

Overview
& Scrutiny



MEETING: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES)

DATE: Tuesday 27th February, 2024

TIME: 6.30 pm

VENUE: Birkdale Room, Town Hall, Southport

Member

Substitute

Councillor	Councillor
Councillor Bradshaw (Chair)	Councillor Harrison
Councillor Byrom (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Carragher
Councillor D'Albuquerque	Councillor Shaw
Councillor Evans	Councillor Dodd
Councillor Grace	Councillor Catie Page
Councillor Killen	Councillor Myers
Councillor McGinnity	Councillor Thomas
Councillor McKee	Councillor Roche
Councillor Murphy	Councillor Christine Maher
Councillor Sir Ron Watson	Councillor Prendergast

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Paul Fraser
Senior Democratic Services Officer
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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.

AGENDA

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 (Pages 5 - 12)

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024

4. Annual ICT Update Report (Pages 13 - 20)

Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services

5. Levels of Disciplinary, Grievance, Dignity at Work and Sickness Absence (Pages 21 - 30)

Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services

6. Taxi Issues in Sefton (Pages 31 - 36)

Report of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection)

7. Work Programme 2023/24, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan (Pages 37 - 58)

Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer

- 8. Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update** (Pages 59 - 62)

Briefing note of the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services

- 9. Cabinet Member Report - December 2023 to February 2024** (Pages 63 - 82)

Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer

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

**MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL BOOTLE
ON TUESDAY 6TH FEBRUARY, 2024**

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Atkinson and Lappin

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D'Albuquerque and Murphy.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

38. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

39. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ASSET DISPOSAL POLICY 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services on the Asset Management Strategy (the Strategy) and Asset Disposal Policy (the Policy) 2024/25.

The report indicated that the Strategy and Policy set out the vision and aspirations for the effective management of the Council's corporate asset portfolio and the role it played in supporting and shaping the Council's agenda for the 2030 vision; that aside from its staff, the Council's next biggest resource was its land and property and therefore it was vital that this resource was managed and used effectively and efficiently to ensure that the Council derived maximum benefit from its assets in support of its strategic aims and priorities; that the Strategy and Policy would provide a framework for the planning, prioritisation, management and funding of the Council's asset base; and that this was a statutory document that the Council was required to have in place and would be reviewed on an annual basis.

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The Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy 2024/25 were attached as appendices to the report.

This report would also be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings to be held on 8 and 29 February 2024 respectively.

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

- The criteria used for establishing what was an asset to meet the service delivery standard; and how liabilities associated with such assets impacted on the judgement of this.
- The expectation that disposals would be at market value predicated on the nature of the asset and any agreed mix of uses to obtain best consideration.
- In respect of the Asset Review, information was requested on the numbers of assets held for operational purposes, assets held for heritage reasons or other designated reasons, assets held to be developed or re-purposed, and asset to be disposed of to create a capital receipt.
- The asset disposal in respect of the development to the east of Buckley Hill Lane on the former Z Blocks land brownfield site.
- The list of sites and other property assets that were available for disposal was requested.

RESOLVED:

That Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy 2024/25 be noted.

40. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services on Prudential Indicators 2024/25.

The report indicated that the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities was introduced following the Local Government Act 2003; that it detailed a number of measures / limits / parameters (Prudential Indicators) that were required to be set each financial year; and that the approval of these limits would provide a benchmark to measure actual performance against, to help ensure that the Council complied with relevant legislation, was acting prudently and that its capital expenditure proposals were affordable.

A summary of Prudential Indicators was attached as an appendix to the report.

This report would also be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings to be held on 8 and 29 February 2024 respectively.

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The Committee was requested to consider the Prudential Indicators as the basis for compliance with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities; and provide any comments to Council to be considered as part of the formal approval of the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25.

In respect of the business cases for projects that had now been approved by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (referred to in paragraph 2.6 of the report) a Member of the Committee asked for information on what would happen if a change of government altered its funding commitments.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Prudential Indicators as the basis for compliance with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities be noted;
- (2) it be noted that the relevant Prudential Indicators will be revised as required and that any changes will be brought to Cabinet and then to Council for approval; and
- (3) It be noted that the estimates of capital expenditure may change as grant allocations are received.

41. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services on the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2024/25.

The report indicated that the Council had adopted CIPFA's 2021 Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services (the Code) which recommended the production of annual Treasury Management Policy and Strategy documents; and that in addition, the Council had adopted and incorporated into both documents:

- (a) the requirements of the 2021 Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities; and
- (b) an Investment Strategy produced in line with the then Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments 2018, which set out the manner in which the Council would manage its investments, giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

The report also advised that the Code required the Council to produce:

- (a) a Treasury Management Policy Document (attached as Appendix A to the report) which outlined the broad policies, objectives and approach to risk management of its treasury management

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activities;

- (b) a Treasury Management Strategy Document (attached as Appendix B to the report) which set out specific treasury activities that would be undertaken in compliance with the Policy in 2024/25;
- (c) suitable Treasury Management Practices, setting out the manner in which the organisation would seek to achieve these policies and objectives and prescribing how it would manage and control those activities; and
- (d) Investment Management Practices for investments that were not part of Treasury management activity.

Also attached to the report as Appendix C was the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2024/25.

This report would also be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings to be held on 8 and 29 February 2024 respectively.

The Committee was requested to consider the proposed policies and strategy documents which included the objectives and operation of the Council's Treasury Management functions, the manner in which the Council would manage its investments and the methodology used to set aside revenue provision for the repayment of debt; and provide any comments to Council that would be considered as part of the formal approval of the Treasury Management Policy, Treasury Management Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provisions Policy Statement.

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

- The processes in place to ensure that external scrutiny of the Council's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy was undertaken.
- The assumptions taken into account regarding interest when drawing up the Council's budget.
- Confirmation was sought, and given, that the Council did not currently have any overseas investments.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2024/25 be noted.

42. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services on the Capital Strategy 2024/25.

The report indicated that the Capital Strategy set out the long-term context in which capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions were made and consider the impact of these decisions on the priorities within the Council's Core Purpose and the promises made in the 2030 Vision for Sefton; that at the heart of the Capital Strategy was the Council's core objective to continue to deliver financial sustainability; and that as such, a flexible capital investment programme was more important than ever as a method to stimulate and enable economic growth and strategic investment, ensuring best use of existing assets and of generating future income streams to pay for and deliver day to day services.

The Capital Strategy was a key policy document for Sefton Council and followed guidance issued in the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (2021 Edition); and local authorities were required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code when carrying out their duties in England and Wales under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003.

The Capital Strategy 2024/25 was attached to the report.

This report would also be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings to be held on 8 and 29 February 2024 respectively.

The Committee was requested to consider the proposed Capital Strategy document as set out in Appendix A; and provide any comments to Council that would be considered as part of the formal approval of the Capital Strategy.

A Member of the Committee asked a question/commented on the following issue:

- Information was sought on the revenue implications arising from capital schemes; and what was the cumulative figure of all such revenue implications. It was noted that information was detailed in paragraph 3 of the Prudential Indicators 2024/25 report which detailed Prudential Indicator – Financing Costs/Net Revenue Stream.

RESOLVED:

That the Capital Strategy 2024/25 be noted.

43. ROBUSTNESS OF THE 2024/25 BUDGET ESTIMATES AND THE ADEQUACY OF RESERVES – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2003 - SECTION 25

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services on the robustness of the

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2024/25 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – Local Government Act 2003 - Section 25.

The report indicated that to comply with statute, the Chief Financial Officer was required to report to Council prior to the approval of the budget and the setting of the Council Tax, to give assurance that the budget was robust and that there were adequate reserves and balances.

The report concluded that as a result of considering the issues contained within the report, it was the view that the budget proposed was a robust budget package whilst also ensuring that there were adequate General Balances to draw on if the service estimates turned out to be insufficient; and that this opinion was provided in accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.

This report would also be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings to be held on 8 and 29 February 2024 respectively.

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

- The use of earmarked reserves of over £25m due to the unprecedented pressure in Childrens Services and from energy prices increases meaning that it was important that as the report says these should be replenished.
- The impact on the Council's budget if the independent Improvement Board Chair recommended that Children's Services provision be removed from the Council to an external trust. – no modelling has been undertaken on this as it had not been requested or suggested by any internal or external person or body
- The total figure of school reserves.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that the Local Government Act 2003, (section 25 as amended) requires the Chief Financial Officer to report formally on the following issues:

- (a) an opinion as to the robustness of the estimates made and the tax setting calculations; and
- (b) the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves;

and that the Council is requested to have regard to the matters raised in this report during the final stages of determining the budget for 2024/25.

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44. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PLAN 2024/25 – 2026/27 AND COUNCIL TAX 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services on the Revenue and Capital Budget Plan 2025/26 – 2026/27 and Council Tax 2024/25.

The report provided:

- an assessment of the Council's current financial position and approach to the 2024/25 Budget Plan and preparation for the additional two-year budget period 2024/25 to 2025/26
- an update on the Government's announcement of resources that were available to the Council for 2024/25
- the Council's current financial position and the assumptions built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan
- the proposed Budget for 2024/25; and
- the proposed Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2026/27

The report also set out the financial strategy of the Council and the national and local financial context within which it was operating; and that the Council had a statutory requirement to remain financially sustainable and to balance its budget every year.

Attached as appendices to the report were the individual school budgets 2024/25; budget saving proposals; draft Council budget summary 2024/25; and the Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27.

This report would also be considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings to be held on 8 and 29 February 2024 respectively. The Council would be recommended:

- (A) In respect of the Budget 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan from 2025/26 to 2026/27 to:
- (1) note the update of the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27;
 - (2) approve the Revenue Budget for 2024/25 and authorise officers to undertake all of the necessary actions to implement the budget changes and proposals as detailed within the report;
 - (3) approve the release of the Environmental Warranty Earmarked Reserve and the transfer of the amount released to General Balances;
 - (4) approve the commencement of all appropriate activity required to implement the budget savings proposals as detailed in the report, including for example, consultation with employees and engagement with partners and contractual changes as the

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programme develops;

- (5) note that officers would comply with agreed HR policies and procedures including relevant consultation with Trade Unions and reports to the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services as required.
 - (6) note the Schools' Forum decisions on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Individual School Budgets;
 - (7) approve the allocation of specific grants as detailed in the report; and
 - (8) approve, subject to the recommendations above, the overall Council Tax resolution for 2024/25 including Police, Fire, Mayoral and Parish Precepts;
- (B) In respect of the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27 to:
- (1) approve for inclusion within the Capital Programme the full list of projects in Appendix D;
 - (2) approve a supplementary capital estimate for £7.387m for the Corporate Essential Maintenance Programme Phase 2 funded by capital receipts; and
 - (3) approve a supplementary capital estimate for £1.865m for Green Sefton Equipment and Machinery funded by prudential borrowing.

The Committee was requested to consider the proposals within the report and to provide any comments to Cabinet which could be considered as part of the formal approval of the Budget Plan for 2024/25 – 2026/27 and the Council Tax for 2024/25.

A Member of the Committee asked a question about the impacts on the budget, and how they would be addressed, when income was anticipated but not achieved; and when losses were incurred that were not anticipated.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update of the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27 be noted; and
- (2) the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services and his staff be thanked for the production of the detailed reports for consideration at this meeting and their overall efforts in formulating the Council's budget for consideration by Council.

