



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

**MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM, TOWN HALL,
SOUTHPORT
ON TUESDAY 31ST OCTOBER, 2023**

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lappin

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Byrom (and his substitute Member Councillor Carragher), D'Albuquerque (and his substitute Member Councillor Shaw), McGinnity and Murphy (and her substitute Member Councillor Chris Maher).

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

20. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

**21. UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF LIVERPOOL CITY REGION
DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY**

The Committee received a presentation from Andrea Watts, Executive Director of People, that updated on the Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Strategy (the Strategy). Ms. Watts indicated that further to the presentation made to this Committee in January 23, which set out the initial first steps in bringing to life the framework for LCRCA Digital Inclusion Strategy and which included an overview of Sefton's Digital strategy linked to connected Council, empowered residents and business growth; this presentation would detail the progress of Digital Inclusion from a Combined Authority perspective. Ms. Watts highlighted the following matters:

- A reminder of the key components of connectivity – barriers being availability and cost; equipment; and skills
- The developed key workstreams of Digital Inclusion Alliance Network; Digital Champions Model; and Digital Support Intervention Pilots

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- In respect of the Digital Support Intervention Pilots the Digital Inclusion Initiative was an industry led programme to tackle digital exclusion; and LCRCA were facilitating the roll-out of 4500 free android tablets, accompanied by 6 months of free Vodaphone mobile connectivity and free in person digital skills training. Wave 1.1 was launched in August 2023 and focused on the DWP Restart Scheme and Ways to Work; and that working with the Digital Inclusion Network members the aim was to continue to support residents between now and July 2024
- Wave 1.2 would take place between November 2023 and January 2024 and would target the roll-out of 600+ devices and sims across the six LCRCA local authority areas and cohorts could include digitally excluded individuals across numerous groups
- Wave 1.3 onwards was to distribute the remaining 3900 devices and feedback would be crucial to assess what was working well with the programme and what was not
- In addition, informed by data and local authority colleagues, other areas of intervention would be explored that helped to target digital exclusion –e.g., social broadband tariffs, recycled digital kit or free mobile data for those most in need
- Other Sefton initiatives to increase the number of public access computers and other devices available to residents and organisations

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

- The age range of participants in the Digital Inclusion Initiative
- The availability of statistics on the number of Sefton residents who did not have internet access
- Did, and how, was contact maintained with cohorts
- The extent of take-up of social broadband tariffs

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Executive Director of People be requested to provide responses to the comments/questions raised by members; and
- (2) Andrea Watts be thanked for her informative presentation.

22. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY/DISPOSAL POLICY - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from Paul Reilly, Service Manager - Finance, on the Asset Management Strategy/Disposal Policy. Mr. Reilly updated on:

- the Council's Asset Base - a robust strategic approach was required to ensure assets were maximised and informed decisions could be made and that this was achieved via a centralised approach; and

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that there was a need to critically evaluate the use, value and benefit that could be derived from council assets.

- the relevant policies such as the Asset Management Strategy and the Asset Disposal Policy; and that an annual review for above documents would be conducted with the next formal review being 6 January 2024; that the policies aligned with the Framework for Change and new capital strategy; and that the documents went through the Council's formal governance process including Cabinet and Council.
- elected Member engagement in the decision-making process and the legislation that provided the framework within which the council operated within.
- Phase 1 asset disposals approved by Cabinet in January 2020; and that further phases were being considered and would progress as a continuous programme subject to necessary approvals.

A Member of the Committee acknowledged that assets were technically classed as such on the Council's Balance Sheet and information was sought on how the Council distinguished between assets and liabilities since some assets required ongoing investment.

RESOLVED:

That Paul Reilly be thanked for his informative presentation.

23. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2023/24 TO 2026/27 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2023/24 - OCTOBER UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 70 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 October 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; and
- (3) the monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of August 2023 in respect of:
 - the forecast expenditure to year end;
 - variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members; and
 - updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects are also presented for approval.

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

- financial problems were self-evident and information was sought on when solutions would be identified to achieve a balanced budget
- when schemes associated with the Southport Town Deal would be referenced in the capital programme

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; and
- (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

(B) That in respect of the Capital Programme:

- (1) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 7.1) be noted;
- (2) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 August 2023 of £11.047m (paragraph 7.16) and that the latest full year forecast is £66.536m (paragraph 7.7) be noted; and
- (3) 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.

**24. 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 by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and that

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updated on 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) the request for the Committee to select a topic for review at an informal meeting be noted;
- (3) the Key Decision Forward Plans for the period 1 November 2023 to 29 February 2024 and 1 December 2023 to 31 March 2024, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be noted; and
- (4) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

25. CABINET MEMBER REPORT - AUGUST 2023 TO OCTOBER 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.

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

- The high number of taxi licence appointments at the One-Stop Shops
- Information was sought on the terms of the petition submitted by “The Voice of the Families” as referred to in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) update

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be noted;
- (2) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be requested to circulate information to Committee members on the terms of the petition submitted by “The Voice of the Families”; and
- (3) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.