

Overview
& Scrutiny



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

DATE: Tuesday 11th June, 2024

TIME: 6.30 pm

VENUE: Birkdale Room, Town Hall, Southport

Member

Councillor
Councillor Bradshaw (Chair)
Councillor Byrom (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Brodie - Browne
Councillor McNabb
Councillor Murphy
Councillor Catie Page
Councillor Parker
Councillor Shaw
Councillor Thomas
Councillor Sir Ron Watson

Substitute

Councillor
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Carragher
Councillor Evans
Councillor Porter
Councillor Johnson
Councillor Myers
Councillor Killen
Councillor Evans
Councillor Roche
Councillor Morris

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Paul Fraser
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Telephone: 0151 934 2068
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E-mail: paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk

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 3 - 10)

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024

4. Changes to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Potential Impacts on Service Users in Sefton (Pages 11 - 18)

Report of the Assistant Director of Place (Communities)

5. Work Programme 2024/25, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan (Pages 19 - 44)

Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer

6. Cabinet Member Report - February 2024 to June 2024 (Pages 45 - 66)

Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer

THIS SET OF MINUTES IS NOT SUBJECT TO "CALL IN".

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

MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM, TOWN HALL,
SOUTHPORT
ON TUESDAY 27TH FEBRUARY, 2024

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lappin

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D'Albuquerque, Evans (and his substitute member Councillor Dodd), Grace, McGinnity and Murphy (and her substitute member Councillor Christine Maher).

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

47. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

48. ANNUAL ICT UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that provided a summary of the performance of the Managed Services ICT Contract over the last 12 months, currently outsourced to Agilisys.

The report provided specific information on the following areas:

1. Agilisys Contract Performance against key performance indicators - during the contract period to date Agilisys had met key performance measures (KPI's) except when exceptional agreed circumstances had prevailed; and customer satisfaction had remained high during the last 12 months, and any scores falling below expected standards were followed up on a case-by-case basis. Performance over the last 12 months was detailed in Appendix A attached to the report;
2. Project Delivery and Security – in respect of project delivery, Agilisys provided a significant volume of ad hoc projects to Sefton,

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in line with the provisions of the Contract; these ranged from system upgrades to major infrastructure programmes; and

In respect of cyber security, risk continued to be significant issue for local authorities across the Country, and the risk of an Information Security Breach due to a cyber-attack featured on the Corporate Risk Register and although Sefton had made significant investment in its security tools, polices, and licenses the threat to the Council network was still significant. Over the last 12 months it was noted that local authorities had been targeted via distributed denial of service attacks. This type of attack flooded the targeted website or online service with traffic (requests) and could overwhelm the service making it unavailable to legitimate users; and

3. the wider work of the ICT Client team in relation to ICT and Digital - the ICT client team had also delivered services and support for ICT across the Council, including specialist ICT Procurement and Contract Management for approximately 250 ICT Contracts; and the team provided 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.

The report concluded that the current contract with Agilisys performed well and had delivered significant savings for the authority compared to the previous contractual arrangement.

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

- The % increase in the number of Cyber-attacks per year on Sefton's corporate network
- The failure of Agilisys, in April 2023, to meet the key performance indicator in respect of answering telephone calls made to the Service Desk within an average of 60 seconds of the telephone call first being made
- The office-based location of Agilisys staff

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report detailing the performance of the Managed Services ICT Contract over the last 12 months, currently outsourced to Agilisys, be noted; and
- (2) the Senior Manager ICT & Digital be requested to produce statistics detailing the % increase in the number of Cyber-attacks year on year on Sefton's corporate network.

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

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

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

- Disciplinary, Grievance and Dignity at Work - the organisation enjoyed a comparatively good level of cases and this reflected on the whole, both the good overall industrial relations environment, the partnership approach that was undertaken and also the work undertaken within departments
- Suspensions - in the period August - December 2023, 10 employees were suspended from duty (not including schools)
- Disciplinary - during the period September – December 2023, there had been 13 disciplinary investigations
- Grievances - during the period October – December 2023, there had been 4 grievances
- Dignity at work - During the period September – December 2023, there had been 7 dignity at work complaints
- Statistical data for Q1 and Q2 2023/2024 (01.04.23 – 30.06.23 and 01.07.23 - 30.09.23) which detailed 'Short Term', 'Long Term' and 'All Absence' data along with previous year's figures for comparison purposes
- The Strategic Leadership Board continuing to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence
- The Occupational Health Unit providing counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy on a face-to-face basis
- Physiotherapy appointments being arranged through the OH Unit as were pension assessments for ill health, ill health pension appeals and deferred pension cases
- The Council's Sickness Absence Policy which operated in a partnership with trade unions

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

- Information was sought on the year-on-year statistics on the numbers of staff suspended from duty
- The planned action, and timeframe, for addressing long-term sickness absence

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- The provision of sickness statistics differentiating between office based staff and operational staff
- Benchmarking Sefton's sickness statistics against similar local authorities
- The impact of agile working on sickness absence levels

RESOLVED: That

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

50. TAXI ISSUES IN SEFTON

Further to Minute No. 16 (2) of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 the Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) on wider taxi issues in Sefton including how hackney carriages could be further encouraged within the Sefton area.

The report indicated that the existing numerical restriction applied to hackney carriage vehicle licences had been in place since 1986 when the limit was set at 271; that the Council had discretion to limit the number of hackney carriage vehicles it chose to licence for the purpose of controlling their numbers; that current legislation stated the only reason on which an application for a hackney carriage licence could be refused was that the Council was satisfied that there was no significant demand for hackney carriage services that were not being met; and that this meant that the Council was satisfied that there were enough licensed hackney carriages to serve the public without issuing any more.

To gather evidence on the significant demand for hackney carriage services the Council undertook a hackney carriage demand survey; the last survey was undertaken in 2019 and found that "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"; and that current statistics showed that Sefton currently had 236 active hackney carriage vehicles and 266 licensed drivers (35 vehicle licences were currently 'on hold' with the Council; and that since the 2020 pandemic, hackney carriage driver numbers had steadily reduced leading to vehicle owners being unable to find enough drivers to drive the 271 licensed vehicles.

The report highlighted potential reasons for the decline in numbers; and that the next unmet demand survey was due to be carried out later this year and would include wide ranging consultation across drivers, vehicle owners, users, business owners and trade representatives together with detailed surveys of rank activity across the borough; and that this would

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provide 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.

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

- The scarcity of London style hackney carriages in the north of the borough and the negative impact this had on the provision of wheelchair accessible licensed vehicles to local residents
- The inclusion of local NHS organisations as consultees in the next unmet demand survey
- The Level 4 Devolution Framework offer to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in connection with improving consistency and efficiency in taxi and private vehicle licensing

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report on taxi issues in Sefton be noted;
- (2) the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) be requested to include local NHS organisations as consultees in the next unmet demand survey; and
- (3) the Assistant Director of Place (Highways and Public Protection) be requested to submit a further report to the Committee following completion of the 2024 unmet demand survey.