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 27 February 2024
Subject:	Annual ICT Update Report		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the performance of the Managed Services ICT Contract over the last 12 months, currently outsourced to Agilisys. The report will cover the following areas: Agilisys Contract Performance against key performance indicators, Project Delivery and Security and the wider work of the ICT Client team in relation to ICT and Digital.

Recommendation(s):

(1) That members note the content of the report and the performance of the ICT Service over the last 12 months.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Annual performance report for review by the committee.

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

Not applicable.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

Not applicable

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Implications of the Proposals:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</p> <p>Service delivery costs are met within current revenue budgets.</p>									
<p>Legal Implications:</p> <p>None – Service provision is within agreed contract.</p>									
<p>Equality Implications:</p> <p>There are no equality implications.</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"> <tr> <td>Have a positive impact</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a neutral impact</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a negative impact</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> </table> <p>The content of the report does not propose any changes that impact on the Climate Emergency.</p>		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
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								

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable:</p> <p>No direct implications but the provision of a well performing service for ICT will ensure the continued delivery of key council services.</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</p> <p>No direct implications but the provision of a well performing service for ICT will ensure the continued delivery of key council services.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services:</p> <p>No direct implications but the provision of a well performing service for ICT will ensure the continued delivery of key council services.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer:</p> <p>No direct implications but the provision of a well performing service for ICT will ensure the continued delivery of key council services.</p>

<p>Drivers of change and reform:</p> <p>No direct implications but the provision of a well performing service for ICT will ensure the continued delivery of key council services.</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</p> <p>No direct implications but the provision of a well performing service for ICT will ensure the continued delivery of key council services.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment:</p> <p>No direct implications but the provision of a well performing service for ICT will ensure the continued delivery of key council services.</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener</p> <p>No direct implications but the provision of a well performing service for ICT will ensure the continued delivery of key council services.</p>

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7519/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5619/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Not applicable, no decision required.

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Appendices:

Appendix A – ICT KPI Performance

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

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1. Introduction/Background

1.1 The Agilisys Contract delivers the following services to Sefton Council

The Core Operational Services

1. Helpdesk Services
2. Infrastructure and Hardware
3. Network Services including Cyber Security
4. Council User Services
5. Telephony
6. Application Support including Cloud Services
7. Data Collection & ICT Services Report
8. Installation Services
9. Active Directory Services

Ad Hoc Services

10. Project Management Services
11. Major Upgrade Support
12. Commissioning and Decommissioning support
13. Ad Hoc Reporting
14. Data Security Services

Schools ICT Services (Schools opt in for these bought back services)

15. Support for Management Information Systems (MIS)
16. ICT Support (Connectivity)
17. Fully Managed Services

2. Contract Performance

- 2.1 During the contract period to date Agilisys have met key performance measures (KPI's) except when exceptional agreed circumstances have prevailed. Performance over the last 12 months can be found in Appendix A. The one failure is highlighted in red and service relief from this KPI during this month was agreed due to priority work set by the authority, linked to cyber security, which impacted on the ability of Agilisys to meet performance standards.
- 2.2 Customer satisfaction has remained high during the last 12 months, any scores falling below expected standards are followed up on a case-by-case basis.

3. Project Delivery

As well as the provision of core business as usual ICT services as set out in section 1.2 Agilisys provide a significant volume of ad hoc projects to Sefton, in line with the provisions of the Contract. These range from system upgrades to major infrastructure programmes. Over the last year Agilisys has worked in

partnership with the ICT Client team to deliver key programmes of work including (but not limited to)

- The improvement and development of the ICT Infrastructure to support Adults and Childrens Social Care Service delivery.
- The implementation of a new Customer Experience Platform
- The website improvement programme
- The delivery of new managed print services
- Supported the transformation of Sefton Arc services.
- Cyber Security improvements

3.1 The key projects for 2023 were the Customer Experience Platform, Print Services and Cyber Security. These pieces of work supported the Councils Framework for Change Programme and the Sefton 2030 vision, as well as delivering key priorities within the Council's Digital Strategy approved at Cabinet on the 4th of February 2021. These projects completed with minimal disruption to operational service delivery whilst uplifting and securing an improved infrastructure platform for Sefton.

4. Cyber Security

4.1 Cyber security risk continues to be significant issue for local authorities across the Country, the risk of an Information Security Breach due to a cyber-attack features on the Corporate Risk Register and although Sefton has made significant investment in its security tools, polices, and licenses the threat to our network is still significant. Over the last 12 months we have seen authorities being targeted via DDOS or Distributed Denial of Service Attacks. This type of attack floods the targeted website or online service with traffic (requests) and can overwhelm the service making it unavailable to legitimate users, we also saw a cyber incident affecting St Helens Council earlier this year.

4.2 The number of Cyber-attacks per week on corporate networks across the world increased by 38% in 2022 compared to 2021, the most targeted industries in 2022 were Education/Research, Government and Health. The USA saw a 57% increase in overall Cyber-attacks in 2022, in comparison the UK saw a 77% increase (source Checkpoint 2022 Cyber Security Report)

4.3 The Sefton ICT Client team have worked in partnership with Agilisys colleagues throughout the year to strengthen the Councils security profile, including the introduction of additional training for all staff. One of the key benefits of the current ICT contract with Agilisys is the access to a team of security experts. In addition, Sefton has worked in partnership with the NW Cyber Resilience Centre to develop a support offer to all our Schools in the Borough, whether or not they opt into purchase ICT SLAs from the authority.

5 ICT Client Functions

Further to the work completed in partnership with Agilisys as outlined within this paper the ICT client team have also delivered services and support for ICT across the Council, including specialist ICT Procurement and Contract Management for

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approximately 250 ICT Contracts. The team provide a dedicated System development support for both Children's and Adults Social Care, as well as Education functions, supporting both the Children's Improvement Programme, and the SEND improvement programme.

Finally, the team support the wider Digital Strategy of the Council and have developed and delivered clear governance around this workstream, along with launching the Digital Inclusion Strategy and this year launched SeftOnline to support all residents across the Borough.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The current contract with Agilisys performs well and has delivered significant savings for the authority compared to the previous contractual arrangement.
- 6.2 The relationship between the partners is good, with robust challenge where needed but a shared vision and approach to service improvement and risk, which has provided significant benefits to the authority, particularly around cyber security challenges.

		Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sept-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Target
															Performance Level
KPI 1(a)	KPI1 (a) System Availability [excepting cloud]	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99.52%	100%	100%	98.50%
KPI 1(b)	KPI1 (b) System Availability cloud services	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99.50%
KPI 4 (a)	KPI 4 (a) - Answering telephone calls made to the Service Desk within an average of 60 seconds of the telephone call first being made	46s	47s	48s	53s	44s	67s	57s	57s	21s	37s	35s	29s	27s	<60s
KPI 4 (b)	KPI 4(b) FTF resolve 80% resolved within 15 minutes of being made to the Service Desk	90.32%	80.00%	91.50%	94.50%	92.60%	91.70%	92.70%	94.01%	83.20%	91.50%	93.07%	93.7%	92.90%	80%
KPI 5 (a)	Resolving Priority 1 incidents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<1
KPI 5(b)	Resolving Priority 2 incidents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<1
KPI 5 (c)	Resolving Priority 3 incidents	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
KPI 5(d)	Resolving Priority 4 incidents	99.48%	99.21%	99.43%	99.18%	99.91%	99.19%	99.42%	99.47%	99.08%	99.45%	99.26%	99.53%	99.66%	99%
KPI6 (b)	Closing Priority 2 Requests	99.63%	99.17%	99.66%	99.42%	99.39%	99.27%	99.07%	99.27%	99.05%	99.22%	99.55%	99.5%	99.10%	99%
KPI 10(a)	Availability of critical applications	99.99%	99.97%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99.74%	99.99%	100%	100%	99.51%	99.94%	99.50%
KPI 10(b)	Availability of non-critical applications	99.98%	99.99%	99.99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99.75%	100%	100%	100%	99.94%	99.96%	99.50%
KPI 15	Maintain a Customer Satisfaction Score above 70%	92%	91%	89%	90%	89%	91%	88%	90%	91%	90%	88%	87%	93%	70%

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	27 th February 2024
Subject:	Levels of Disciplinary, Grievance, Dignity at Work and Sickness Absence		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To provide a report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of levels of discipline, grievance, dignity at work and sickness absence within the Council (excluding schools).

Recommendation(s):

The Overview & Scrutiny - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Receive the report in terms of discipline, grievance, dignity at work and sickness levels.
- (2) Note the latest information in respect of ongoing work.
- (3) Note the initiatives currently being implemented.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The recommendations reflect the request made by Overview & Scrutiny – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services Committee for information.

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

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs – N/A

(B) Capital Costs – N/A

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
N/A	
Legal Implications:	
N/A	
Equality Implications:	
There are no equality implications.	
Impact on Children and Young People: No	
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

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Achieving the correct application of procedures, facilitating the protection of the most vulnerable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: N/A
Commission, broker and provide core services: Absences can have a detrimental effect upon core service delivery
Place – leadership and influencer: Correct workforce allocation allows leadership and influencing
Drivers of change and reform:

N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7529/24.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5629/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

N/A

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee.

Contact Officer:	Marie Lambert
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 3388
Email Address:	Marie.lambert@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** This report provides Members with an update on the levels of disciplinary, grievance, dignity at work and sickness absence within the Authority (excluding schools).
- 1.2** The management of the workforce is an important activity to ensure outcomes for our communities are achieved and to ensure that the workforce is appropriately managed and motivated.

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2. Disciplinary, Grievance and Dignity at Work

2.1 The organisation enjoys a comparatively good level of cases and this reflects on the whole, both the good overall industrial relations environment, the partnership approach that is undertaken and also the work undertaken within departments.

2.2 A lot of effort is taken to avoid formal procedures where possible.

3. Suspensions

3.1 In the period August - December 2023, 10 employees were suspended from duty (not including schools).

3.2 Suspension takes place in order to facilitate an investigation into matters which could result in dismissal for gross misconduct. Some investigations will also include a potential referral to a professional body such as the Health Care and Professionals Council. Personnel continue to press departments to resource investigations appropriately.

3.3 Whether a suspension is appropriate will be a decision taken by a Senior Manager with the advice of the Personnel Department.

4. Disciplinary

4.1 During the period September – December 2023, there have been 13 disciplinary investigations as per the table below:

Department	No. of Investigations	Outcome
Children's Social Care	4	2 – No case to answer; 1 – Verbal Warning 1 – case on-going
Communities - (Housing Options)	1	1 – on-going
Corporate Resources – (Property Services)	2	Cases on-going
Economic Growth & Dev – (Sefton @Work)	1	Case on-going
Operational In House Services : Cleansing (3) Green Sefton (1) Sefton Arc (1)	5	1 – Final Written Warning 4 – cases ongoing

5. Grievances

5.1 During the period October – December 2023, there have been 4 Grievances as follows:

Department	Outcome
Adult Social Care	Not upheld
Economic Growth & Dev.	Not upheld
Highways & Public Protection	Not upheld
Operational In-House Services	Resolved

6. Dignity at Work Complaints (DAW)

6.1 During the period September – December 2023, there have been 7 DAW complaints as follows:-

Department	Outcome
Communities	1 - upheld; 3 - not upheld
Children's Social Care	1 – not upheld
Operational In-House Services	2 – on-going

7 Council Sickness Absence – Q1 & Q2 – 2023/2024

7.1 This report contains statistical data for Q1 and Q2 2023/2024 (01.04.23 – 30.06.23 and 01.07.23 - 30.09.23). The information details 'Short Term', 'Long Term' and 'All Absence' data along with previous year's figures for comparison purposes. Sickness percentages are calculated as a proportion of the total FTE days available. The current year's figures are shown in bold if the percentage is above the Council's Preferred target.

