



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS)

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT ON TUESDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Howard (in the Chair)
Councillors Corcoran, Harvey, Lloyd-Johnson,
Christine Maher, McKee, Catie Page,
Sir Ron Watson and Webster

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Hardy

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Chair, Councillor Dowd, Councillor Atkinson, Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills and Councillor Veidman, Cabinet Member – Planning and Building Control.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

11. MERSEYSIDE RECYCLING AND WASTE AUTHORITY – SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2023/24

The Committee received a presentation from Lesley Worswick, Chief Executive of the Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority on her authority's service delivery plan 2023/24. Ms. Worswick highlighted the following 4 aims of the Corporate Plan:

- Improve the sustainable management of waste and resource. Information was provided on the Recycling Discovery Centre; the Southport Eco-Centre; education resources; the circular economy; food waste collection; campaigns regarding lithium batteries, home composting and recycling; and the community fund in partnership with Veolia.
- Delivery of effective waste services. Information was provided on the Merseyside Energy Recovery Limited, appointed on a 30-year contract in 2013 by MRWA to divert household waste from landfill; and the Waste Management and Recycling contract with Veolia.
- Co-operate to improve working arrangements. Information was provided on food waste collection; and zero waste strategies.

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- Measure and report on climate change impacts and sustainability improvements. Information was provided on sustainable development goals; carbon footprint; biodiversity; overall recycling rates from 2017-18 to 2021-22 for Sefton v the City Region; and contamination rates.

Ms Worswick concluded by detailing what MRWA wanted to achieve and its key priorities.

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

- The more prevalent use of mobile scooters requiring the use of batteries and charging equipment with the resultant risk of combusting in the home and when disposed of; and information was sought on the availability of safer batteries for such purposes.
- In respect of the food waste collection scheme it was suggested that some dwellings such as flats and apartments may not be suitable for the scheme; but that the use of communal bins, in communal areas, may resolve such issues; and whether funding was available for this.
It was also noted that the re-launch of the food waste collection service was included in the contract with Veolia; that details of the scheme were being worked on; and that by December 2023 a clearly scoped set of timelines, activities and high-level costs would be developed.
- The campaign to raise awareness of the disposal of lithium batteries was referred to; and it was acknowledged that other incorrectly disposed of items such as vapes, which also contained lithium batteries, and pressurised whipped cream chargers (being used for psychoactive substance use) also posed dangers of combustion/explosion.
- It was noted that Sefton's overall recycling rates over the last 5 years were consistently above the Liverpool City Region average; but that worryingly, recycling rates were falling across Sefton and the City Region.
- It was noted that the current waste management and recycling contract would shortly need to be re-tendered; and information was sought on business competitiveness in the waste management industry.

RESOLVED:

That Lesley Worswick be thanked for her informative presentation.

12. DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 11 of 28 September 2022 the Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of People (Communities) that updated on Sefton's strategic approach to tackling domestic abuse.

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The report indicated that in September 2022 Members were provided with an update on the Domestic Abuse Act (introduced in April 2021), Sefton Council's statutory obligations within the Act, and Sefton's Domestic Abuse Partnership Board; and that since then, work had continued to refresh Sefton's Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and to develop an action plan to take the priorities within this forward.

The report detailed the operation of the Sefton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board; provided information on the Sefton Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2028 and Action Plan; and because the impact of domestic abuse cut across all agency services, detailed the cross-partnership collaboration with the following organisations:

- Safer Sefton Together partnership on the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) agenda
- the Sefton Safeguarding Adults Board and Sefton Safeguarding Children's Partnership
- Liverpool city region partnerships such as the Merseyside Strategic Domestic Violence and Abuse Group, the Merseyside Strategic Sexual Violence Group, Community Safety Leads meetings around domestic abuse and suicide prevention, domestic homicide reviews learning workshops and multi-agency domestic abuse perpetrator work

The Sefton Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2028 and the Domestic Abuse Action Plan 2023-2028 were attached as appendices to the report.