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

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

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (2) the request for the Committee to select a topic for review at an informal meeting be noted;
- (3) the Key Decision Forward Plans for the period 1 January 2024 to 30 April 2024 and 1 February 2024 to 31 May 2024, as set out in

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Appendix 3 to the report, be noted; and

- (4) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

52. MEMBERS' WELFARE REFORM REFERENCE GROUP – UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 34 of the meeting held on 9 January 2024 the Committee considered a Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty update of the Head of Health and Wellbeing and Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

The update provided information on the latest meeting of the Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty (WRAP) Cabinet Member Reference Group and in particular activities associated with:

- Updates from the Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Steering Group in relating to Citizen's Advice, Bootle; One Vision Housing; Sefton Public Health; and foodbank and food pantry usage
- Community Pantry update
- Sefton Child Poverty Strategy
- Sefton Council Housing update
- Warm hubs
- Emergency limited assistance scheme

Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services presented her update and made particular reference to Sefton currently experiencing a homelessness crisis with approximately 180 households currently in temporary accommodation; and the continuing work being undertaken to reduce the number of long-term vacant homes in the borough.

A Member of the Committee commented on the potential changes to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and impacts this would have on service users in Sefton.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update on the operation of the Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group be noted;
- (2) the Assistant Director of People (Communities) be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee on the potential changes to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and impacts this would have on service users in Sefton; and
- (3) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her update.

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53. CABINET MEMBER REPORT - DECEMBER 2023 TO FEBRUARY 2024

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

A Member of the Committee suggested that that the salutation message relayed at the start of each incoming call to the Council's call-centre, encouraging customers to use online Council services should be changed; as the reason telephone calls were made to the call-centre was because the customers wished to speak to a call-centre operative. It was acknowledged that reducing staff resources necessitated the use of online services; that customers could eventually speak to a call-centre operative if they wished; and that visits could also be made to the Council's One Stop Shops.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be noted; and
- (2) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	11 June 2024
Subject:	Changes to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Potential Impacts on Service Users in Sefton		
Report of:	Assistant Director of People - Communities	Wards Affected:	All
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Communities and Partnership Engagement		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To provide information requested by the Committee at its meeting held in February 2024 on the update of visa's issued to refugees on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and how this will impact those that arrived in Sefton.

Recommendation(s):

That the report updating on visa's issued to refugees on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and how this will impact those that arrived in Sefton be noted.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To comply with a previous decision of the Committee and to update on government changes only.

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

None. The report is to comply with a previous decision of the Committee.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

None.

(B) Capital Costs

Not applicable.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
Not applicable, update only.
Legal Implications:

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Not applicable, update only.

Equality Implications:

There are no equality implications.

Impact on Children and Young People: Yes

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: The Council will continue to work with affected groups and tailor support to their needs where appropriate.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Affected groups will be supported in order to prevent homelessness, to live independently and integrate into communities.

Commission, broker and provide core services: If new services are required for this group consideration will be given to what is needed based on the evidence available at the time.

Place – leadership and influencer: Resettlement Team will continue to work closely with commissioned and CVS partners to support any affected groups.

Drivers of change and reform: Sefton's Resettlement service is adaptable to changing needs of affected groups and where this may be the case in future, the service is proven to be able to respond quickly and effectively.

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Affected groups are supported into employment and independent accommodation.

Greater income for social investment: Revenue savings from preventing affected groups becoming homeless.

Cleaner Greener: Through sourcing locally available accommodation, there will be less travel needed due to fewer households being placed outside borough.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

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The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7658/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5758 /24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the meeting of the Committee.

Contact Officer:	Allan Glennon
Telephone Number:	07891398420
Email Address:	allan.glennon@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Background

At its meeting held on 27 February 2024 the Committee considered a Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty update of the Head of Health and Wellbeing and the former Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services. During deliberations on the update a Member of the Committee commented on the potential changes to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and impacts this would have on service users in Sefton.

The Committee resolved (Minute No. 52 (2)) that the Assistant Director of People (Communities) be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee on the potential changes to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and impacts this would have on service users in Sefton. This is the reason for the submission of this report.

Refugees and International Migrants

A fact sheet at the end of this update provides a brief overview of the different types of international migrants that may come to the UK and a summary of some of the schemes that they may have accessed.

Homes for Ukraine – Changes to visas schemes currently open to Ukrainian refugees

On 19 February 2024 the Government announced some changes to the various visa schemes currently open to Ukrainians.

The **Ukraine Family Scheme** closed to all new applications on 19 February 2024 and the **Ukraine Extension Scheme** will close on 16 May 2024. The Council does not have direct involvement with the Family Scheme.

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The Government have detailed their intention to create a new **Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE)**. This scheme will allow Ukrainians already living the UK under one of the existing Ukrainian visa schemes to apply for a further 18 months permission to stay in the UK when their current visa expires. This includes Ukrainians living in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. They will not be able to apply for this until early 2025.

The details of how the process will work are not yet available and the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing are awaiting confirmation as to what the process will be and if there will be an application fee. The Resettlement Team have been advised that discussions between various Government departments are ongoing and further details will be shared when they are clear on the process. The Home Office have advised that they are preparing to be able to process large numbers of applications for visa extensions in early 2025.

It has been confirmed that the extension period will offer the same rights and entitlements to work, housing, benefits, healthcare, and education as currently apply to Ukrainians in the UK.

The Government also announced changes to the **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**, these changes also took effect on 19 February 2024 and are as follows:

- All visas granted under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme from the above date will be for 18 months, rather than for 36 months as previously has been the case.
- New arrivals who will now have 18-month visas will be eligible to apply for an additional 18-month extension under the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE).
- There has also been a change to sponsor eligibility criteria. Sponsors must now be a British or Irish citizen or should have the right to live in the UK permanently (settled status). Some current sponsors who are in the UK on Homes for Ukraine visas, are renting their own homes and are sponsoring family or friends. It has been confirmed that this is currently unaffected by the changes, and they will be eligible to continue to receive thank you payments.
- We do rematch guests with new hosts when the original sponsor is unable to continue with the hosting arrangement. It has been confirmed that there is no restriction on Ukrainians on Homes for Ukraine visas being able to host guests where rematches are required.
- Funding will remain unchanged for new arrivals. The tariff to Local Authorities will remain at £5,900 for each person and £10,500 for any eligible minors.
- Thankyou payments to sponsors will remain for the duration of the visa period and will remain at £350 for the first 12 months and £500 for the remainder of the visa term. For those on a 36-month visa, the £500 payment can continue for 2 years. For those on an 18-month visa the £500 thankyou payment will only be payable for the additional 6 months.

DLUHC have been unable to confirm if thankyou payments will be payable for those who successfully apply for their visa to be extended by a further 18 months. They have advised that the detail of the scheme is currently being worked out.