7.2 Assistant Directors are presented with their own service area information each quarter. The information presented is dependent on all service areas maintaining and updating sickness absence records on the Absence Feeder in an accurate and timely manner.

7.3 Short Term Sickness Absence Q1 & Q2

Short term sickness absence is defined as absence lasting less than 4 weeks for any single episode. The Council's long-standing target for short term absence is 2.2%.

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SERVICE AREA	COMPARISON Q1 2021/22	COMPARISON Q1 2022/23	SHORT TERM SICKNESS Q1 2023/24
Adult Social Care	1.30%	2.85%	2.09%
Children's Social Care	1.21%	1.10%	1.91%
Communities	1.16%	2.26%	2.28%
Corporate Resources & Customer Services	0.77%	1.41%	1.30%
Economic Growth & Housing	0.83%	1.20%	1.13%
Education Excellence	1.03%	1.92%	1.49%
Highways & Public Protection	0.88%	1.19%	0.90%
Operational In-House Services	2.12%	3.66%	2.79%
Public Health & Wellbeing	0.74%	3.00%	0.84%
Strategic Support	1.59%	1.84%	0.79%

All except two service areas (based on recordings input into the system) remain under the Council target of 2.2% for short term sickness absence for Q1 in the current year 2023/2024.

SERVICE AREA	COMPARISON Q2 2021/22	COMPARISON Q2 2022/23	SHORT TERM SICKNESS Q2 2023/24
Adult Social Care	2.18%	2.37%	2.50%
Children's Social Care	1.37%	1.47%	2.51%
Communities	1.68%	2.46%	2.42%
Corporate Resources & Customer	1.36%	1.60%	1.30%
Economic Growth & Housing	1.05%	1.87%	1.34%
Education Excellence	2.18%	1.32%	0.91%
Highways & Public Protection	1.92%	1.17%	1.04%
Operational In-House Services	3.40%	2.94%	2.69%
Public Health & Wellbeing	3.44%	0.52%	0.14%
Strategic Support	2.29%	1.44%	0.61%

Four service areas (based on recordings input into the system) exceed the Council target of 2.2%, whilst six service areas remain under the target for short term sickness absence for Q2 in the current year 23/24.

7.4 Long Term Sickness Absence Q1 & Q2

Long term sickness absence is defined as absence lasting more than 4 weeks for any single episode. The Council's long-standing target for long term absence is 1.8%.

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SERVICE AREA	COMPARISON Q1 2021/22	COMPARISON Q1 2022/23	LONG TERM SICKNESS Q1 2023/24
Adult Social Care	6.23%	5.01%	4.13%
Children's Social Care	3.59%	3.68%	5.09%
Communities	2.97%	2.95%	2.49%
Corporate Resources & Customer Services	1.90%	2.11%	1.66%
Economic Growth & Housing	1.77%	2.05%	2.57%
Education Excellence	3.15%	2.54%	3.35%
Highways & Public Protection	3.91%	1.25%	1.98%
Operational In-House Services	5.43%	4.31%	2.80%
Public Health & Wellbeing	0.00%	1.26%	0.00%
Strategic Support	2.46%	3.38%	1.70%

All service areas except three have a long-term sickness percentage exceeding the Councils target of 1.8% for the current year.

SERVICE AREA	COMPARISON Q2 2021/22	COMPARISON Q2 2022/23	LONG TERM SICKNESS Q2 2023/24
Adult Social Care	4.57%	5.13%	4.29%
Children's Social Care	5.39%	4.47%	5.41%
Communities	4.73%	4.00%	2.11%
Corporate Resources & Customer	1.39%	2.22%	2.67%
Economic Growth & Housing	1.50%	1.65%	1.24%
Education Excellence	1.20%	2.78%	1.56%
Highways & Public Protection	4.14%	0.78%	2.57%
Operational In-House Services	2.97%	3.44%	3.33%
Public Health & Wellbeing	3.33%	0.00%	0.00%
Strategic Support	0.00%	3.94%	2.28%

Q2 shows that with just 3 service areas fall below the council's long term sickness target of 1.8%, all other services exceed the Councils target for the current year.

7.5 All' Sickness Absence Q1 & Q2 – Short and Long Combined

The Council's long-standing target for 'all' sickness is 4%

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SERVICE AREA	COMPARISON Q1 2021/22	COMPARISON Q1 2022/23	"ALL SICKNESS" Q1 2023/24
Adult Social Care	7.53%	7.86%	6.23%
Children's Social Care	4.80%	4.77%	7.00%
Communities	4.13%	5.21%	4.77%
Corporate Resources & Customer	2.67%	3.52%	2.96%
Economic Growth & Housing	2.60%	3.24%	3.70%
Education Excellence	4.18%	4.46%	4.84%
Highways & Public Protection	4.79%	2.44%	2.88%
Operational In-House Services	7.55%	7.97%	5.59%
Public Health & Wellbeing	0.74%	4.26%	0.84%
Strategic Support	4.05%	5.22%	2.49%

The 5 service areas with a percentage above the 4% Council target are indicated in bold, with the remaining 5 areas being under the 4% demonstrating the fluctuating nature of sickness absence.

SERVICE AREA	COMPARISON Q2 2021/22	COMPARISON Q2 2022/23	"ALL SICKNESS" Q2 2023/24
Adult Social Care	6.75%	7.50%	6.79%
Children's Social Care	6.76%	5.94%	7.92%
Communities	6.41%	6.46%	4.53%
Corporate Resources & Customer	2.75%	3.82%	3.97%
Economic Growth & Housing	2.55%	3.52%	2.58%
Education Excellence	3.38%	4.10%	2.47%
Highways & Public Protection	6.06%	1.94%	3.61%
Operational In-House Services	6.37%	6.38%	6.02%
Public Health & Wellbeing	6.77%	0.52%	0.14%
Strategic Support	2.29%	5.38%	2.90%

For Q2 the 4 service areas with a percentage above the 4% Council target are indicated in bold, with the remaining 6 areas being under the 4%. The comparison of figures demonstrates the fluctuating nature of long-term (and short term) sickness absence.

8 Initiatives undertaken by the Council

- The Strategic Leadership Board continues to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence.

- Sickness reports are provided to Assistant Directors on a quarterly basis and on an ad hoc basis on request.
- Managers are encouraged to manage absence in accordance with Council policy and procedures and to use the online testing package to fill any knowledge gaps. Briefing sessions and targeted training is arranged, as required, following the results of online testing.
- Targeted support continues within departments to help with the management of sickness absence.
- The Personnel Team work closely with departments providing information and advice and appropriate levels of support, advising managers on informal processes, and assisting managers with the more complex and formal levels of sickness absence management.
- The Personnel team continue to monitor sickness absence and report to the Chief Personnel Officer any issues or trends that are cause for concern.
- The Occupational Health Unit provide Counselling and CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) on a face-to-face basis. In addition, a specific type of CBT known as Eye Movement Desensitisation, is also available if declared appropriate by the OH physicians. Telephone and video call appointments can be arranged if that is preferred method for individual.
- Physiotherapy appointments are also arranged through the OH Unit as are pension assessments for ill health, ill health pension appeals and deferred pension cases.

9 Managing Absence

The Council has a Sickness Absence Policy which operates in a partnership with trade unions. Long term absence is being dealt with in accordance with overall business need and short-term absence is operated in accordance with recognised and agreed trigger points. All policies, where applicable, are subject to modification in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

- 9.1** Trade unions and management recognise the need for correct management of sickness absence to provide appropriate support to lessen the demands on employees who remain at work.

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 27 February 2024
Subject:	Taxi Issues in Sefton		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection)	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

A report on wider taxi issues in Sefton including how hackney carriages could be further encouraged within the Sefton area.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Note the contents of this report
- (2) Request that a further update report is brought back to this committee following completion of the 2024 unmet demand survey

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To further consider methods to strengthen the hackney carriage fleet following a detailed survey.

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

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) **Revenue Costs** - none

(B) **Capital Costs** - none

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Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): The cost of the service is wholly recovered from the ring-fenced Taxi Licensing Trade Account (Revenue Budget BD12).								
Legal Implications: The Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provide that a district council may set out criteria when undertaking their taxi and private hire licensing functions and may attach to the grant of a licence such conditions as they may consider reasonably necessary.								
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.								
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will <table border="1"><tr><td>Have a positive impact</td><td>N</td></tr><tr><td>Have a neutral impact</td><td>Y</td></tr><tr><td>Have a negative impact</td><td>N</td></tr><tr><td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td><td>Y</td></tr></table>	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
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							

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services: Improve the quality of Council controlled services and comply with legal requirements.
Place – leadership and influencer:
Drivers of change and reform:
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 Head of Corporate Resources has been consulted (FD 7546/24) and any comments have been incorporated into the report. The Chief Legal & Democratic Officer (LD 7546/24) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the meeting

Contact Officers:	Mark Toohey
Telephone Number:	Tel: Ext 2274
Email Address:	mark.toohey@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 At the meeting held on 12 September 2023, the following question was raised;

“Whilst considering the Cabinet Member Update, Sir Ron asked about encouraging black cabs in the Southport area. The Cabinet Member (Cllr. Lappin) suggested receiving a report back on wider taxi issues and the Committee agreed that:-

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”

1.2 The existing numerical restriction applied to hackney carriage vehicle licences has stood since 1986 when the limit was set at 271. Vehicle licences are issued under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 as amended by the Transport Act 1985. The Council has discretion to limit the number of hackney carriage vehicles it chooses to licence for the purpose of controlling their numbers.

1.3 Current legislation states the only reason on which an application for a hackney carriage licence can be refused is that the Council is satisfied that there is no significant demand for hackney carriage services which is not being met. This

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means that the Council is satisfied there are enough licensed hackney carriages to serve the public without issuing any more.

- 1.4 Following a Crown Court decision (29 February 2000) to uphold an appeal by a Sefton private hire driver for the issue of hackney carriage licences the Council agreed to carry out a hackney carriage demand survey in 2000/2001 and subsequently at intervals of 4 – 5 years, (Minute 58, 27 March 2000).
- 1.5 The last study was carried out in 2019 and found the following;

“The overall conclusion is that there is no evidence of council rank-based unmet demand that is significant and that the strong view of the Trade is that the limit should be retained and can be supported”

The report can be found here: <http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s94190/Enc.%201%20for%20Hackney%20Carriage%20Unmet%20Demand%20Survey%202019.pdf>

2. Current Numbers

- 2.1 Sefton currently has 236 active hackney carriage vehicles and 266 licensed drivers – 35 vehicle licences are currently ‘on hold’ with the Council. In March 2020, the Council had 271 active hackney carriage vehicles with 330 licensed drivers. 119 drivers have a Southport address with the remainder being based in South Sefton or Liverpool City Region (LCR).
- 2.2 Since the 2020 pandemic, hackney carriage driver numbers have steadily reduced leading to vehicle owners being unable to find enough drivers to drive the 271 licensed vehicles.