Members asked questions/commented on the following matters:

- The methodology used in the Sefton Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy to ensure that victim/survivor voices and experiences were clearly captured, listened to, and enacted upon to ensure Sefton's response to tackling domestic abuse was based on their needs.
- In the Sefton Domestic and Sexual Abuse Action Plan it was considered that it would be helpful if the table could be updated by the completion of the "Progress RAG Rated" column to aid evaluation of key milestones.
- Funding risks across agencies providing valuable services was a concern.
- The provision of wider support opportunities for perpetrators of domestic abuse to sustain positive behaviour change long-term.
- The work undertaken with schools (including academies), as part of the Sefton Domestic and Sexual Abuse Action Plan, to promote preventative interventions and approaches in the curriculum.
- The synergy between the Leadership and Governance, and Prevent and Protect, Repair, and Children and Young People Sub-Groups.

RESOLVED:

That the report updating on Sefton's strategic approach to tackling domestic abuse be noted.

13. RIVERSIDE DISPERSED ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

Further to Minute No. 5 of 28 June 2022 the Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) that provided an update on activity undertaken relating to the Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Programme (the Programme) since June 2022.

The report indicated that following a strategic review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23 it was agreed to introduce a pilot service to provide dispersed temporary accommodation and support services for vulnerable households, particularly for those who struggled to access tenancies; that the pilot project was a Housing First-style approach to preventing homelessness by providing person-centred support for families to help them sustain a tenancy and prevent them from falling into temporary accommodation or shelters; and that the pilot was initially part funded by the Riverside Impact Fund – which aimed to provide opportunities to test outcomes-based commissioning models with its mission being to find a new approach to protect and support some of the most vulnerable families in the borough, whilst reducing council expenditure on costly bed and breakfast and other private rented sector accommodation.

The Programme was evaluated by an independent company, Impact Limited, to assess the impact of the pilot which concluded that without this service, customers' progression to living in independent accommodation would have been much slower with subsequent consequences relating to health, wellbeing, family cohesion, etc; and that of the 37 families involved, only one failed to successfully progress to a regular social housing tenancy with Riverside in Sefton, due to a preference for being housed in a different borough.

The report continued that following the successful completion of the project pilot the Council commissioned the Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Project for a further two years from September 2022; and detailed how families would be supported by the Programme.

The report also advised that Sefton Council won the Best Initiative for Tackling Homelessness category at this year's Northern Housing Awards for its Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Service.

The report concluded by providing information on case studies relating to six families supported by a Support Worker through the Programme.

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

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- Who funded the evaluation of the pilot, carried out by an independent company, Impact Limited, to assess the impact of the pilot.
- Systems that were in place to liaise with neighbours, and offer support if necessary, in the vicinity of properties to be used to house families in the pilot scheme.
- Future funding/grants for the continuation of the pilot scheme, including the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.
- It was welcome to note that the pilot evaluation concluded that there was a positive return on investment which represented potential public spending costs savings associated with homeless families.
- The positive outcome of the pilot in maintaining family cohesion.
- It was pleasing to note that Sefton Council won the Best Initiative for Tackling Homelessness category at this year's Northern Housing Awards for its Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Service.
- The informative case studies of six families supported by the Support Worker through the initiative and which detailed the types of work and support provided.
- The Sefton wide nature of the scheme
- The potential to include other registered social landlords in schemes to provide similar services.
- The challenges facing the Council to widening the scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the update on activity undertaken relating to the Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Programme since June 2022 and the continued approach to the Programme be approved.

14. WINTER MAINTENANCE POLICY AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) seeking consideration of the revised Winter Maintenance Policy and Operational Plan policy document for approval for 2023/24.

The report indicated that the Council provided a Highway Winter Service to the Borough in accordance with the Winter Service Policy and Operational Plan; that officers monitored the weather conditions 24 hours a day throughout the winter season and enacted the plan when weather conditions dictated; that the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003 (section 111) had inserted an additional section 41(1A) to the Highways Act 1980 which placed a duty on the Highway Authorities in respect of winter conditions, and stated 'In particular, a Highway Authority is under duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice'; and that in addition, the Traffic Management Act 2004 placed a Statutory Network Management Duty on all local traffic authorities in England requiring all authorities to do all that

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was reasonably practicable to manage the network effectively to keep traffic moving. In meeting this duty, authorities should establish contingency plans for dealing promptly and effectively with unplanned events, such as unforeseen weather conditions, as far as is reasonably practicable. The Council's Winter Service Policy and Operational Plan, which has been approved by the Council, is reviewed each summer to ensure that it remained 'fit for purpose'.

The report advised that as part of the annual review and reassessment consultation was undertaken and that a consultation letter was sent to every Elected Member seeking their views. A copy of the letter was attached as Annex A to the report.