Impact for Ukrainian refugees in Sefton

There are currently 105 Ukrainian individual Ukrainians living with hosts on the Homes for Ukraine programme. The table below shows when the visas expire.



If a decision is reached that hosts will no longer receive thank you payments for hosting a Ukrainian household, then it could become unaffordable for them to do so when visas are extended. This could lead to a risk that refugees could present as homeless and potentially impact upon homeless temporary accommodation needs.

The Resettlement Team will continue to work with guests to support them to move to independent accommodation prior to visa end dates. Other mitigations to prevent homelessness will also be considered prior to the above end dates and tailored to refugee needs.

Additionally, there are 140 Ukrainians that have moved on into their own accommodation and are no longer on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, of these 90 are adults and 50 children. Not all have remained in the borough. As they are no longer on scheme and living with a host they will not be impacted by thankyou payments ending.

Recommendations

Overview and Scrutiny Working Group note the contents of this report.

Fact Sheet – Refugees and International Migrants

Latest definitions and government schemes linked to refugees and international migrants from Sefton's Resettlement Team

June 2024

Sefton Council 

The descriptions in this fact sheet present a high-level definition of different schemes, and other key definitions, that Sefton Council has either participated in in the past, is currently participating in or may participate in in the future.

Definitions

Asylum Seekers

Asylum Seekers are people that have arrived in the UK and have asked for asylum. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee they are known as an asylum seeker. In the UK they do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen, for example people seeking asylum are not allowed to work.

Asylum Seekers have no recourse to public funds. They will receive £40.85 a week when provided with somewhere to live. This could be in a flat, house, hostel or bed and breakfast. In some circumstances Asylum Seekers are in hotels. If the Asylum Seeker receives food as part of the support, the funding provided would be £8.24 per week to enable them to purchase non-prescription medication, travel, and clothes. SERCO support and work with Asylum Seekers in the Sefton area.

Dispersal Accommodation

Dispersal accommodation are areas in the community where the local authority has agreed to take Asylum Seekers up to a defined cluster limit (defined as an assumption that there will no more than one asylum seeker per 200 residents). Suitable accommodation in Sefton is sourced by SERCO using a property procurement process.

Initial Accommodation (IA) Contingency Hotels

These are hotels procured by the Home Office to accommodate asylum seekers, whilst their applications are processed. Sefton does not currently have any hotels being used for this purpose but there are several across the Liverpool City Region.



NRPF - Glossary of Terms

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

If someone has residence in the UK but is subject to immigration control, they may have no recourse to public funds. This means that they cannot claim most benefits, tax credits or housing assistance.

Public bodies that suspect that someone may have NRPF should conduct further investigations prior to refusing a service.

Refugee

A refugee is someone that has fled war, violence, conflict, or persecution and have crossed an international boundary to find safety in another country. Refugees do not leave their country out of choice.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers.

Schemes and Programmes

Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

ACRS is for vulnerable Afghan citizens who are at risk in Afghanistan due to their beliefs, values, or minority groups. The scheme is delivered by the Home Office.

The Home Office contract the housing of asylum seekers to Serco who are the provider for the Northwest and Midlands. Mears Group and Clearsprings deliver in other parts of the UK. This is known as the Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC). In Sefton, Venus provide support to this cohort.

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

ARAP is for Afghan citizens who worked for or with the UK Government in Afghanistan. The Ministry for Defence decide who is eligible for the programme.

Ukraine Family Scheme

The Ukraine Family Scheme is for eligible displaced Ukrainians due the war in their home country. The scheme is open to UK-based Ukrainians who wish to provide accommodation in the UK to family members fleeing Ukraine. The Home Office complete the initial pre-arrival visa checks for Ukrainians registering onto the scheme.

Ukrainians on this scheme are refugees and can stay in the UK for up to 3 years. The Council does not receive a tariff to support Ukrainians on this scheme.

Homes for Ukraine Scheme

The Homes for Ukraine scheme is for eligible displaced Ukrainians due the war in their home country. The Home Office will complete the initial pre-arrival visa checks for Ukrainians registering onto the scheme and successful applicants are then matched with UK households that have volunteered to act as host.



The local authority is notified when a match has been agreed in their area and then completes their necessary checks to ensure it is a safe and suitable match. The local authority will then assist in post-arrival checks and support the sponsor and guest with resettlement.

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Ukrainians on this scheme are refugees and can stay in the UK for up to 3 years. The Council receives a tariff to support Ukrainians on this scheme. The scheme falls under the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) once the pre-arrival checks have been completed by the Home Office.

[Hong Kong British Nation Overseas \(HKBN\(\)\)](#)

This is a scheme open to those people of Hong Kong who chose to retain their ties to the UK by taking up British National (Overseas) status at the point of Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997. People and their families holding this status can live work and study in the UK. This scheme falls under the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

[Vulnerable Person Resettlement \(VPRS\) and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme \(VCRS\) - Syrian Resettlement Scheme](#)

This scheme was established in 2015 to resettle displaced Syrian refugees in need of protection. Those that accessed the scheme and became resident in Sefton are now fully integrated and have been exited from the scheme successfully.

Agenda Item 5

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	11 June, 2024
Subject:	Work Programme 2024/25, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Corporate Services Communities and Partnership Engagement		
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 draft Work Programme for 2024/25, identify potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by informal meetings of the Committee; to identify any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; to update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and to provide an update on cyber security attacks on Sefton MBC.

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 to the selection of a topic(s) for review by either a Working Group or at informal meetings of the Committee as detailed in section 2 of the report;
- (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;
- (4) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted; and
- (5) the update on cyber security attacks on Sefton MBC 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 2024/25 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/informal meeting 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: 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 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 but the Work Programme indicates that reports will be submitted to each meeting updating on the work of the Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: None directly applicable to this report.
Commission, broker and provide core services: None directly applicable to this report.
Place – leadership and influencer: None directly applicable to this report.
Drivers of change and reform: None directly applicable to this report.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: None directly applicable to this report.
Greater income for social investment: None directly applicable to this report.
Cleaner Greener: None directly applicable to this report but reference in the Work Programme to the submission of the report on Air Quality Monitoring will raise awareness of associated issues with Members.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD7659/24) and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD5759/24) have been consulted and have no comments to make. 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

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:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2024/25
- Criteria Checklist for Selecting Topics for Review
- Latest Key Decision Forward Plan items relating to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Introduction/Background

1. WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

- 1.1 The proposed Work Programme of items to be submitted to the Committee for consideration during the Municipal Year 2024/25 is set out in **Appendix 1** to the report. The programme has been produced in liaison with the appropriate Executive Directors/Heads of Service, 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 2024/25 to provide Members with the opportunity to add items to the Programme.

2. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS 2024/25

- 2.1 It has been usual practise for the Committee to appoint a Working Group(s) to undertake a scrutiny review of services during the Municipal Year.
- 2.2 However, last year the Committee agreed to hold informal meetings to consider topics for review rather than establishing Working Groups.
- 2.3 The Committee's views are therefore sought on topics for review by informal meetings of the Committee.
- 2.4 To help Members in this matter, contact has been made with officers whose roles fall within the remit of this Committee seeking suggestions.
- 2.5 The Executive Director of Customer Services and Corporate Resources has suggested that a potential topic for review could be "Customer Journey/Channel Shift"; and background information for the review is set out below.
- 2.6 Terms of reference for the informal meeting could include those set out below. However, if the Committee agree to select this topic then the terms of reference could be refined.

The production of evidence with statistics/data.

In the past few years, the Council has invested in technology in areas such as:

- CXP – customer platform (online options for customers to report e.g. missed bins, pest control, bulky items collections, anti-social behaviour)
- Citizens Access – Benefits (online claim and reporting changes for

- Housing Benefit / Council Tax Reduction)
- Citizens Access – Revenues (online management of Council Tax/ Business Rates)
- New Taxi-licensing portal (online application process)
- Parking portal
- Web-chat – whereby contact centre advisers can signpost customers to website etc
- Enhanced messaging facility on contact centre telephony to encourage customers to use online services.

The Council holds a great amount of statistical data showing trends in contact by each channel over past several years and this could be compared to show how this has changed as more services offer online options.

The inclusion of case-studies showing benefits to customers of using online; and not forgetting that we still offer support to those digitally excluded.

The Council's Communications Manager would be useful for the collation of web statistics – areas of website getting most hits/ social media engagement; how this has changed over recent years etc; and future development plans.

- 2.7 For the information of Members, 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

Agenda Item 5

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. This Committee considered the matter at its meeting held on 22 October 2019 (Minute No. 20).

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 updates 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.

Sefton's appointed Members are Councillors Desmond, Hart and Hinde. Councillor Hart is Sefton's Scrutiny Link.

4.6 **Chair**

The Chair of the LCRCAO&S cannot be a Member of the majority group. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee for 2024/25 will be reported to Members at the next meeting.

4.7 **Quoracy Issues**

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. This has on occasion caused meetings to be inquorate.

4.8 Meetings

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

<https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=365&Year=0>

Latest Meeting - 28 February 2024

The last meeting of the LCRCAO&S was held on 28 February 2024 and considered the following matters:

- Verbal Update from Mayor Steve Rotheram
- Progress Update on the LCR Combined Authority Five Year Climate Action Plan
- Work Programme Update 2023-24

4.9 The next meeting of the LCRCAO&S will be held on 19 June 2024.

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

5.0 CYBER SECURITY ATTACKS ON SEFTON MBC

5.1 At its meeting held on 27 February 2024, the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that provided a summary of the performance of the Managed Services ICT Contract over the last 12 months, currently outsourced to Agilisys.

5.2 Following questions and comments by Members the Committee resolved (Minute No. 48) that the Senior Manager ICT & Digital be requested to produce statistics detailing the % increase in the number of Cyber-attacks year on year on Sefton's corporate network.

5.3 The Senior Manager ICT & Digital has advised that Sefton has had an actual reduction in attacks which goes against the national trends; and it is believed that this can be attributed to the work Sefton has proactively done to mitigate the risks as summarised below.

	percentage change 21/22 to 22/23	percentage change 22/23 to 23/24
Phishing emails	+13	-44
Malware	-44	-53
Brute Force	-71	-97

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) WORK
PROGRAMME 2024/25**

Tuesday, 11 June 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Southport	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones/Helen O'Reilly
Homes for Ukraine Scheme (potential changes to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and impacts this would have on service users in Sefton)	Mel Ormesher/Allan Glennon
Climate Emergency Annual Report	Stephanie Jukes
Corporate Communications Strategy	Andrew Daniels
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

Tuesday, 10 September 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Bootle	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Financial Performance Monitoring - Finance, Performance and Risk	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/Helen O'Reilly
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

Tuesday, 22 October 2024, 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
Update on Progress of LCR Digital Inclusion Strategy	Andrea Watts
Transformation Programme Update	Stephan Van Arendsen/Jan McMahon
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

Tuesday, 14 January 2025, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Bootle	
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/Helen O'Reilly
Air Quality Monitoring	Peter Moore/Greg Martin
Armed Forces Covenant	David McCullough
Annual ICT Update Report (Performance of Agilisys)	Helen Spreadbury
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

Tuesday, 11 February 2025, 6.30 p.m., Budget Meeting - Town Hall, Bootle	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Budget Report 2025/26 to 2028/29	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 2025/26 and Future Years	Stephan Van Arendsen/Andrew Bridson
Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy – Update Position	Stephan Van Arendsen
Robustness of the 2025/26 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – Local Government Act 2003 – Section 25	Stephan Van Arendsen

Tuesday, 4 March 2025, 6.30 p.m. Town Hall, Southport	
Report/Item	Report Author/Organiser
Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and Sickness Absence Monitoring	Paul Cunningham/Marie Lambert
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones/Helen O'Reilly
Financial Performance Monitoring - Finance, Performance and Risk	Stephan Van Arendsen/Paul Reilly
Unmet Demand Survey of Hackney Carriages – Update Report on Results of Survey	Mark Toohey
Public Engagement and Consultation Panel Annual Report 2024	Jayne Vincent
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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APPENDIX 2

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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SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 JULY 2024 - 31 OCTOBER 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

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APPENDIX 3

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 (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
Asset Disposal - Pendle Drive, Litherland	Suzanne Rimmer suzanne.rimmer@sefton.gov.uk
Asset Disposal - Former Bootle High School site, Brown's Lane, Netherton	Suzanne Rimmer suzanne.rimmer@sefton.gov.uk
Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – July Update	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106
Financial and Corporate Performance 2023/2024	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106
Treasury Management Outturn 2023/24	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report	Stephen Watson stephen.watson@sefton.gov.uk

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APPENDIX 3

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Asset Disposal - Pendle Drive, Litherland To seek approval to the provisionally agreed Heads of Terms for the disposal of the Council's freehold interest in land and buildings at Pendle Drive, Litherland			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	25 Jul 2024 Decision due date for Cabinet changed from 20/06/2024 to 25/07/2024. Reason: Negotiations are still in progress in relation to the sale of the site			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	Part exempt (Paragraph 3)			
Wards Affected	St. Oswald			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Lead Director	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Cabinet Member and Senior Management			
Method(s) of Consultation	Meeting and emails			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Asset Disposal - Pendle Drive, Netherton			
Contact Officer(s) details	Suzanne Rimmer suzanne.rimmer@sefton.gov.uk			

APPENDIX 3

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Asset Disposal - Former Bootle High School site, Brown's Lane, Netherton To seek approval to the provisionally agreed Heads of Terms for the disposal of the Council's freehold interest in part of the former Bootle High School site, Brown's Lane, Netherton			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	25 Jul 2024 Decision due date for Cabinet changed from 20/06/2024 to 25/07/2024. Reason: Negotiations are still in progress in relation to the sale of the site			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	Part exempt (Paragraph 3)			
Wards Affected	St. Oswald			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services			
Lead Director	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Cabinet Member and Senior Officers			
Method(s) of Consultation	Meetings and emails			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Asset Disposal - Former Bootle High School site, Brown's Lane, Netherton			
Contact Officer(s) details	Suzanne Rimmer suzanne.rimmer@sefton.gov.uk			