3 Reasons for Decline

- 3.1 Vehicle owners have cited potential barriers to attracting more drivers such as rising costs, fall in trade and the requirement to sit a street knowledge test.
- 3.2 In 2021, the Council removed the requirement for an extra street knowledge test for hackney carriage drivers in order to obtain a licence but it appears to have had little impact on numbers. Rising costs of fuel and insurance have also been highlighted as a potential reason for decline.
- 3.3 Vehicle owners have indicated that there has been a shift away from night time working and more to day shifts by many drivers due to a perceived decline in demand for late night journeys in South Sefton. Many hackney drivers now accept journeys via private hire operators which will likely mean that they could be working anywhere in the LCR and not within Sefton.
- 3.4 Despite a recent rise in hackney carriage tariffs (October 2023) which are regulated by the Council, private hire operator fares are unregulated and many drivers are finding income via this method more attractive especially when fare ‘multipliers’ are applied during busy periods.

4 Unmet Demand Survey

- 4.1 The 2019 report concluded that the restricted number of 271 vehicles should be maintained and that there was no significant 'unmet demand' in Sefton and stated the following:

"Overall service to the public in Sefton has deteriorated in the period since the last survey. Matters appear worse in Bootle than in Southport. However, the overall service is generally appreciated, and overall there has been less reduction in rank-based demand than in most other places, just 5% compared to much higher reductions over shorter periods in other licensing areas. This suggests there are some very positive elements to the local trade. Usage levels are also very high despite the concerns – which may well account for the deterioration in service given the same number of vehicles operating. The overall conclusion is that there is no evidence of council rank-based unmet demand that is significant and that the strong view of the Trade that the limit should be retained can be supported."

- 4.2 The next survey is due to be carried out later this year and will conduct a wide ranging consultation across drivers, vehicle owners, users, business owners and trade representatives and carry out detailed surveys of rank activity across the borough. This would be an ideal opportunity to better shape the scope and range of the survey to properly understand and address any issues concerning the hackney carriage trade.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 There has clearly been a decline in active vehicles and the number of licensed drivers. Although discussions with vehicle owners and drivers have suggested some of the reasons for this, the upcoming unmet demand survey would seem like an ideal opportunity to examine in more detail issues affecting the hackney carriage trade and look for solutions to declining numbers.

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Agenda Item 7

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	27 February 2024
Subject:	Work Programme 2023/24, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan		
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 the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for 2023/24; identify potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by informal meetings; identify any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and to update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

That:

- (1) the Work Programme for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be considered, along with any additional items to be included and thereon be agreed;
- (2) consideration be given as to whether the Committee would like to select a topic for review at an informal meeting of the Committee;
- (3) consideration be given to items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, which fall under the remit of the Committee and any agreed items be included in the Work Programme referred to in (1) above; and
- (4) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

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Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To determine the Work Programme of items to be considered during the Municipal Year 2023/24 and identify scrutiny review topics which would demonstrate that the work of the Overview and Scrutiny 'adds value' to the Council.

The pre-scrutiny process assists Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues before making formal decisions.

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

No alternative options have been considered as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to approve its Work Programme and identify scrutiny review topics.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications arising from the consideration of a key decision or relating to a recommendation arising from a Working Group review will be reported to Members at the appropriate time.

(A) **Revenue Costs** – see above

(B) **Capital Costs** – see above

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 for impacting on children and young people arising from this report. Any impact on children and young people implications arising from the consideration of reports referred to in the Work 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 Work 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: None directly applicable to this report. However, any implications arising from the consideration of reports referred to in the Work Programme will be contained in such reports when they are presented to Members at the appropriate time.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: As above.
Commission, broker and provide core services: As above.
Place – leadership and influencer: As above.
Drivers of change and reform: As above.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: As above.
Greater income for social investment: As above.
Cleaner Greener: As above.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

This report is not subject to LD and FD comments. Any specific financial and legal implications associated with any subsequent reports arising from the report will be included in those reports as appropriate.

(B) External Consultations

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

Contact Officer:	Paul Fraser
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2068
Email Address:	paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2023/24 – Appendix 1
- Criteria Checklist for Selecting Topics for Review – Appendix 2
- Latest Key Decision Forward Plan items relating to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Appendix 3

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

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Introduction/Background

1. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

- 1.1 The Work Programme of items to be submitted to the Committee for consideration during the Municipal Year 2023/24 was approved by the Committee on 13 June 2023 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The programme has been produced in liaison with the appropriate Assistant Directors, whose roles fall under the remit of the Committee.
- 1.2 The Work Programme has been produced based on items included in last year's Programme.
- 1.3 Members are requested to consider whether there are any other items that they wish the Committee to consider, that fall within the terms of reference of the Committee. The Work Programme will be submitted to each meeting of the Committee during 2023/24 and updated, as appropriate.

2. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS 2023/24

- 2.1 It is usual practise for the Committee to appoint a Working Group(s) to undertake a scrutiny review of services during the Municipal Year.
- 2.2 At its meeting held on 13 June 2023 the Committee agreed that any future reviews during the year be dealt with by informal meetings of the Committee rather than via Working Groups.
- 2.3 The Committee's views are sought on the selection of a topic(s) for consideration by an informal meeting(s) of the Committee.
- 2.4 A criteria checklist for selecting and rejecting potential topics to review is attached at Appendix 2.

3. PRE-SCRUTINY OF ITEMS IN THE KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

- 3.1 Members may request to pre-scrutinise items from the Key Decision Forward Plan which fall under the remit (terms of reference) of this Committee. The Forward Plan which is updated each month, sets out the list of items to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration during the next four-month period.
- 3.2 The pre-scrutiny process assists Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.
- 3.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has requested that only those key decisions that fall under the remit of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be included on the agenda for consideration.
- 3.4 The latest Forward Plan is attached at Appendix 3 for this purpose. For ease of identification, items listed on the Forward Plan for the first time appear as shaded.

- 3.5 Should Members require further information in relation to any item on the Key Decision Forward Plan, would they please contact the relevant Officer named against the item in the Plan, prior to the Meeting.

4. LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 4.1 As Members will be aware, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees considered a report on the guidance produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government relating to Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities following on from the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's inquiry into Overview and Scrutiny.
- 4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees all agreed the recommendations contained in the report, one of which being that an update on Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (LCRCAO&S) be included in the Work Programme report considered at each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- 4.3 In accordance with the above decision, information on the LCRCAO&S is set out below.

4.4 Role

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established by the Combined Authority in May 2017 in accordance with the Combined Authorities Order 2017.

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to:

- Scrutinise the decision and actions taken by the Combined Authority or the Metro Mayor;
- Provide a 'critical friend to policy and strategy development;
- Undertake scrutiny reviews into areas of strategic importance for the people of the Liverpool City Region; and
- Monitor the delivery of the Combined Authority's strategic plan.

4.5 Membership

The Committee is made up of 3 elected Members from each of the constituent Local Authorities of the LCR Combined Authority, along with one elected Member from both the Liverpool City Region Liberal Democrat Group and the Liverpool City Region Conservative Group.

Council appointed Councillors Desmond, Hart and Howard as Members of the LCRCA O&S Committee; and appointed Councillor Howard as Sefton's Scrutiny Link. However, as Councillor Howard has now been appointed as Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills, she can no longer serve on Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It is anticipated that Council at its meeting to be held on 29 February 2024 will appoint a new Member to serve on the LCRCA O&S

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Committee and a new Scrutiny Link.

4.6 **Chair and Vice-Chair**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the LCRCAO&S cannot be Members of the majority group. Councillor Steve Radford, a Liberal Party Councillor serving on Liverpool City Council has been appointed Chair for the 2023/24 Municipal Year; and Councillor Pat Moloney, a Liberal Democrat Councillor serving on Liverpool City Council has been appointed Vice-Chair.

4.7 **Quoracy Issues**

In the past a high number of meetings of the LCRCAO&S have been inquorate.

The quorum for meetings of the LCRCAO&S is 14, two-thirds of the total number of members, 20. This high threshold is not set by the Combined Authority but is set out in legislation.

4.8 **Meetings**

Information on all meetings and membership of the LCRCAO&S can be obtained using the following link :

<https://liverpoolcityregion-ca.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=365>

4.9 The last meeting of the LCRCAO&S was held on 17 January 2024. The Committee considered the following items:

- Mayoral Combined Authority Budget 2024-25
- Towards a Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region – Engagement
- Work Programme Update 2023-24
- Bus Service Improvement Plan Update
- Transport Matters

4.10 The Committee is requested to note the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) WORK
PROGRAMME 2023/24**

Tuesday, 13 June 2023, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Southport	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones
Debt Management	Stephan Van Arendsen/Diane Turner
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

Tuesday, 12 September 2023, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Bootle	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Financial Performance Monitoring	Stephan Van Arendsen/Paul Reilly
Customer Contact Centre Activity - Presentation	Stephan Van Arendsen/Diane Turner
Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and Sickness Absence Monitoring	Paul Cunningham/Marie Lambert
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

Tuesday, 31 October 2023, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Southport	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Financial Performance Monitoring	Stephan Van Arendsen/Paul Reilly
Disposal of Surplus Council Owned Land/Asset -Management Strategy	Stephan Van Arendsen/Dom Ellis
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones
Update on Progress of LCR Digital Inclusion Strategy	Andrea Watts
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

Tuesday, 9 January 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Southport	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Financial Performance Monitoring	Stephan Van Arendsen/Paul Reilly
Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Stephan Van Arendsen/Diane Turner
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones
Air Quality Monitoring	Peter Moore/Greg Martin
Armed Forces Covenant	David McCullough
Corporate Communications Update	Martin Driver
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

Tuesday, 6 February 2024, 6.30 p.m., Budget Meeting - Town Hall, Bootle	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Budget Report 2024/25 to 2027/28	Stephan Van Arendsen/Paul Reilly
Financial Performance Monitoring	Stephan Van Arendsen/Paul Reilly
Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities – Prudential Indicators	Stephan Van Arendsen/Graham Hussey
Treasury Management Policy and Strategy	Stephan Van Arendsen/Graham Hussey
Capital Strategy 2024/25 and Future Years	Stephan Van Arendsen/Andrew Bridson
Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy – Update Position	Stephan Van Arendsen
Robustness of the 2024/25 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – Local Government Act 2003 – Section 25	Stephan Van Arendsen

Tuesday, 27 February 2024, 6.30 p.m. Town Hall, Southport	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Annual ICT Update Report (Performance of Agilisys)	Helen Spreadbury
Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and Sickness Absence Monitoring	Paul Cunningham/Marie Lambert
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones
Armed Forces Covenant (deferred from meeting held on 9 January 2024)	David McCullough
Hackney Carriage Licensing Issues in Sefton (added at meeting on 12 September 2023)	Mark Toohey
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

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APPENDIX 2

CRITERIA CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING TOPICS FOR REVIEW

Criteria for Selecting Items
▪ Issue identified by members as key issue for public (through member surgeries, other contact with constituents or volume of complaints)
▪ Poor performing service (evidence from performance indicators/benchmarking)
▪ Service ranked as important by the community (e.g. through market surveys/citizens panels)
▪ High level of user/general public dissatisfaction with service (e.g. through market surveys/citizens panels/complaints)
▪ Public interest issue covered in local media
▪ High level of budgetary commitment to the service/policy area (as percentage of total expenditure)
▪ Pattern of budgetary overspends
▪ Council corporate priority area
▪ Central government priority area
▪ Issues raised by External Audit Management Letter/External audit reports
▪ New government guidance or legislation
▪ Reports or new evidence provided by external organisations on key issue
▪ Others

CRITERIA FOR REJECTION

Potential Criteria for Rejecting Items
▪ Issue being examined by the Cabinet
▪ Issue being examined by an Officer Group : changes imminent
▪ Issue being examined by another internal body
▪ Issue will be addressed as part of a Service Review within the next year
▪ New legislation or guidance expected within the next year
▪ Other reasons specific to the particular issues.

