

Overview  
& Scrutiny



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

DATE: Tuesday 22nd October, 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  
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**If you have any special needs that may require arrangements to facilitate your attendance at this meeting, please contact the Committee Officer named above, who will endeavour to assist.**

We endeavour to provide a reasonable number of full agendas, including reports at the meeting. If you wish to ensure that you have a copy to refer to at the meeting, please can you print off your own copy of the agenda pack prior to the meeting.

# AGENDA

**1. Apologies for Absence**

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Members are requested at a meeting where a disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest arises, which is not already included in their Register of Members' Interests, to declare any interests that relate to an item on the agenda.

Where a Member discloses a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, he/she must withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest, except where he/she is permitted to remain as a result of a grant of a dispensation.

Where a Member discloses a personal interest he/she must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or staff member representing the Monitoring Officer to determine whether the Member should withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest or whether the Member can remain in the meeting or remain in the meeting and vote on the relevant decision.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (Pages 3 - 10)

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2024

**4. Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 - October Update** (Pages 11 - 26)

Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial

**5. Work Programme 2024/25, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan** (Pages 27 - 60)

Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer

**6. Cabinet Member Report - September 2024 to October 2024** (Pages 61 - 84)

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 COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL BOOTLE ON TUESDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Byrom, Vice-Chair (in the Chair)  
Councillors Catie Page, Johnson, Parker, Thomas  
and Sir Ron Watson

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Howard

#### 9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bradshaw and Murphy.

#### 10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Paragraph 9 of the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declaration of personal interest was made and the Member concerned remained in the room during the consideration of the item:

Member	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Councillor Johnson	Minute No. 15 – Cabinet Member Report – June – September 2024	He is employed by a taxi business

#### 11. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### 12. CUSTOMER SERVICES ACTIVITY

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial that provided details of customer activity to the Council's Contact Centre and One Stop Shop service. The report outlined the variety of access channels for customers, including web-based services, and how the Council continued to improve the quality and consistency of services. Importantly, it provided clarity on the measures in place to deliver customer service excellence for those using the range of services. The report also set out actions and recommendations as to the direction that the Council's customer services would take in the future in response to both the availability of more access channels, and customer expectations that councils were providing web-

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based services. A presentation was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, providing a summary overview of service delivery and volumetric data.

The presentation outlined:

- Customer Services – Customer Contact Activity
- Contact Centre – Activities
- Contact Centre – Telephone calls
- Contact Centre – Switchboard Service
- Contact Centre Monthly Call Volumes 2022/23 v 2023/24
- Contact Centre – Average Wait Time for Calls to be Answered for Prioritised Services 01.01.24 to 31.07.24
- Contact Centre – Emails and Webchat
- Contact Centre – Taking Payments for Council Services
- Contact Centre – Triaging Corporate Complaints
- Contact Centre – Social Media Enquiries
- One Stop Shop – Activities
- One Stop Shop – Face to Face Enquiries
- One Stop Shop – Reception Service
- Bootle and Southport Enquiries from 2022/23 to 2024/24
- One Stop Shop – Payments for Council Services
- Payment Kiosk and Online Payment Analysis
- One Stop Shop – Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Recent Improvements
- Other Matters for Consideration.

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

- The use of direct messaging via social media as a method of contacting the Council.
- Good news stories.
- Repercussions in the event of lack of response taken by Teams within the Council following enquiries being forwarded by the Contact Centre.
- The possible integration of different portals in the future and mitigating circumstances in case of problems by portals, particularly within the Liverpool City Region.
- Waiting times for telephone enquiries and calls not answered.
- The Council's Digital Strategy and whether individuals who preferred not to make contact on-line were being excluded. Questions were raised as to how many residents had access to the internet in Sefton and how many did not. Further information would be provided.
- Expectations held by the public of services provided.
- Thanks and continued support be extended to the Customer Services Team.

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RESOLVED: That

- (1) the current position of customer services provided by the Council as set out within the report and presentation attached at Appendix 1, be noted;
- (2) the proposed action plan and recommendations be noted;
- (3) the recommendations set out in the action plan be agreed; and
- (4) the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial be requested to provide further information on how many residents have access to the internet in Sefton and how many do not have access.

## **13. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2024/25 TO 2027/28 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2024/25 - SEPTEMBER UPDATE**

Further to Minute No. 44 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 September 2024 the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director - Corporate Services and Commercial that advised of:

- (1) the current position relating to the 2024/25 revenue budget;
- (2) the current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2024/25;
- (3) the monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of July 2024 in respect of:
  - the forecast expenditure to year end;
  - variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members; and
  - updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects; and
- (4) the measures being taken by the Council to respond to the tragic incident in Southport on 29th July 2024.