Agenda Item 5

APPENDIX 3

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – July 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	25 Jul 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 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – July Update			
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106			

APPENDIX 3

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Financial and Corporate Performance 2023/2024 Summary of the 2023/2024 Revenue and Capital Outturn position plus Corporate Performance for the year and latest Corporate Risks			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	25 Jul 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 and Corporate Performance 2023/2024			
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106			

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APPENDIX 3

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Treasury Management Outturn 2023/24 This outturn report provides Members with a review of the Treasury Management activities undertaken during 2023/24 and an update on the in year position for 2024/25.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet Council			
Decision Expected	25 Jul 2024 12 Sep 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	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	N/A			
Method(s) of Consultation	None			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Treasury Management Outturn 2023/24			
Contact Officer(s) details	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100			

APPENDIX 3

SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report Annual report of progress in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion, relating to implementation of Sefton's EDI strategy and action plan for 2023-2027 published in April 2023.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	25 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 - Place			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Council staff, external engagement including via Race Equality Monitoring Group, and various external partners and stakeholder groups			
Method(s) of Consultation	Corporate Equalities Group, and via other internal communications channels and forums; dialogue with external partners			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report			
Contact Officer(s) details	Stephen Watson stephen.watson@sefton.gov.uk			

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	Date of Meeting:	11 June 2024
Subject:	Cabinet Member Report – February 2024 to June 2024		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To submit the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services report for the period February 2024 to June 2024 relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member - 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 Howard'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
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Appendices:

Cabinet Member - (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 Corporate Services is attached.

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CABINET MEMBER REPORT		
Overview & Scrutiny		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Christine Howard	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services	May 2024

Financial Management

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

The overall Budget Report (and associated supporting reports) were approved at Budget Council on 29th February 2024, when the budget for 2024/25 was set along with the Council Tax for the year.

Work has been ongoing to work with services to set individual budgets, especially in complex areas, including Adult Social Care and Children’s Social Care. The first monitoring position will be established as at the end of June 2024, and reported to Cabinet at the end of July.

Initial work has been undertaken on updating and expanding the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 – 2027/28.

The Council’s revenue outturn position for 2023/24 is close to being finalised and will be reported to Cabinet at the end of July 2024.

The audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 was completed and the audit certificate was 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.

The audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 by EY is also currently in abeyance. Although some initial audit work has been undertaken by EY, the main audit has yet to commence for the same reasons as above.

The production of the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 is being finalised and will be published by 31st May 2024 in line with the statutory deadlines. The Council’s auditors will be Grant Thornton from the 2023/24 financial year. Initial work has been undertaken by them including for informing the Council’s Value for Money assessment. The main work on auditing the Statement of Accounts will commence in late June and is expected to be completed in mid-September. The audited Statement of Accounts is expected to be presented to Audit and Governance Committee in last September 2024 for approval.

Customer Centric Services

All areas of the service are continuing to deal with high volumes of work as is typical and expected at this stage in the year following the issue of annual bills for Council Tax, Business Rates and benefit annual uprating notification letters. Annual Billing for 2024/25 ran successfully and to plan in March with 130,617 bills being raised for Council Tax and 7,926 bills being raised for Business Rates.

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The focus for coming months is to deal with workloads in a timely manner to reduce customer waiting times whilst maintaining collection for Council Tax and Business Rates.

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).

Advanced plans were made to cope with the high volume of enquiries expected during the main billing period for Council Tax. With bills being staggered and sent out from 11th March to 5th April 2024, automated messages were relayed on the telephony software confirming the dates of dispatch, where financial support was available and the benefits of setting up an account through Citizens Access – Revenues My Account Portal to enable residents to view and manage their Council Tax account online.

Data available at the end of April 2024, shows that in just over six-months, since the My Account Council Tax and Business Rates portal went live in October 2023, almost 14,000 households and businesses have successfully registered to view their account online.

Over 20,200 households and 320 businesses are signed up for paperless billing via the portal. Since go-live almost 12,000 work items have been submitted via the Council Tax portal, e.g. new requests /amendments for discounts, Direct Debits, contact details, with approximately 58% of those work items automatically updating Council Tax records instantly upon receipt and without manual intervention; with the remaining items being manually processed within 2 weeks of receipt due to level of checks required.

During March and April, almost 16,000 bills have been viewed online and almost 90,000 log ins have been reported via My Account. This will include multiple login's i.e. by the same resident who have viewed the account summary page that shows their balance and payment due date and amount etc. The team continues to work with Customer Services and the Communications team to promote the portal to encourage further sign-up.

After a five-month break over the winter-period, the resumption of the green bin collections started in early March, however there was some confusion with calendar dates displayed online. While this was quickly rectified, the Contact Centre did have to deal with a steady influx of calls. A message confirming the correct collection dates was then prepared and relayed to customers, with call volumes then reducing consequently.

In April, the Contact Centre set-up telephony for the Election service, allowing residents easier access to speak to a Customer Service Advisor. In total, 315 Election calls were handled with the main enquiries relating to customers checking to see if they were registered to vote, enquiring about the exact locality of their polling station and querying to why they hadn't received their voting pack. The telephony functionality for this service has now been removed, however it will return when confirmation of the date for the General Election is released.

Demand continues to be high at the One Stop Shops, with approximately 2,800 customers attending Bootle One Stop Shop in April; this included approximately 560 taxi drivers, and 1,100 who attended with Council Tax, Parking or benefits enquiries, with the remaining 1,100 customers seeking general council-related advice at reception.

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At Southport, 758 customers attended the Atkinson, with 163 customers booking an appointment to discuss their Council Tax or benefit and the remainder seeking general council-related advice at reception.

Taxi-Licensing

The new Taxi Licensing system consisting of an online portal went live on Tuesday 2nd April 2024. The new system allows taxi drivers, vehicle owners and operators to upload various evidence documents as well as pay all licensing fees via an online portal.

After an initial difficult first couple of weeks, staff and customers are now more familiar with the new way of working. Online support is being provided in the self-serve area at Bootle One Stop Shop, and Sefton's Adult Education Team are considering how they can offer support.

The Council's priority is to ensure that all current Sefton licence holders continue to be licensed in a timely manner. At present, there are no delays to the business-as-usual workloads, such as vehicle plates and the renewal of driver's badges, with all processes being completed within two-days of receipt. A work-plan is in place to deal with new applications for Sefton licences received in 2023.

A communication plan is in place with regular updates provided to taxi trade representatives. In addition to the current support, a video confirming how to access and use the new portal has been uploaded onto the Council's website, with detailed frequently asked questions also available.