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SCRUTINY CHECKLIST DO'S AND DON'TS

DO
◆ Remember that Scrutiny <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Is about learning and being a "critical friend"; it should be a positive process◆ Is not opposition
◆ Remember that Scrutiny should result in improved value, enhanced performance or greater public satisfaction
◆ Take an overview and keep an eye on the wider picture
◆ Check performance against local standards and targets and national standards, and compare results with other authorities
◆ Benchmark performance against local and national performance indicators, using the results to ask more informed questions
◆ Use Working Groups to get underneath performance information
◆ Take account of local needs, priorities and policies
◆ Be persistent and inquisitive
◆ Ask effective questions - be constructive not judgmental
◆ Be open-minded and self aware - encourage openness and self criticism in services
◆ Listen to users and the public, seek the voices that are often not heard, seek the views of others - and balance all of these
◆ Praise good practice and best value - and seek to spread this throughout the authority
◆ Provide feedback to those who have been involved in the review and to stakeholders
◆ Anticipate difficulties in Members challenging colleagues from their own party
◆ Take time to review your own performance

◆ DON'T
◆ Witch-hunt or use performance review as punishment
◆ Be party political/partisan
◆ Blame valid risk taking or stifle initiative or creativity
◆ Treat scrutiny as an add-on
◆ Get bogged down in detail
◆ Be frightened of asking basic questions
◆ Undertake too many issues in insufficient depth
◆ Start without a clear brief and remit
◆ Underestimate the task
◆ Lose track of the main purpose of scrutiny
◆ Lack sensitivity to other stakeholders
◆ Succumb to organisational inertia
◆ Duck facing failure - learn from it and support change and development
◆ Be driven by data or be paralysed by analysis - keep strategic overview, and expect officers to provide high level information and analysis to help.

APPENDIX 2

KEY QUESTIONS

Overview and Scrutiny Committees should keep in mind some of the fundamental questions:-

Are we doing what users/non users/local residents want?
Are users' needs central to the service?
Why are we doing this?
What are we trying to achieve?
How well are we doing?
How do we compare with others?
Are we delivering value for money?
How do we know?
What can we improve?

INVESTIGATIONS:-

To what extent are service users' expectations and needs being met?
To what extent is the service achieving what the policy intended?
To what extent is the service meeting any statutory obligations or national standards and targets?
Are there any unexpected results/side effects of the policy?
Is the performance improving, steady or deteriorating?
Is the service able to be honest and open about its current performance and the reasons behind it?
Are areas of achievement and weakness fairly and accurately identified?
How has performance been assessed? What is the evidence?
How does performance compare with that of others? Are there learning points from others' experiences?
Is the service capable of meeting planned targets/standards? What change to capability is needed.
Are local performance indicators relevant, helpful, meaningful to Members, staff and service users?

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APPENDIX 3

**SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN
FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 MARCH 2024 - 30 JUNE 2024**

This Forward Plan sets out the details of the key decisions which the Cabinet, individual Cabinet Members or Officers expect to take during the next four month period. The Plan is rolled forward every month and is available to the public at least 28 days before the beginning of each month.

A Key Decision is defined in the Council's Constitution as:

1. 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;
2. 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

Anyone wishing to make representations about any of the matters listed below may do so by contacting the relevant officer listed against each Key Decision, within the time period indicated.

Under the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution, a Key Decision may not be taken, unless:

- it is published in the Forward Plan;
- 5 clear days have lapsed since the publication of the Forward Plan; and
- if the decision is to be taken at a meeting of the Cabinet, 5 clear days notice of the meeting has been given.

The law and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in the Forward Plan in accordance with Rule 26 (General Exception) and Rule 28 (Special Urgency) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

Copies of the following documents may be inspected at the Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle L20 7AE or accessed from the Council's website: www.sefton.gov.uk

- Council Constitution
- Forward Plan
- Reports on the Key Decisions to be taken
- Other documents relating to the proposed decision may be submitted to the decision making meeting and these too will be made available by the contact officer named in the Plan
- The minutes for each Key Decision, which will normally be published within 5 working days after having been made

Some reports to be considered by the Cabinet/Council may contain exempt information and will not be made available to the public. The specific reasons

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(Paragraph No(s)) why such reports are exempt are detailed in the Plan and the Paragraph No(s) and descriptions are set out below:-

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or b) to make an order or direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime
8. Information falling within paragraph 3 above is not exempt information by virtue of that paragraph if it is required to be registered under—
 - (a) the Companies Act 1985;
 - (b) the Friendly Societies Act 1974;
 - (c) the Friendly Societies Act 1992;
 - (d) the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 to 1978;
 - (e) the Building Societies Act 1986; or
 - (f) the Charities Act 1993.
9. Information is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission pursuant to regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992
10. Information which—
 - (a) falls within any of paragraphs 1 to 7 above; and
 - (b) is not prevented from being exempt by virtue of paragraph 8 or 9 above, is exempt information if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Cabinet and Council which are held at the Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle or the Town Hall, Lord Street, Southport. The dates and times of the meetings are published on www.sefton.gov.uk or you may contact the Democratic Services Section on telephone number 0151 934 2068.

NOTE:

For ease of identification, items listed within the document for the first time will appear shaded.

Phil Porter
Chief Executive

APPENDIX 3

FORWARD PLAN INDEX OF ITEMS

Item Heading	Officer Contact
ICT Managed Service Contract	Helen Spreadbury helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk
Financial Management 2023/24 to 2026/27 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2023/24 – March Update	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106
MOSL Market Innovation Fund (Acceptance of Funding)	Stephanie Jukes stephanie.jukes@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4552
Vine House Disposal	Lee Payne lee.payne@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4842
Annual Progress Report Climate Emergency	Stephanie Jukes stephanie.jukes@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4552

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SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	ICT Managed Service Contract This report seeks approval to go to market to secure a service provider to deliver ICT Managed Services to Sefton from the 1st of October 2025.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	7 Mar 2024			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Lead Director	Assistant Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (Strategic Support)			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Internal consultation has already taken place with members of ELT and further consultation is planned with the Portfolio holder for Corporate Resources and Customer Services, the Central Procurement team, Legal Services, Human Resources and Payroll and members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Consultation will also take place with trade unions as in when required			
Method(s) of Consultation	Consultation will be completed via the delivery of papers and attendance and meetings, the circulation of the report for comments and by seeking feedback from subject matter experts.			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	ICT Managed Service Contract			
Contact Officer(s) details	Helen Spreadbury helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk			

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SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Financial Management 2023/24 to 2026/27 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2023/24 – March Update Financial updates and Policy decisions relating to the Council's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan, including the monthly Revenue and Capital budget monitoring reports			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	7 Mar 2024			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Lead Director	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Cabinet, Chief Executive, Strategic Leadership Board, Trade Unions, Staff and relevant organisations as appropriate			
Method(s) of Consultation	Individual budget saving options / amendments to the budget will be subject to consultation – internal and external to the Council (as appropriate).			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Financial Management 2023/24 to 2026/27 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2023/24 – March Update			
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106			

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SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	MOSL Market Innovation Fund (Acceptance of Funding) To accept any offer of funding from the MOSL Market innovation fund, which is 100% grant funding for water saving interventions. A decision on funding is due January 2024 with work to start in April 2024.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet Council			
Decision Expected	4 Apr 2024 18 Apr 2024 Decision due date for Cabinet changed from 01/02/2024 to 04/04/2024. Reason: a decision on the allocation of funding is still awaited			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Lead Director	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	MOSL, United Utilities, Water Plus and key site managers.			
Method(s) of Consultation	Meetings have been held with MOSL, United Utilities, Water Plus and key site managers. Emails and documentation containing details of the bid have also been shared.			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	MOSL Market Innovation Fund (acceptance of funding)			
Contact Officer(s) details	Stephanie Jukes stephanie.jukes@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4552			

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SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Vine House Disposal Approval of the terms of disposal of the Council owned tower block Vine House, Kepler Street, Seaforth.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	4 Apr 2024 Decision due date for Cabinet changed from 01/02/2024 to 04/04/2024. Reason: Discussions are ongoing with a potential purchaser for the building. However, these discussions are taking longer than originally anticipated to conclude			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	Part exempt (Paragraph 3)			
Wards Affected	Linacre			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Lead Director	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Not applicable			
Method(s) of Consultation	Not applicable			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Vine House Disposal			
Contact Officer(s) details	Lee Payne lee.payne@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4842			

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SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Annual Progress Report Climate Emergency Progress made on the Climate Emergency Declaration during 2023/24			
Decision Maker	Cabinet Council			
Decision Expected	20 Jun 2024 11 Jul 2024			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	No	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	Open			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Lead Director	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Consultation ongoing with departments across the Council to bring together carbon footprint figures and reporting relevant activities.			
Method(s) of Consultation	DMT Climate officers group meetings/emails.			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Annual Progress Report Climate Emergency			
Contact Officer(s) details	Stephanie Jukes stephanie.jukes@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4552			

**Cabinet Member Brief
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
(Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)
27 February 2024**

Welfare Reform & Anti-Poverty Update

The Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Cabinet Member Reference Group met on 24th January 2024. The following updates were received:

Updates from the Welfare Reform & Anti-Poverty Steering Group

Officers from Public Health provided an update from the partnership steering group meeting held on the 6th of December 2023.

The cost-of-living crisis was discussed. Updates included:

- Citizens Advice, Bootle have employed Mind & Money project officer who can help support with ELAS applications. The post provides individuals with 8 hours of help such as setting up bank accounts, budgeting, benefit calculations, setting up online accounts, accessing charitable support, fuel vouchers, PIP applications etc. The request for support surrounding immigration issues and translation services has increased.
- One Vision Housing has advised that the link to their offers will be shared. It will include their Christmas community campaign with prizes given to residents. They also have an energy fund for January 2024 providing six payments of £49 annually.
- Sefton Public Health officers updated the partnership on the Respiratory Pilot, the vacancy has now been filled and the successful candidate is in post and has completed their induction.
- Foodbank and food pantry usage continued to rise and South Sefton more so in the lead-up to Christmas. They have been providing hats, coats, scarves, gloves and energy vouchers. They have predicted that January & February will be difficult months.

Community Pantry Update

Cabinet Members received an update regarding community pantries

The Sustainable Living Network meeting has taken place as well as the Food Strategy Officers Group meeting. Updates included LCR Digital Inclusion Network promoting an offer for foodbanks and pantries to provide re-serviced devices and data SIMS providing 4/5GB of data, to help mitigate digital exclusion. Liverpool Hope presented information suggesting that organisations such as charities are concentrating on front-line services and less on research, reducing the availability of vital information on local government impact. The Sefton Infant Feeding Lead

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discussed the extra needs for new and expectant mothers with breastfeeding and is currently collecting data to explore difficulties that families are facing.