The report concluded by seeking comments for submission to the Cabinet Member - Locality Services.

Members asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- Liaison with neighbouring local authorities to ensure a consistency of gritting operations.
- The impact of climate change and the consequential risks of more often and severe flooding incidents; and what measures could be put in place to alleviate such issues.
- Concern was raised that the report indicated that there had been no response from Merseytravel to consultation on the Policy and Operational Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Winter Maintenance Policy and Operational Plan policy document for 2023/24 be endorsed.

15. EXECUTIVE/SCRUTINY PROTOCOL

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

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

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

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A Member of the Committee commented that it was best practice for Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to not be from the ruling political group; and that legislation was in place to ensure that at Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees the Chair of the Committee must be from an opposition group.

RESOLVED: That

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

- (1) Executive Directors and Assistant Directors, whose responsibilities fall within the remit of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, being requested to seek the views of the Committees on all strategies and plans prior to submission to Cabinet and Council; and that if it is not possible, due to time constraints, to submit the final strategy or plan for consideration, then an outline or synopsis be submitted to the Committees to allow an oversight of the proposals to be considered and commented upon; and Section 6 of the Protocol relating to pre-scrutiny be amended accordingly; and
- (2) reference being made to informal meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to review topics in Section 8 of the Protocol.

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

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought views on the Work Programme for 2023/24; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan; the confirmation of the date for a visit to the Gillmoss Recycling Discovery Centre and informal meeting of the Committee; updated on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee; provided information on the breakdown of offences for which penalty charge notices had been issued; and provided information on the reduction in time civil enforcement officers would spend patrolling if the parking and environmental enforcement functions were split.

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

- In respect of the Bootle Regeneration Strategy item contained in the Forward Plan, clarification was sought on whether the report would be open or exempt; and a suggestion was made that the item had a borough wide impact rather than simply affecting Derby and Linacre wards.
- Quoracy problems at meetings of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee were referred to and it was noted that the high quorum threshold was not set by the Combined Authority but was set out in legislation. It was also noted that Councillor Howard, Sefton's Scrutiny Link to the

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Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, had offered Sefton's support to the Combined Authority in their approach to Government to reduce the quorum for meetings.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed;
- (2) the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) be requested to submit his Southport Market update report to the next meeting of the Committee;
- (3) due to the low number of Members available to attend the visit to the Gillmoss Recycling Discovery Centre and informal meeting of the Committee on 9 October 2023, the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be requested to arrange a fresh date for the visit and informal meeting in November/early December;
- (4) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (5) the information on the breakdown of offences for which penalty charge notices had been issued; and information on the reduction in time civil enforcement officers would spend patrolling if the parking and environmental enforcement functions were split be noted; and
- (6) In respect of the implementation of recommendations arising from the Effectiveness of the Council's Enforcement Activity Working Group:
 - (1) bearing in mind the views of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) and the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) that it is unlikely that their comments will change on the implementation of such recommendations for the foreseeable future then no further update reports be submitted on this matter; and
 - (2) however, if circumstances do change in due course, then the Assistant Directors be requested to provide updates to the Committee.

17. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS - JUNE 2023 TO SEPTEMBER 2023

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that included the most recent reports from the Cabinet Members for Communities and Housing; Health and Wellbeing (Green Sefton element); Locality Services; Planning and Building Control; and Regeneration and Skills.

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

- The achievement of Library Assistant Lizzie Todd of being named MJ Rising Star of 2023 at this year's Municipal Journal Awards.
- Affordable housing delivery in the borough and the potential impacts on such delivery due to current economic market conditions.
- A concern was raised that a Member wished to ask a question but that due to the Cabinet Member not being present at the meeting they were unable to do so. It was acknowledged that any Member could contact a Cabinet Member about their reports directly, but that this would not provide public scrutiny as the question would not be in the public domain.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing; Locality Services; Health and Wellbeing (Green Sefton element); and Regeneration and Skills reports relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (2) the congratulations of the Committee be extended to Lizzie Todd for her achievement of being named MJ Rising Star of 2023 at this year's Municipal Journal Awards;
- (3) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be requested to arrange for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to consider the issue of questions submitted to Cabinet Members at Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and
- (4) Councillor Hardy be thanked for her attendance at the Committee.