The Council's website continues to be regularly updated, and this can be accessed, as well as the new video at [Taxi licensing \(sefton.gov.uk\)](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/taxi-licensing)

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.
- Annual Governance Statement and Corporate Governance Review
- ASC Controls to mitigate market failure
- Pupil Place Planning
- Fuel Cards
- Credit Cards
- Waste Management
- Risk Management review
- High Needs Funding

We have recruited two temporary internal auditors one of whom started in April 2024 and the other in May 2024.

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

- We are currently working on the insurance renewal for September 2024. The insurance market is much more benign this year although there remains pressure in motor insurance premiums which reflects cost of claims increases, supply chain issues and repairs affecting electric vehicles.

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- We have used some of the “free days” as part of the insurance programme risk bursary to undertake a review of the Council’s risk management framework as well as arranging a horizon scanning session for ELT.
- 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. This has now been rolled out to other teams.
- The Team assisted in arranging material damage cover for 25 Catholic schools where the Diocese was unable to offer terms from their existing insurer.
- 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 March 2024 which we have subsequently received feedback on we are currently implementing the recommendations from the review. We are currently facilitating the refreshing of a number of Business Continuity Plans that are being updated by Assistant Directors.

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 March 2024 and for the next meeting in June 2024. 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

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.
- Assisting Property Services in the review of management of asbestos in both schools and other Council owned properties.
- 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.

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- 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.
- A new staff member started 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 contract with Liverpool is now in place for the Data Centre and work is progressing at pace on the work required to move the Comms Room including moving all existing campus dark fibre links in Bootle and procuring the necessary appliances and equipment including, but not limited to Switches, UPS and Air Conditioning.
- The Cloud telephony project is now closed, the legacy Mitel Infrastructure is now removed from the estate and work is in progress to collect all legacy equipment across sites including handsets. 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. In addition, the team are completing a proof-of-concept in relation to Teams Telephony to inform the strategy moving forwards.
- The Council's CXP solution continues to be developed. Changes have been made to the look and feel of the CXP solution to make it more consistent with the Council website. Work has begun on improving reporting functionality. Furthermore, new processes have been requested for Registrars, Stray Dogs, Electric Vehicles and Sefton Arc, amongst others. Scoping is underway to make Contact Centre-only processes available online. Phase 3 of the eforms migration is in progress, as is the initial configuration of a new FOI module. Regular changes and improvements to existing processes are ongoing.
-
- The upgrade of the Umbraco content management system used to manage www.sefton.gov.uk is nearing completion; testing is in progress and go-live is expected in June 2024. The number of requests from departments for new and/or improved websites has increased, and a web governance board, chaired by the Communications Team, is in place to manage this work moving forwards.

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- The ICT Procurement team continue to be busy; work has completed two key procurements including the the new corporate eLearning product, and the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement for all licencing, GIS, and Leisure are 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 completed with members of ELT and IPC, with a proposal for external consultation is due to be consider at Consultation and Engagement Panel on the 3rd of June. Sefton now has in place clear policy document on the use of next Gen AI tools and officers continue to maintain a watching brief in this space.
- 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 Following approval from Cabinet in March to release the opportunity to market the ICT client team is working with officers across the Council as well as external legal colleagues to finalise the contractual and tender documents required by early June. The ICT client has already held an open day with interested suppliers with 14 attending in person and a further 3 expressing an interest to receive the information. At the time of writing Sefton has issued a formal notice so that suppliers can formally express an interest in bidding, only these suppliers will receive the tender documentation once released in June.

Legal Services

Democratic Services Team – Overview

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

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 20 February 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Shaping Care Together Update
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside – Sefton Place Update
- Health Provider Performance Dashboard
- 2022/23 Outturn Review of Wholly Owned Council Companies – New Directions
- Carers Strategy
- Cabinet Member Update Reports
- Work Programme Update

The next meeting of the Committee, the first of the new municipal year, will be held on 18 June 2024.

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding)**

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 12 March 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Attendance of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Cabinet Member Update Reports
- Childrens Services Improvement Programme
- Summary of Recent Audit Activity
- Education Scorecard

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- Ofsted Inspections
- Review of the Operation and Terms of Reference of the Committee
- Work Programme Key Decision Forward Plan

The next meeting of the Committee, the first of the new municipal year, will be held on 4 June 2024.

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)**

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 5 March 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Housing Standards Team - Damp Mould and Condensation
- Sefton Economic Strategy Update (March 2024)
- Social Value and the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme
- Refuse and Waste Recycling
- Work Programme 2023/24, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan
- Cabinet Member Reports - January 2024 to March 2024

The next meeting of the Committee, the first of the new municipal year, will be held on 25 June 2024 and will consider its Work Programme for 2024/25 and the identification of topics for review by informal meetings of the Committee.

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

The last ordinary meeting of the Committee was held on 27 February 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Annual ICT Update Report
- Levels of Disciplinary, Grievance, Dignity at Work and Sickness Absence
- Taxi Issues in Sefton
- Work Programme 2023/24, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan
- Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Reference Group – Update
- Cabinet Member Report - December 2023 to February 2024

The next meeting of the Committee, the first of the new municipal year, will be held on 11 June 2024 and will consider its Work Programme for 2024/25 and the identification of topics for review by informal meetings of the Committee.

- **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 12 March 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Liverpool City Region Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny Link - Councillor Hart
- Broadcasting/Recording of Council Meetings
- Review of the Operation and Terms of Reference for Children's Services

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- Update on Informal Meetings and Working Groups
- Centre for Governance and Scrutiny - Newsletters and Annual Survey
- Strategic Scrutiny in Practice Network
- Update on Called-in Items to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

The next meeting of the Management Board will take place on 18 June 2024.

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

The last meeting of LCRO&S was held on 28 February 2024. The Committee considered the following items:

- Verbal Update from Mayor Steve Rotheram
- Progress Update on the LCR Combined Authority Five Year Climate Action Plan
- Work Programme Update 2023-24

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.

Sefton's appointed Members are Councillors Desmond, Hart and Hinde. Councillor Hart is Sefton's Scrutiny Link.

The next meeting of the LCRO&S will be held on 19 June 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 08 May and will end in July 2024 (possibly subject to some late appeals in September). In this period over 200 appeals will have been listed and heard. The number of appeals are lower than recent years, with more applicants being offered schools from their initial preferences.

The section will hosted a training event for new and existing Panel Members in March. We enlisted a few new Panel Members at these events.

Civic and Mayoral Services

The Mayor's Gala Charity Ball was held on 6 April 2024 and raised over £6,000 for the Mayor's Charity Fund.

On 16 May 2024, Cllr June Burns continued into a fourth term of office, and the Charity Events for that term have now been released. There will be a charity cabaret night on 19 October 2024, a Charity Burns Night on 25 January 2025, and the Gala Charity Ball on 26 April 2025

The Mayor's Office has also launched a Charity Sweepstake for Euro 2024, with all 24 slots being taken within 3 days.