Sefton Child Poverty Strategy

Officers from the Public Health team updated Cabinet Members on the Sefton child poverty third event. The event took place at Brunswick Youth & Community Centre on Thursday 18th January 2024, formal evaluation is underway. Initial anecdotal feedback has been positive with 80 plus delegates including schools, businesses, housing and NHS trusts. Public Health have been approached to present at a C&M committee.

Previous consultation took place requesting partners to provide information surrounding their work against the Sefton Child Poverty Strategy objectives. There has been a positive response from partners including how schools can expand cultural experiences for young people, Leisure services review of their pricing policy and concessions that have been introduced; libraries have given examples of surrounding child-dedicated spaces and offers.

Sefton Council Housing update

A written update had been circulated with the meeting pack and highlighted the following:

Homelessness - Sefton is currently experiencing a homeless crisis with approximately 180 households currently in temporary accommodation. The homeless crisis is being 'driven' by two factors: lack of availability and affordability.

Homeless Action Plan - Discussions surrounding Sefton's response to the crisis took place. Previous intervention decisions, in the provision of affordable, stable and high-quality housing through affordable homes developed by Sandway and the new Council Housing Programme, has allowed Sefton to be in the best position possible to respond to the current issues. In addition to responding to the immediate crisis, the overriding intention is to strengthen the borough's ability to deal with any potential future issues.

Homeless Strategy - The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review in its Borough every 5 years. Sefton commissioned consultants Imogen Blood and Associates to carry out the Homelessness Review in early 2023. The consultation started on Monday 30th October 2023 and lasted until Sunday 21st January 2024.

Housing Standards - There have been 92 requests for service relating to poor housing standards or poor housing management have been received between 1 Nov 2023 and 13 Dec 2023. Where landlords fail to comply with informal action, the team continue to take formal enforcement action. Since 1 Nov 2023 this has included the

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service of 1 Emergency Prohibition Order, 1 x Prohibition Order, 2 x Improvement Notices and 7 Notices for failure to have smoke alarms fitted.

Work to reduce the number of long-term vacant homes has continued, with responses to 11 new Service Requests relating to problematic empty homes. One Enforced Sale has progressed to auction on December 23.

Warm Hubs

An update on Warm Spaces was provided. Updates included:

Sefton CVS advised on 1st October the Welcome Spaces had changed its name back to Warm Spaces. 41 Warm Spaces are now operating across the borough and they are all logged on the CVS website which is also linked to Sefton Council website and working closely with organisations and in collaboration CVS have provided 536 residents with winter clothing grants.

The Warm Spaces Summary was presented. The report covered the period October to December 2023 with an overview of 38 providers who all provide Warm Hubs. The report highlighted the numbers of monthly attendees, age profiles and included case studies.

ELAS Update

Cabinet Members received an update on ELAS performance for the council's local welfare support scheme. Averaging around 300+ applications per week in January with figures at 318, 362 & 353. The Wednesday after the Christmas/New Year period they were receiving one application per minute.

Potential loss of government funding for household support funds will have an impact. Currently monitoring every week and it was agreed there was no benefit in pausing until funds ran out.

Requests for Action

None noted.

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	27 February 2024
Subject:	Cabinet Member Report – December 2023 to February 2024		
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 submit the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services report for the period December 2023 to February 2024 relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services report relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

Reasons for the Recommendation:

In order to keep Overview and Scrutiny Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No alternative options have been considered because the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

Any financial implications associated with the Cabinet Member report that are referred to in this update are contained within the respective reports.

(A) Revenue Costs – see above

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(B) **Capital Costs** – see above

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
Legal Implications:	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Impact on Children and Young People: No There are no direct children and young people implications arising from this report. Any children and young people implications arising from the consideration of reports referred to in the Cabinet Member update 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 matters referred to in the Cabinet Member report will be contained in reports when they are presented to Members at the appropriate time.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: None directly applicable to this report. The Cabinet Member update provides information on activity within Councillor Lappin's portfolio during a previous two/three-month period. Any reports relevant to her portfolio considered by the Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Committees during this period would contain information as to how such reports contributed to the Council's Core Purpose.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: As above
Commission, broker and provide core services: As above

Place – leadership and influencer: As above
Drivers of change and reform: As above
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: As above
Greater income for social investment: As above
Cleaner Greener: As above

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Cabinet Member Update Report is not subject to FD/LD consultation. Any specific financial and legal implications associated with any subsequent reports arising from the attached Cabinet Member update report will be included in those reports as appropriate

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

Contact Officer:	Paul Fraser
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2068
Email Address:	paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

Cabinet Member - (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) update report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 In order to keep Overview and Scrutiny Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.2 The most recent Cabinet Member report for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services is attached.

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CABINET MEMBER REPORT Overview & Scrutiny		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Paulette Lappin	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services	February 2024

Financial Management

Within the Financial Management service, there has been significant activity on a number of key issues:

The latest budget monitoring position, as at the end of December 2023, was reported to Cabinet in February 2024. This showed a forecast overspend of about £9m, mainly due to a forecast overspend on Children’s Social Care (£6.1m), Adult Social Care, (£2.5m) and the impact of the agreed pay award (an additional £1.4m). There are other budgets under pressure, but the expectation is that services will mitigate these pressures from elsewhere within their budgets. Mitigating actions have been approved by Cabinet which reduces the forecast overspend to just under £1.0m. Work continues to be undertaken to refine forecasts and updated positions will be reflected in the next report to Cabinet in March 2024.

The overall Budget Report (and associated supporting reports) have been presented to Overview and Scrutiny and Budget Cabinet and will be considered at Budget Council on 29th February 2024, when the budget for 2024/25 will be set along with the Council Tax for the year.

The audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 has now been completed and the audit certificate has been issued by EY. The audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 by EY is currently in abeyance as the firm considers the latest Government consultation and guidance on how audits will be completed.

Due to the delays in finalising the audit of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Statement of Accounts the production of the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 were delayed. Draft accounts were produced in mid-September and were presented to Audit and Governance at the end of September. Updated accounts were published in November 2023. Although some initial audit work has been undertaken by EY, the main audit has yet to commence for the same reasons as above.

The Council’s auditors will be Grant Thornton from the 2023/24 financial year. Officers have had an initial contact meeting, with further meetings scheduled to discuss matters related to the audit of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

Customer Centric Services

All areas of the service continue to deal with high workloads, whilst it remains positive that there continues to be progress in reducing volumes outstanding, it is acknowledged that work must continue over coming months to further reduce customer waiting times, with clearing work backlogs in Council Tax remaining the highest priority.

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Annual Billing for Council Tax and Business Rates

Preparations have gathered pace for the issue of annual bills for Council Tax and Business Rates for 2024/25. Testing is underway with ICT and service areas, including changes to Council Tax Premiums and Business Rates. Associated documentation has been reviewed and completed ready for the test files due to be produced mid-February. It has been agreed that a Council Tax Booklet will be issued with this year's bills, so work is taking place with the Communications Team and our printing supplier for the initial drafts to be produced.

Customer Services

The Council's Customer Services Contact Centre continues to answer approximately 17,000 calls each month. The salutation message that is relayed at the start of each incoming call continues to encourage customers to use the online Council services if they can, allowing staff to handle calls for Sefton's prioritised services, i.e., Social Care and the Councils' Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme (ELAS).

During the winter months, the team has dealt with a high volume of enquiries relating to cost-of living financial support, i.e. the Council's ELAS and the Household Support Fund. As expected, there has also been an increase in weather-related calls, i.e. the high winds resulted in calls from residents complaining about wheelie bins being blown over and rolling down roads; the heavy snowfall, followed by bursts of rain, resulted in a surge of telephone calls from people concerned about traffic lights not working and flooded roads being blocked.

Telephone enquiries for Adult Social Care remain consistently high as residents and families progress chase on outstanding assessments and care packages.

Demand at the One Stop Shops continues to be high, with approximately 2,700 visitors to Bootle One Stop Shop in January; approximately 1,000 people were seeking general council-related advice at reception, 670 had a taxi-licensing enquiry, with a further 1,000 attending with Council Tax, Parking/ Blue Badge or benefits enquiries.

At Southport, 584 customers attended the Atkinson in January, with 163 customers booking an appointment to discuss their Council Tax or benefit and the remainder seeking general council-related advice at reception. Service delivery from Southport continues to be reviewed with alternative locations being explored. Positive discussions have been held with colleagues in the Assets and Property service, however further updates are not expected to be provided until the end of February at the earliest following discussion with the new Assistant Director for Communities.

While overall customer contact remains high, enquiries for Social Care and ELAS remain prioritised above all other services that are offered by Customer Services.

Taxi-Licensing

Taxi Licensing is at a critical period of time, with advanced plans in place for implementing a new Taxi Licensing software system by April 2024. The system will be a significant improvement for the trade and key-stakeholders, allowing for taxi drivers, vehicle owners and operators to upload various evidence documents as well as pay all licensing fees via an online portal.

Over recent months, the priority has been to ensure that all existing drivers had their current licence renewed and all new/transfer/renewal vehicle plates have been processed in a quick and timely manner.

The new online portal was issued to the Council on Monday 29th January 2024, with a testing period of at least three weeks. A demonstration of the system will be provided to taxi-trade representatives mid-February at Bootle One Stop Shop. Following that, the trade will be given a period of offsite front-end user testing before a go-live date is mutually agreed.

With this being a very critical period for Taxi Licensing, a clear communication strategy has been put in place. The Council website continues to be regularly updated and the trade have been receiving a weekly update on processing timescales and progress with the portal. The current website update can be found at [Taxi licensing \(sefton.gov.uk\)](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/taxi-licensing)

In January 2024, a total of 68 Knowledge tests have been offered, with 20 new drivers licensed. The Knowledge test pass rate remains very poor (40%); however, the trade has agreed to support new applicants with preparing for the Knowledge test and providing assistance for drivers accessing the portal.

The trade has recently requested for a scaled down service similar to Bootle One Stop Shop to be reinstated from a Southport location. This has already been discussed with Sefton's Assets and Property Services and will be considered at the same time as the request to relocate all services currently offered from The Atkinson.

Risk and Audit

The **Internal Audit** team are continuing to work on delivering the 2023/24 internal audit plan with a current focus on reviews of:

- Review of number of Schools.
- ASC Controls to mitigate market failure
- SHOL Governance review
- Pupil Place Planning Assurance Mapping
- Petty cash
- Leisure Centres
- Waste Management
- Commissioning - Living Well
- Review into the procurement and management of contracts

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We have continued the recruitment of a permanent staff member in February 2023 and were able to appoint a suitable candidate in September 2023 who started in January 2024.

Insurance Team have completed and are working on the following initiatives to improve the Council's risk management.

