



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

**MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL BOOTLE
ON TUESDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2023**

PRESENT: Councillor Byrom (in the Chair)
Councillors Evans, Grace, Killen, McKee, Murphy
and Sir Ron Watson

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lappin

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atkinson and Bradshaw.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

11. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

12. CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE ACTIVITY - PRESENTATION

Further to Minute No. 8 (3) of the meeting held on 13 June 2023 the Committee received a presentation from Diane Turner, Customer Centric Services Manager, on Customer Contact Centre Activity. Ms. Turner highlighted the following matters:

- Customer services customer contact activity from home-based Contact Centre staff and staff based in both Bootle and Southport one stop shops
- The main activities handled by the Contact Centre relating to telephone calls, switchboard service, e-mails, webchat, taking payments for Council services, triaging Corporate Complaints and social media (Twitter, Facebook)
- Contact Centre monthly call volumes 2019/20 (pre-COVID19) v 2022/23 (post-COVID19)
- Average wait time for calls to be answered for prioritised services
- One Stop Shop activities in respect of face-to-face enquiries, the reception service, payments for Council services
- Payment kiosk and online payment analysis 2019/20 v 2022/23
- One Stop Shop customer satisfaction survey

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- Bootle enquiries (2019/20) V Southport enquiries (2019/20)
- Customer Services changes since Covid

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

- How feedback from switchboard services was gathered.
- The One Stop Shop at Southport and lack of a drop-in facility.
- Whether callers were advised as to where they were up to in the queue to be dealt with.
- Not all members of the public used the Internet.
- The current location of the One Stop Shop at Southport at the Atkinson and whether there were any plans to return to Cambridge Arcade.
- The website provided much of the information sought, although there would always be a need to provide a face-to-face service.
- Difficulties associated with individuals who needed to telephone the Contact Centre and credit associated with mobile telephone use.

RESOLVED:

That Diane Turner be thanked for her informative presentation.

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

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

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

- Disciplinary, Grievance and Dignity at Work - the organisation enjoyed a comparatively good level of cases and this reflected on the whole, both the good overall industrial relations environment, the partnership approach that was undertaken and also the work undertaken within departments
- The Strategic Leadership Board continuing to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence; and that the Personnel Team worked closely with departments providing information and advice and appropriate levels of support, advising managers on informal processes and assisting managers with the more formal and complex levels of sickness absence management

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- The Occupational Health Unit providing counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy on a face-to-face basis
- Physiotherapy appointments arranged through the OH Unit as were pension assessments for ill health, ill health pension appeals and deferred pension cases
- The Council's Sickness Absence Policy which operated in a partnership with trade unions

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

- Assurances were sought that sickness absence in areas of the Council where it was highest was being addressed.
- If agency staff were paid for sickness absence.
- If flexible working arrangements and agile working were helping to reduce sickness absence.
- The perception of Occupational Health Unit and the need to portray interventions as being positive.
- Reasons for stress profiles being higher in certain services and support offered.

RESOLVED: That

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

**14. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2023/24 TO 2026/27 - REVENUE
AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2023/24 – SEPTEMBER UPDATE**

Further to Minute No. 63 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 September 2023 the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that advised of:

- (1) the current position relating to the 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 July 2023 in respect of:
 - the forecast expenditure to year end;
 - variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members; and
 - updates to spending profiles and proposed

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amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects are also presented for approval; and

- (4) the latest performance management information for 2023/24.

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

- Reference was made to the Pay Award provision.
- Amounts to be allocated to Sefton from the Local Transport Capital Block Funding – Pothole Fund and how it would be distributed. A written response would be sought.
- The budget for Children’s Social Care and the demand for services, together with out-of-borough placements of children receiving services.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That in respect of the 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 it be acknowledged 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; and.
- (4) the requests for specific supplementary revenue estimates funded from additional grant funding referred to in the report be noted; and

- (B) That in respect of the Capital Programme:

- (1) Note the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 8.1) be noted;
- (2) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 July 2023 of £7.195m (paragraph 8.16) and that the latest full year forecast is £63.999m (paragraph 8.17) be noted;
- (3) the requests for specific supplementary capital estimates funded from additional grant funding referred to in the report be noted

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- (4) it be noted that the Council will procure an updated Stock Condition Survey for Crosby Library; and
- (5) It be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council;
- (C) the latest position relating to key performance measures be noted; and
- (6) The Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) be requested to provide information on the Local Transport Capital Block Funding – Pothole Fund to the Senior Democratic Services Officer, for circulation to Committee Members.

15. EXECUTIVE/SCRUTINY PROTOCOL

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought formal approval of changes to the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol (the Protocol) for submission to Cabinet.

The report advised that the draft protocol was approved by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet at their meetings in late 2020; and that at its first meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year, held on 20 June 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the Protocol and suggested two additions in relation to the submission of Plans and Strategies to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Working Group Reviews/Informal Meetings.

For illustrative purposes, an updated version of the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol was attached to the agenda highlighting the changes if ultimately approved by Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet.

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

- On-line informal meetings had proved to be effective.
- Very few items were “called-in”, in practice.

RESOLVED: That

Cabinet be requested to approve changes to the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol in relation to:

- (1) Executive Directors and Assistant Directors, whose responsibilities fall within the remit of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, being requested to seek the views of the Committees on all strategies and plans prior to submission to Cabinet and Council; and that if it is not possible, due to time constraints, to submit the final strategy or plan

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for consideration, then an outline or synopsis be submitted to the Committees to allow an oversight of the proposals to be considered and commented upon; and Section 6 of the Protocol relating to pre-scrutiny be amended accordingly; and

- (2) reference being made to informal meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to review topics in Section 8 of the Protocol.

**16. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24, SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS
AND KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for 2023/24; the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by informal meetings; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and that updated on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

- Quoracy issues encountered by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (2) a report on wider taxi issues in Sefton, including how black hackney cabs could be encouraged within the Sefton area, be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee;
- (3) the request for the Committee to select a topic for review at an informal meeting be noted;
- (4) the Key Decision Forward Plan for the period 1 October 2023 to 31 January 2024, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be noted; and
- (5) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

17. CABINET MEMBER REPORT - JUNE 2023 TO AUGUST 2023

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

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

- Business rates collection was performing well, with Sefton being the best performing council of the 36 metropolitan authorities. A request was made for congratulations to be extended to the relevant staff.
- Taxi-licensing and the situation regarding encouraging the use of black hackney cabs in Southport. A report could be requested on wider taxi issues in Sefton, including how black hackney cabs could be encouraged within the Sefton area.
- Member development and mandatory training, together with the small number of Members who responded to the last consultation process. The situation regarding compulsory courses undertaken within the Mersey Fire and Rescue Service.
- The nature of the “legal support” offered on the Marine Lake Events Centre project.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be noted;
- (2) congratulations be extended to the relevant staff for their contribution towards Sefton being the best performing council of the 36 metropolitan authorities;
- (3) the Principal Officer, Licensing, be requested to submit a report on wider taxi issues in Sefton, including how black hackney cabs could be encouraged within the Sefton area, to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- (4) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.