Member Development

Mandatory Committee Training

A mandatory training session for Members of Planning Committee took place on the 21 May 2024 and was well attended. A number of Members gave apologies and have been offered follow up training on Wednesday 29 May 2024.

At the time of drafting this report, mandatory training for the Licensing and Regulatory Committee is due to take place on 10 June 2024.

Member Development Steering Group

The Member Development Steering Group was established in November 2022. The Group is comprised of 6 Members and last met on 21 February 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for 27 June 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.

Regulatory and Other Committees:

Audit and Governance Committee

At the time of drafting this report, the last meeting of the Committee was held on 20 March 2024 and the Committee considered the following items:

- Corporate Risk Management
- ICT Acceptable Usage Policy – Yearly Review
- Treasury Management Position to January 2024
- Sefton Assurance Map
- Risk and Audit Service Performance
- Internal Audit Charter and Annual Audit Plan
- Grant Thornton External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update – February 2024
- Review of Whistleblowing Policy and Review of Whistleblowing Referrals 2022 – 2023
- Review of Terms of Reference
- Guidance for Council Appointed Directors
- Audit and Governance Committee Self-Assessment 2023/2024
- Audit and Governance Committee Member Training and Development
- Audit and Governance Committee Work Programme 2024-2025
- Audit and Governance Committee – Work Programme Update Report
- Unrecoverable Debts over £10,000
- Write-off of irrecoverable retail-related arrears with balances over £10,000

Health and Wellbeing Board

The last meeting of the Board was held on 6 March 2024 and the Board considered the following items:

- Anchor Charter

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- Merseyside and Isle of Man Child Death Overview Panel Annual Report 2022-23
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2025-28 development process and scope report
- Progress update on the Sefton Child Poverty Strategy
- Sub-Group Updates

Licensing and Regulatory Committee

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 11 March 2024 and the Committee considered the following items:

- Petitions - Revised Licensed Driver Convictions Policy
- Revised Licensed Driver Convictions Policy
- Local Licensing Fees and Charges
- Continuation of the Public Spaces Protection Order – Dog Control

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Operational Matters

All Other Council Operational HR Business Support

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

In addition to business as usual:

HR are supporting with the development and implementation of the new Learning Disability and Autism Team within the Adult Social Care Department. This was created following the recommendation of the 2022 Local Government Association Peer Review.

The team are going to go live on the 3 June 2024, and we currently have 1 x team manager, 1 x LP, 5 x SW, 2 x CA, 1 x transition coordinator. All the LD and Autism cases will transfer into the new team on a phased basis and will alleviate the waiting list in the community teams.

Children's Services – Human Resources Operational Support Team

A Business Partner Model continues to support Children's Services, including all maintained schools, with all People matters.

In addition to business-as-usual there are clear focus on the following priorities.

- Children's Social Care Whole Service review and restructure. The team has supported the Executive Director (ED) with all the HR elements to this process, which was approved by Cabinet on 23rd May 2024.
- Recruitment and Appointment of Assistant Director of Education Excellence. The team has supported the Employment Procedures Committee in the appointment and onboarding to this post.

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- Academisation of 18 Maintained Schools. The team continues to support the Education Excellence department and the individual schools with the process of academisation including TUPE.
- Collaborative Working between Children's Services (excluding Schools) and Corporate Resources. With a bid to improve collaboration between Childrens Services and Corporate Resources, the HR Manager - Childrens Social Care and Education is working closely with the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Service to improve collaborative working between both departments, with the aim to improve outcomes for Children, Young People and Families.

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. Work is currently being undertaken in relation to the Childrens services Review.

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. Recent Hay reviews include HAY positions associated with the Childrens Services Review.

The team are responsible for the production of the Council's Annual Pay Policy and publication of the Gender Pay GAP reporting.

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. Officers have settled the GMB legitimate claims via COT 3 agreements. (which covers a small proportion of the 580 claims). In March 2024 the Council and UNISON reached agreement to take forward an overarching settlement process to enable individual settlement offers to be calculated. Unisons officers are seeking instructions on the offers and terms from individual claimants. It is anticipated that it will be possible to conclude matters without the need for a full Employment Tribunal.

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.

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The policy officer is involved in the implementation of a staff survey which went live on 15.4.24 with a closing date of 3.5.24. Following this the officer will be involved in the insight meetings, analysis of data and review and feedback of information to ELT/SLB.

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 Midland HR (MHR) for improvements to the reports provided and fortnightly meetings continue with MHR to address issues. These have now been escalated within MHR and further meetings are scheduled.

Teachers Pensions Monthly data collection (MDC) moves to Monthly Contribution Reconciliation (MCR) has been postponed until further notice 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 2024 for NJC staff, Councillors, Coroners and Chief Executive have not yet been agreed.

The Pay award for minimum wage and apprentices was implemented on 1st April 2024

Cleaning staff had an inhouse ICT database to provide a payroll file to payroll for changes to pay required and this has been replaced by an alternative solution which has been welcomed by the Cleansing Officers. This has been subject to a parallel run and has gone live Monday 6th May 2024.

Development work is ongoing to enhance automation of the DBS process using the robotics blue prism software and this is currently being tested and is expected to go live in June24.

Mail merge development is underway to address backlogs of letters from THR, these have been reviewed by contract type and establishment and will be distributed by June24.

Reusing positions has been in place for 4 to 5 months and this has provided improved data accuracy within iTrent. NB: No data cleansing has been done for CSC as this service is under ongoing structural review.

Scoping to record and maintain annual PDR's and monthly 1:1/supervision meetings is underway with the intention to develop and build electronic forms into employee self-service and Managers self-services to enable greater accessibility and reporting using the iTrent platform.

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

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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 the period April 2024 to 28th May 2024, a total of 140 referrals for SMBC employees were made to the Health Unit. This is a very slight decrease in comparison to the same period in the previous 12 months in which there were 144 referrals.
2. Referrals during this latest period included Education Excellence (34.7%), Operational Services (26.3%), and Adult Social Care (8.5%). The main reasons were stress and mental health related (46.4%), musculoskeletal (20%), and chronic medical illness (15.7%).
3. Delivery of OH services continue to be offered via a mixture of telephone and face-to-face appointments, and there continues to be a high number of requests for face-to-face appointments for the Occupational Health Nurse and Physician, and for Counselling services.
4. The HU continues to receive referrals from schools, specifically those moving to or considering, academy status.

Workforce Learning and Development (CLC)

Apprenticeships

All existing apprenticeship contracts have now been renewed for the period 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2026. We continue to procure new apprenticeship standards via the YPO portal to support succession planning. The latest standards procured include the **Playworker Level 2** and **Youth Support Worker Level 3**.

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 their degree. 3 staff successfully gained a 1st Class Honours degree.

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 September 2024. We met with the L&D Board end of January 2024 to review the Training Needs Analysis to inform our planning for both apprenticeships and training requests that were discussed and identified during Performance Development Reviews (PDRs).