- We have concluded the Council's insurance tender and have selected the successful insurers for each of the lots and are currently completing the renewal process.
- We have used some of the "free days" as part of the insurance programme risk bursary to undertake a review of Emergency Planning and Business Continuity documentation the outcome was shared with the Audit and Governance Committee. We are currently using some free insurance days to assess the Council's risk management framework.
- We are working with insurers and the Council's liability insurers to robustly defend claims and in limited circumstances will pursue through the Courts claimants to recover Council costs where the claims are proven to be exaggerated.
- To assist with risk management, the Team have developed a pilot report for Highways detailing claims numbers, values and outcomes, and areas where the concentration of claims is the highest. Once agreed with the service area, it is hoped that this can be developed and rolled out to others appropriately
- Team continues to work extensively with Service Teams including Highways, Green Sefton and Tourism to improve the management of insurable risk in areas where there are high numbers of claims or areas of concern.

The **Risk and Resilience Team**.

We have developed a Corporate Business Continuity Plan using the existing Service Area Business Continuity (BC) Plans which is currently with the Executive Leadership Team to approve. Following the exercise of the Council's BC arrangements in January 2023 which we have subsequently received feedback on we are currently implementing the recommendations from the review. A follow up exercise is due to take place in March 2024. We have revised the Council's BC Strategy and Policy and the Policy was presented to Cabinet and approved in September 2023.

The **Risk and Resilience Team** have completed the training on the Council's Risk Appetite which was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in March 2023 to all Service Areas as well as facilitating the updates of the Council's Corporate Risk Register for Audit and Governance Committee in December 2023. Other work includes:

- Working with the Merseyside Resilience Forum
- Development of a Shoreline Pollution Plan
- Review of the Council's emergency facilities
- Review of approach of volunteers
- Training for loggists and planning an exercise to enhance their experience
- Working on Sefton events

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For the **Health and Safety Team** there will be a continued focus during the next quarter of delivering the Health and Safety Improvement Plan.

- Continue to review, update and monitor the Health and Safety Standards and Policies, with focus on working from home, display screen and workstation assessments and stress risk assessments.
- Continue to develop the Council-wide training needs assessment which will eventually build into the health and safety training plan and provision.
- Completing a planned review of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and completing the Annual Health and Safety report.
- Focus on improving the accuracy of incident reporting across the Council will continue to ensure incidents of threatening and abusive behaviours towards staff are reported.
- Continue to deliver a health and safety management audit and inspection regime across the Council, to schools with a Service Level Agreement with the Council and those schools where the Council retains responsibility for the health and safety as the employer. This will provide assurance that health and safety management systems are suitable and effective.
- One new staff member started in January 2023 and a second staff member due to start in March 2024.

ICT

- The ICT Service continues to work on a number transformation programmes as well as delivering the BAU ICT Service alongside Agilisys. Key projects currently in flight relate to support for the Children's Improvement Programme, Customer Services (CXP), Data Centre relocation and the Website upgrade. The Sefton Arc and Leisure ICT Improvements are now complete, with further developments underway to improve Sefton's Cyber Security capabilities.
- Data centre rationalisation and right sizing is now completed within the existing Data Centre at St Peters ready for relocation to a new site. Due to the complexities associated with move to Bootle Town Hall the team are planning to move the existing comms capacity to Magdalen House with the remaining small data centre footprint to be moved to a dedicated Data Centre within the Liverpool City Region. The Agilisys staff will be relocated within Magdalen House.
- The Cloud telephony project is now closed, the legacy Mitel Infrastructure is now removed from the estate. Work is ongoing across teams to identify any telephony lines commissioned by departments directly so that these can be removed, and the users transferred to the corporate system.
- The new CXP solution is now live across all service areas and the legacy CRM system has been formally decommissioned. In terms of phase two, work is now well underway to transfer Council e-forms to CXP from the legacy e-forms system, with 20 forms completed to date and a further 4 phases of 20 each

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underway. Work is also starting on the configuration and set up of FOI processes in CXP.

- The website improvement programme work is now completed. Work is in progress to upgrade the Umbraco content management system; governance is in place to manage any web developments moving forwards.
- The ICT Procurement team continue to be busy; the forward plan for the next 12-18 months has been agreed by members of ELT and work has completed on several key procurements including the corporate connectivity service and the application for Crems and Crematoria, eLearning, GIS, and Leisure are all underway at present.
- The threat level in relation to Cyber Security remains high and the team are working hard to implement new technologies and tools to stay one step ahead of the risk.
- The drafting of the new Digital Strategy for Sefton has started, with engagement across the Council to develop a proposal document which, following internal approvals, will go out to consultation in later this year. Alongside this the ICT Client team is exploring opportunities around products such as AI and a policy document on the use of these next generation technologies will be released shortly.
- Due to the Agilisys contract ending on the 30th of September 2025 work is now underway regarding the procurement of a Managed Service provider for ICT from October 2025, with a report due to be tabled at Cabinet for decision in March this year.

Property Services

The Property Services Department are a multi-Disciplinary team delivering various services, professional advice and initiatives across the Borough of Sefton. Below are some examples of ongoing pieces of work throughout the department.

Asset Management

- Ongoing work to deliver approved Asset Disposals with further phases being developed for approval.
- Assisting with the SEND programme.
- Ongoing work supporting Growth Board projects.
- Ongoing work in connection to lease agreements.

Maintenance Management, Building Services & FM

- Facilities Management (FM) have recently moved under the management of Maintenance Management and building Services.
- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Corporate Buildings.
- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Education Capital & SEND programme.

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- Delivery of reactive maintenance and statutory compliance services to Corporate and Educational buildings.
- RAAC Study/Surveys – following an exercise across Sefton Corporate buildings and Sefton Maintained schools, Engineers have confirmed that they have not found any RAAC to be present.
- Professional advice and support on a broad range of regeneration programmes.
- Phase 1 essential maintenance delivery plan for corporate buildings progressing with works ongoing/complete.
- Phase 2 essential maintenance – looking to secure funding for this further phase of works.
- Asset survey delivery plan in train alongside the essential maintenance (this is funded under the essential maintenance programme).
- Delivering services in support of major adaptation to vulnerable and disabled residents.
- Looking at accommodation options for teams/departments.

Project Management

- Provide professional support to Growth Board on several projects.
- Project delivery for various Education capital & SEND schemes.
- Provide support to other teams on Asset Disposal, Building Maintenance, Asset Management, Energy and Statutory Compliance colleagues.

Energy Management

- Sefton Council Retrofit programme (LAD3, HUG) – Providing insulation to privately owned properties (worst/not insulated & for poorest residents 407). This has been extended with imminent completion.
- A programme of work to support schools (after large energy price rises) is ongoing.
- Sefton have transferred electricity provider. Post 1 April, all Council buildings and streetlights are 100% renewable energy powered.
- Energy prices (gas and electricity) continue to be high, due to the government support having been removed. Efficiency savings being considered.
- Work on the next phase of the Climate Emergency programme is progressing.
- Delivering services in support of affordable warmth to residents.

Legal Services

Democratic Services Team – Overview

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)**

At the time of drafting this report, the next meeting of the Committee will held on 23 January 2024 and the Committee will considered the following items:

- Melling Surgery Closure Update
- Cancer Alliance Update
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, Sefton Place - Update Report
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Primary Care Update

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- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, Sefton - Health Provider Performance Dashboard
 - Public Health Performance Framework
 - Adult Social Care Data Review
 - Winter Planning 2024
 - Serious Violence Duty
 - Cabinet Member Update Reports
 - Work Programme Update
- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)**

At the time of drafting this report, the next meeting of the Committee will be held on 30 January 2024 and the Committee will consider the following items:

- Cabinet Member Reports
 - Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement
 - Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2023
 - Sefton Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - Annual Report 2022-2023
 - Serious Violence Duty
 - Education Scorecard
 - Ofsted Inspections
 - Work Programme Key Decision Forward Plan
- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)**

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 16 January 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Update on the Progression of the Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Strategy - Presentation
 - Serious Violence Duty
 - A Cultural Strategy for Sefton
 - Southport Market - 2 Year Review
 - Sefton Economic Strategy Update
 - Sandway Homes - 2022 / 23 Outturn Review of Council Wholly Owned Companies
 - Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited (SHOL) - 2022 / 23 Outturn Review of Council Wholly Owned Companies
 - Work Programme 2023/24, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan
 - Cabinet Member Reports - November 2023 to January 2024
- **Informal Meeting of the Committee – 15 January 2024**

Refuse and Recycling – The Committee agreed that a review be undertaken on the topic of refuse and waste recycling. Accordingly, Members undertook a visit to the Gillmoss Recycling Discovery Centre; and following the visit an informal meeting was held to discuss issues associated with refuse and waste recycling.

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

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 9 January 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Corporate Communications Update - Presentation
- Air Quality Update 2023
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base for 2024/25 and Review of Council Tax Premiums for Long-Term Empty Properties
- Financial Management 2023/24 to 2026/27 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2023/24 - January Update
- Work Programme 2023/24, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan
- Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Reference Group – Update
- Cabinet Member Report - October 2023 to December 2023

- **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

The Management Board does not have any formal decision-making powers. Accordingly, any recommendations suggested by the Management Board must be submitted to the appropriate decision-making body for consideration.

A meeting of the Management Board was held on 9 January 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Public Engagement and Consultation Panel
- Centre for Governance and Scrutiny - Newsletters and Annual Survey
- Liverpool City Region Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny Link - Councillor Christine Howard
- Update on Informal Meetings and Working Groups
- Executive/Scrutiny Protocol

The last meeting of the Management Board was held on 21 November 2023 to discuss governance and wider member support to Children's Services.

The next meeting of the Management Board will take place on 12 March 2024.

- **Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The last meeting of LCRO&S was held on 17 January 2024. The Committee considered the following items:

- Mayoral Combined Authority Budget 2024-25
- Towards a Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region – Engagement
- Work Programme Update 2023-24
- Bus Service Improvement Plan Update
- Transport Matters – verbal update

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The Committee is made up of 3 elected Members from each of the constituent Local Authorities of the LCR Combined Authority, along with one elected Member from both the Liverpool City Region Liberal Democrat Group and the Liverpool City Region Conservative Group.

Council appointed Councillors Desmond, Hart and Howard as Members of the LCRCA O&S Committee; and appointed Councillor Howard as Sefton's Scrutiny Link. However, as Councillor Howard has now been appointed as Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills, she can no longer serve on Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It is anticipated that Council at its meeting to be held on 29 February 2024 will appoint a new Member to serve on the LCRCA O&S Committee and a new Scutiny Link.

The next meeting of the LCRO&S will be held on 28 February 2024.

School Appeals

The Section has continued to organise and clerk school admission appeal hearings and school exclusion reviews.

The school appeal 'high season' started on 10 May and ended on 27 September 2023 (late appeals). In this period over 450 appeals were listed. The levels of school appeal cases remain high. Three days of hearings were held in January, and two days have already been 'pencilled in' for February.

Planning for the 2024 'high season' started in December 2023. Early responses from Panel Members highlight this year will be particularly difficult due to a shortage of Members. A few Panel Members have retired, other authorities have block booked Panel Members for the summer period, and there are difficulties in recruiting new volunteers.

The section will host a training event for new and existing Panel Members in March. We hope to enlist a few new Panel Members at these events

Civic and Mayoral Services

The Mayor's Christmas Toy Appeal was launched in November and as always, the appeal received an astounding response from Sefton's businesses and residents. Despite the ongoing cost of living crisis, the appeal successfully provided toys for 700 families within the borough.

