 14 units a week)¹”

Further, “Under 18 alcohol specific admissions for Sefton have risen to 71.0 per 100,000 in 2018/19-20/21. Sefton currently has the second highest rate in the North West (out of 39 Local Authorities) and is in the top 10 nationally.²”

Additionally, “Almost 2% of Sefton’s adult population are estimated to be dependent drinkers, approximately 4237 residents. Of these dependent drinkers, it is estimated that only 16% will be in treatment.”

Like all local authorities, Sefton does have information available for those wanting to lower their alcohol intake. However, local initiatives are undermined by the lack of a National Alcohol Strategy which draws together data and services, allocates resources and has the necessary power to scrutinise the multi-billion-pound alcohol industry.

This Council recognises that;

Many adults will enjoy alcohol in a socially responsible manner and that the aim of any strategy should not be to punish those who do so.

However, amongst this group there are people who wish to lower their alcohol intake, or stop drinking all together, and that they should be supported in making that decision.

Alcohol dependency is a disease and is often linked to social, financial, emotional and physical and mental health issues.

The last National Alcohol Strategy was published in 2012 and is no longer fit for purpose³.

¹ https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/7042/substance-misuse-jsna_.pdf

² https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/7042/substance-misuse-jsna_.pdf

³ <https://ahauk.org/news/independent-review-on-alcohol/>

Excellent work is done within Sefton by both the Council and third-sector organisations to help people wanting to lower their alcohol intake but this work is hampered by a lack of resources and there being no National Alcohol Strategy.

This Council believes that;

The role of providing support to those wanting to lower their alcohol intake and those who are alcohol dependent should not fall solely to local authorities.

A National Alcohol Strategy is required to properly allocate resources, address societal and cultural issues around how alcohol is consumed in the UK and to look at the way that alcohol is marketed and sold.

This council resolves to;

Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care expressing this Council's support for a National Alcohol Strategy and urging them to implement a strategy by the end of the next Parliament.

Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Members of Parliament representing Sefton residents to report the Council's support for a National Alcohol Strategy and urging them to use their powers within Parliament to lobby for its introduction.

Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Harm, thanking them for raising issues around alcohol harm and stating this Council's support for their stated aim of lobbying the Government to produce a National Alcohol Strategy⁴.

Through the Council's Communications Team, on or around 01/02/2024, publish a press release, congratulating those who have taken part in Dry January and signposting to all of the Council's currently available alcohol reduction resources.

⁴ <https://ahauk.org/news/independent-review-on-alcohol/>

92. MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR PUGH - PUBLIC RESPONSE STANDARDS

It was moved by Councillor Pugh, seconded by Councillor Lloyd-Johnson:

PUBLIC RESPONSE STANDARDS

This Council recognises the need for good communication with the citizens of this borough and in line with best practice seeks to improve public accountability by

(a) setting standards for response times to substantive questions raised by the public or councillors

(b) monitoring, recording and publishing by Council department the extent to which those standards are met

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The Council in seeking to achieve this and progress such a scheme without impairing operational effectiveness refers this matter to the relevant Cabinet member and Scrutiny Committee.

Following a debate on the Motion the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer officiated a vote and the Mayor declared that **the Motion was lost** by 14 votes to 42.