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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:

- **Me Learning Implementation** – we are in the process of implementing an upgraded version of the Me Learning training booking system. The estimated go live date is scheduled for Monday 8th July 2024.
- **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 highlight compliance and to encourage staff to complete these courses.
- **Introduction to Management eLearning Refresh** – The current Introduction to Management eLearning programme is being updated and will include 11 bite sized modules that aspiring managers/managers can complete to support their on-going CPD. Modules include:
 1. The Role of the Manager
 2. Management Styles
 3. Managing Teams
 4. Managing Change
 5. Communication
 6. Motivation
 7. Delegation and Allocation.
 8. Time Management
 9. Managing Workload
 10. Managing Performance
 11. Understanding your organisation (a review of Sefton's structure).

The revised programme should be ready to go live early Summer 2024 and the L&D Board agreed to make this mandatory for new managers joining the organisation. Existing managers will be encouraged to complete too.

- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training delivery is going well. To date, we have trained 252 Sefton Council and schools' staff. An increase of 10 since the last report.
- **LCRCA Race Equality Training** – we have secured 2 additional dates for further delivery of this training on the following dates:
 - Race Equality Training for Managers; 9:30am – 1pm; Sefton Corporate Learning Centre; Tuesday 21st May 2024.
 - Race Equality Training for Non-Managers; 1pm – 4:30pm; Bootle Town Hall Assembly Room; Tuesday 28th May 2024.
 - A further date is being planned for end of June 2024.

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The LCR Race Equality Hub are continuing to explore options for the delivery of bespoke and targeted sessions for different cohorts of staff e.g., those who are hard to reach and/or require more flexible sessions early morning or late evening.

- 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 programme was launched in May 2024 and includes the following three courses:
 - Care Act 2014
 - Assessment of Needs and Determination of Eligibility
 - Recording in Social Care.

A series of comms will be shared with the Adult Social Care workforce during May 2024, to encourage staff to book onto the training.

Strategic Support

Performance & Business Intelligence

The Business Intelligence team is continuing to support many work streams across the Council including Economic Regeneration, Education Excellence, SEND, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Public Health Services. The team continue to work closely with Children's Social Care and Adults Social Care services to develop their performance reporting, using the new Data Warehouse and Power BI, including adding 'drill-through' functionality into new Power BI reports to access client level information. The team have been involved in analysing financial data for ASC, Children's Social Care and SEND, aligning client numbers and financial spend to aid financial forecasting and change linked to the new transformation programme. Work is ongoing with the Chief Executive to review our capacity and capability to deliver better quality information and analysis as part of the wider transformation programme, under the banner of 'Set up to Succeed.' This project aims to build on the work of recent years to ensure that the Council continues to improve performance management, has the required skills in the organisation and that there is a clear vision and approach agreed. One of the first deliverables for this project is a new planning and performance framework for the council, which we are aiming to deliver my July 2024.

Consultation & Engagement, Complaints and Information Governance.

The Service continues to support consultation and engagement activities, respond to complaints and subject access requests in a timely manner and provide information, advice, and guidance across the Council on matters relating to information governance and data protection. The consultation and engagement on the refresh of the Children & Young People's Plan is particularly noteworthy, with engagement across all Sefton schools and FE colleges, targeted engagement and workshops with specific groups of children and young people (0-6, Cared for, Care Experiences, SEND, etc.) and wider consultation with key partners, the social care workforce, the corporate workforce and other stakeholders, including parents, carers and residents. This consultation recently ended, and the team is about to start the analysis of the responses, which will be presented to the next meeting of the Children & Young People Partnership Board to inform the next version of the Sefton Children and Young People Plan.

There is a considerable challenge with capacity in the Complaints team, consequently this is increasing the risk of not responding to complaints within standards, but the Service is actively recruiting to vacant posts to address the issue and hoping to be at fully capacity before the end of June 2024. The Chief Executive and Executive Directors for ASC and Childrens Services have been considering the arrangements for administering complaints in these areas specifically, with a

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view to improving performance. This will require change in the way the council manages and resolves complaints, ensuring a future function and form that is sustainable, improves the number of complaints resolved first time, increases satisfaction amongst complainants, and improves staff engagement with the complaints process.

The project to digitise the Council's historic paper records continues at pace, and is nearing an end. All legacy records stored at disparate third-party locations have now been moved to the Council's preferred secured storage provider, taking opportunity to destroy legacy records and digitise those that are not required to be kept in original paper format. The team has now completed processing legacy records stored at the former Thomas Gray School site and has begun to review records at Southport Coroner's Office, the former Bootle Play Centre and Beford Road Community Centre.

Strategic Support

The team continues to provide support across the various services with policy & strategy development, service reviews and transformation activity, but most of the resource continues to be directed to support children and young people, particularly Children's Social Care improvement and SEND. Officers in the team have been aligned to provide project support to each of the six key transformation projects identified under the theme of 'Better outcomes, sustainable services' including 1) SEND, 2) H2S transport, 3) CSC, 4) Better at Home, 5) Housing and 6) Operational In-House Services. Officers have supported the development of the Project Initiation Documents (PIDs), clearly defining project scope, rationale, objectives/deliverables, key stakeholders, timescales and finances. The financial information (savings, reduces pressures and cost to deliver change) is being analysed and presented to inform the development of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2027/28. As the new transformation programme is developed the Senior Leadership Team will need to agree a set of priorities for the short, medium and long term, and review the current capacity within the Strategic Support team, to support the transformation programme, including roles and responsibilities within the individual services.

COMMUNICATIONS

We have continued to provide support right across the council on key projects, including the local elections, major development projects and promotion of the spring and summer events.

Internally, the team has been supporting the promotion of the staff survey and subsequent actions with the staff listening sessions taking place throughout May and June.

The team is refreshing 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 and communications planning and evaluation.

Over the next period our priorities will shift towards encouraging people to vote at the General Election and to inform residents and visitors about what they can do in the borough over the summer period.

Procurement

The Procurement Act 2023 will become live from 28 October 2024. This will directly impact on the running of our contracts due to the significant changes which are being imposed. It is essential to reduce the risk to Sefton from these legislative changes by ensuring staff involved in Procurement, Legal, contract evaluations, contract management, KPI and Social Value delivery attend the

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appropriate training allocated to them. All members of staff have now been advised of their appropriate training schedule and the timeline allocated.

Procurement have been working closely with Legal, Finance and ICT to introduce DocuSign into the Council in order to increase efficiency in the process of signing and storing documents to significantly reduce the amount of labour and printing required, with its associated costs. There have been several technical issues which have been addressed. The training requirements are being rolled out from May 2024.

Procurement and Finance are in the process of implementing a financial recovery audit using a software model designed by Oxygen Finance, the same organisation which supports Sefton with the early payment programme. While we believe our finance systems are robust this will be a test of the controls in place at nil cost to Sefton. Any funds which may be recovered will be split on a gainshare at 70/30 in Sefton's favour.

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