Preparations are in full swing for the Mayors Gala Charity Ball, scheduled for Saturday 6th April 2024 at Formby Hall. Several businesses have already secured the corporate package at £1500. The corporate package includes:

- Table for 10 guests
- Discounted Hotel Room Rate
- VIP Drinks Reception on Arrival from 6pm-7pm
- £300 Bar Tab in Main Room with a Three Course Meal + Tea/Coffee

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- Premium Seating in the Main Room
- Advertising in the Event Brochure and on Presentation Screen on night as Sponsor

The Mayor also attended the funeral of former Mayor of Sefton, Jim Hayes.

Member Development

Mandatory Committee Training

Mandatory training sessions for Members of Planning and Licensing Committees took place in May and June 2023.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Training

Three training sessions have been provided by the Local Government Association (LGA for Members and substitutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding).

On-going mentoring support is being provided for the Chair of the O&S Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding).

The LGA will be providing dedicated training for Members and Substitutes of the O&S Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) on 25 January 2024 at 6.00 p.m.

Mandatory Corporate Parenting training

The mandatory Corporate Parenting Course will continue to be provided in-house, supported by the Cabinet Member - Children's Social Care. During 2023/24 three training sessions have been held to date. At the time of drafting this report, a further training session is planned, as follows:-

- 24 January 2024, 4.00 p.m.

Member Development Steering Group

The Member Development Steering Group was established in November 2022. For 2023/24 the Group is comprised of 6 Members and last met on 20 December 2023. The next meeting is scheduled for 21 February 2024.

The Members of the Steering Group act as Member Development Champions for their respective political groups and are responsible for providing feedback on the Member Development Programme.

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Operational Matters

Children's Services – Human Resources Operational Support Team

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A dedicated HR Team for Children's Social Care and Education, provide advice and support regarding all employment and staffing matters to all areas of Children's Services including Schools.

Current priorities, in addition to business-as-usual focuses on supporting the Executive Director for Children's Social Care and Education on all staffing issues. Sefton School prioritises support to schools' to proposed Academy transfers, along with commencing our 3 yearly HR Support for Schools Service Level Agreement cycle in which history demonstrates 100% buy in. The challenges in recruitment and retention continue within Children's Social Care and SEN. Some interim employment arrangements have been put in place to support SEN with ongoing improvement and pending SEN inspection.

There has recently been an increase into matters relating to managing sickness absence within Children's Services, which is a positive, and the team will be designing and delivering training in relation to the managing absence over the coming months. Following the design and roll of training to Children's Services in relation to managing performance, we have seen a slight increase in supporting Children's Social Care in this area, including formal processes. Formal meetings continue to be held via a combination of Microsoft Teams and in person meetings as required.

Whilst considering the pressures that are placed on Employees and the Authority, the team mindful of sensitivity when providing advice and do so empathetically, at the same time ensuring that the right support and advice is given, and the appropriate processes are actioned accordingly.

All Other Council Operational HR Business Support

Advice and support are provided to all service areas regarding employment/staffing matters.

Pay & Grading, Job evaluation, policy and projects.

Job evaluation is undertaken relative to all Council and School posts for new or revised roles and relative to any operational and service reviews to maximise efficiencies as part of restructuring exercises across the Council. Team members are involved in service reviews and work to support transformational proposals and potential changes to service delivery.

Officers in this team review safeguarding checks held against posts e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service, Health Care Professional Council (HCPC) etc.

The team manages and controls the temporary end dates relative to all fixed term contracts.

Regrading applications and appeals are processed in line with the Council protocol.

The team undertakes the review of HAY graded positions for new posts and the evaluation of HAY posts stemming from any revised proposals to the HAY grading structure. The team are responsible for the production of the Council's Annual Pay Policy and publication of the Gender Pay GAP reporting.

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The team manage the Matrix contract relative to the recruitment of Agency workers. Agency recruitment is currently at an all-time high relative to social worker and associated positions especially within Children's Services

Officers are involved with Employment Tribunal claims (approx. 580) relative to employees seeking backdating of amendments to Term Time Only salary calculations. Consultations are ongoing in relation to the potential settlement of these claims following a Court of Appeal case. On 15th March GMB accepted the Council settlement proposal (which covers a very small proportion of the 580 claims). Officers have settled the GMB legitimate claims via COT 3 agreements. The remaining claims are the subject of ongoing discussions and potential settlement arrangements.

The team includes a Policy Officer responsible for undertaking reviews of policy, procedures and guidance and introduce new policies as required in line with current legislation. The officer is also involved in Corporate Equalities initiatives, staff support groups, responding to Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests, and assistance with mandatory training for managers. The policy officer has recently launched the Council's Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Care Experienced People, and is involved in the implementation of a staff survey.

Team members are responsible for the production of Agenda and minutes in relation to the Joint Trade Union meetings held on a 2 week cycle.

Service Development, Establishment Control, Transactional HR Payroll & Pension (THRP) Services

There are still some issues with Monthly Data Collection (MDC) for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which we are working with Midland HR (MHR) to resolve.

Sefton continue to press MHR for improvements to the reports provided and fortnightly meetings continue with MHR to address issues.

Teachers Pensions Monthly data collection (MDC) moves to Monthly Contribution Reconciliation (MCR) has been postponed until 1st July 2024 as the iTrent software has several known issues. Sefton have engaged with MHR to ensure the system is configured correctly for testing and go live and this work is ongoing

The staff are still learning parts of the new system and there are issues with how long the system is taking to process some records and this has been raised and a fix was put and performance seems to have improved.

There are backlogs in the teams due to process, reporting and resource issues and all work is being prioritised.

The 1st April 2023 for NJC staff, Councillors and Chief Executive pay were agreed and processed in December 2023 pay. The pay awards from 1st September 2022 and 1st September 2023 for Soulbury staff were agreed and processed in January 2024 and the pay award from 1st September 2023 for Youth staff was agreed and processed in January 2024.

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The Teachers Pay award for 1st September 2023 was agreed and was processed in December 2023.

Development work is ongoing to enhance automation of the DBS process using the robotics blue prism software. Mail merge development is underway to address backlogs of letters from THR. Reusing positions has been in place for 1 month which has provided improved data accuracy within iTrent. NB: No data cleansing has been done for CSC as this service is under ongoing structural review.

Workforce reporting is being maintained as BAU, a review of existing Payroll Q&A reports is underway to enhance and speed up final accuracy checks before each Pay date. Financial workforce data reporting is ongoing to enhance data sharing between iTrent and collaborative planning.

Requests have been made to ICT to enable use of the MS power platform applications (power apps/power automate and Azure functions) this future development work plan will allow us to review processes across Employee support, Recruitment, HR, and Establishment Control to enable automation and bring efficiencies across services.

Health Unit

1. During December 2023 and January 2024 a total of 131 referrals for SMBC employees were made to the Health Unit. This is virtually identical to the figure for the same period in the previous 12 months in which there were 130 referrals.
2. Referrals during this latest period included Education Excellence (55.7%), Communities (12.9%), and Children's Services (9.95). The main reasons were stress and mental health related (45.8%), musculoskeletal (19%), and chronic medical illness (9.9%).
3. Delivery of OH services continue to be offered via a mixture of telephone and face-to-face appointments, enabling flexibility for both employees and managers, however, there has been an increase in the request for face-to-face appointments for not only the Occupational Health Nurse and Physician, but also for Counselling services.

Workforce Learning and Development (CLC)

Apprenticeships

We have 4 cohorts of staff enrolled on the **Level 6 Social Work Apprenticeship Degree** – all are progressing well with their studies and our first of these cohorts (3 staff from Adult Social Care and 3 from Children's Services) have just finished with their grades due imminently.

Staff enrolled on **Level 6 Occupational Therapy Degree** are progressing well and 6 Senior Managers have now completed the **Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship Degree programme (MBA)**, and 2 Senior Managers are continuing with their studies and are making good progress.

8 Managers are enrolled on the **Level 5 Operational/Departmental Manager Apprenticeship standard** and are making good progress. We are planning a second cohort for March 2024 and will be meeting with the L&D Board end of January 2024 to review the Training Needs Analysis, to inform our planning and next steps.

We have 1 member of staff from the Public Health Team enrolled on the **Level 6 Environmental Health Practitioner Degree** and they are making good progress.

Training delivery

The Workforce Learning and Development Team continues to deliver a number of training programmes and initiatives. These include:

- **Corporate Mandatory Training** – this includes Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Safeguarding Adults Awareness, Safeguarding Children & Young People Awareness and Climate Change. Monthly reports have recently been updated to include the mandatory courses for managers. Additional courses include Sickness Absence and Equality and Diversity for Managers eLearning, Recruitment and Selection, Managing Capability and Managing Disciplinary, Grievance and Dignity at Work virtual classroom sessions. The reports are shared with ELT/SLB to encourage staff to complete these courses.
- **Information Compliance eLearning** – we have developed a new course and end of module assessment which went live in January 2024. The new course includes 7 sections, examples include terminology and legislation, Data Protection Act Principles and Individual Rights, dealing with information requests and sharing information.
 - **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training delivery is going well. To date, we have trained 241 Sefton Council and schools' staff. An increase of 25 since the last report.
 - **LCRCA Race Equality Training** – working with the LCRCA and neighbouring LAs to develop a training programme to complement existing E&D awareness training. This will include the 'lived experience' to enable us to address the structural and systemic racial biases that exist in some organisations and to challenges micro aggressions and unconscious biases in the workplace. To date we have trained 404 staff across the organisation. The LCR Race Equality Hub are looking into options for the delivery of further sessions during 2024/25.
 - The development of a **Personalisation Training Programme** for students, ASYEs and for new starters working across Adult Social Care, who have not undertaken this training previously. The go live date for the new training programme is 1st April 2024.

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Strategic Support

COMMUNICATIONS

We have continued to provide support right across the council on key projects, including the LGA Peer Review, the work to make repairs to Southport Pier, the latest Ofsted monitoring visit and preparation for the budget setting.

We also played a role in the Mayor's Christmas Toy Appeal, which helped to ensure every child in Sefton had a gift to open on Christmas Day.

A key piece of work has been reviewing the internal communications channels following a number of staff listening sessions that were held prior to Christmas. It is important that staff are kept informed about what is happening and a refreshed, consistent set of channels will be used going forward.

The team is starting the refresh of the communications strategy/framework to provide a clear plan going forwards as to how we can continue to ensure the team helps the organisation in delivering on its priorities and enhancing our reputation in the local community. This will incorporate the work on internal communications as well as digital content.

Over the next period we will be supporting the work to ensure people understand their council tax bills, what support is available and how they can pay. And we will be encouraging residents who are not signed up to register to vote and remind everyone of the voter ID requirements.

Procurement

The Procurement Team engagement meetings with Service areas to update the Contract Register has been concluded. The follow up to this process, for continuity of the process, will be for our Procurement Category Managers to attend Service Teams DMT meetings in order to identify future or prospective projects and update the Procurement pipeline to ensure accuracy and compliance.

The Council are experiencing an increase in uptake of our early payment programme, partly due to these reviews. We have carried out some benchmarking to understand how we can increase sign up levels by suppliers. Consequently, we will be increasing levels of communications within the Council of the benefits of encouraging suppliers to sign up to our early payment programme.

Procurement have been working closely with Legal, Finance and ICT to introduce DocuSign into the Council. This will increase efficiency in the process of signing and storing documents, but also significantly reducing the amount of printing required, with its associated costs. We are planning a targetted rollout in February 2024.