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

- Uncertainties and assumptions facing the revenue budget 2024/25 and difficulties associated with Adult and Children's Social Care.
- Costs associated with looking after children and the likelihood of another one-year settlement which created difficulties in longer term planning.

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- More demand for services with less resources.
- When the next Ofsted visit was due. Enquiries would be made.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That in respect of the Revenue Budget:
- (1) the current position relating to the 2024/25 revenue budget be noted;
  - (2) the actions being taken to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced position be noted; and
  - (3) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2024/25 revenue budget be recognised and it be acknowledged that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed, and remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved; and
- (B) That in respect of the Capital Programme:
- (1) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 8.1) be noted;
  - (2) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 July 2024 of £15.781m (paragraph 8.08); and the latest full year forecast of £87.038m (paragraph 8.09) be noted;
  - (3) it be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director - Corporate Service and Commercial to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council (paragraphs 8.12-8.14); and
- (C) that in respect of Children's Social Care, the Executive Director – Children's Social Care be requested to provide information as to the next anticipated Ofsted visit.

## **14. LEVELS OF DISCIPLINARY, GRIEVANCE, DIGNITY AT WORK AND SICKNESS ABSENCE**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial 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

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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. HR had a business partner model that was industry best practice and HR worked across departmental management teams to facilitate this partnership working. The Council had clear and agreed processes in place for consistency across the Council
- Suspensions - In the period January – July 2024, 10 employees were suspended from duty within central Service Areas (excluding schools)
- Disciplinary - During the period January – July 2024, there had been 24 disciplinary investigations
- Grievances - During the period January – July 2024, there had been 3 Grievances
- Dignity at work - During the period January – July 2024, there had been 5 dignity at work complaints
- Statistical data for Q3 and Q4 2023/2024 (01.10.23 – 31.12.23 and 01.01.24 - 31.03.24). The information detailed 'Short Term', 'Long Term' and 'All Absence' data along with previous year's figures for comparison purposes
- Occupational Health referrals - Excluding schools, the reasons for referral to occupational health during Quarter 3 and 4 of 2023/24 were detailed
- Initiatives undertaken by the Council which included 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 CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) on a face-to-face basis. In addition, a specific type of CBT known as Eye Movement Desensitisation, was also available if declared appropriate by the OH physicians. Telephone and video call appointments could be arranged if that was the preferred method for individual; and physiotherapy appointments being arranged through the OH Unit as were pension assessments for ill health, ill health pension appeals and deferred pension cases
- Managing Absence the Council's Sickness Absence Policy which operated in a partnership with trade unions; and both the trade unions and management recognised the need for correct management of sickness absence to provide appropriate support to lessen the demands on employees who remained at work.

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

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- Sickness absence within Operational In-House Services and whether rates of sickness varied across the year; Further information would be obtained.
- Absences due to mental health issues and the promotion of good practice in this area. Further information would be sought.
- The possibility of undertaking an in-depth review of the health of the workforce in the future.
- Year-on-year trends in terms of disciplinary action taken. Further information would be obtained.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report providing information in terms of discipline, grievance, dignity at work and sickness levels be noted;
- (2) the ongoing work and initiatives to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence be noted; and
- (3) the Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial be requested to provide further information on:
  - Variations in sickness rates in Operational In-House Services across the year;
  - Additional information relating to mental health issues; and
  - Year-on-year trends in terms of disciplinary action taken.

## **15. CABINET MEMBER REPORT - JUNE 2024 TO SEPTEMBER 2024**

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

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

- The need to support businesses and mitigate reputational damage, particularly following recent events in Southport.
- The possibility of undertaking an in-depth review of community resilience in the future.

RESOLVED: That

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



## **16. WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25, 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 draft Work Programme for 2024/25; the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by informal meetings of the Committee; the identification of 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.

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

- Good working relationships between officers and Members and the fact that feedback was welcomed.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (2) the presentation on the Corporate Communications Strategy be made to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 22 October 2024;
- (3) the topic for review, at an informal meeting of the Committee, relating to “Customer Journey/Channel Shift” be no longer pursued;
- (4) possible suggestions for an in-depth review by the Committee be noted; and
- (5) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

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## Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – October Update

Date of meeting:	22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2024
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)
Report of:	Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial
Portfolio:	Corporate Services
Wards affected:	All
Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Is this a key decision:	Yes
Exempt/confidential report:	No

### Summary:

To inform **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)** of:

- 1) The current position relating to the 2024/25 revenue budget.
- 2) The progress made on transformation within Sefton New Directions.
- 3) The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2024/25.
- 4) The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of August 2024:
  - The forecast expenditure to year end.
  - Variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members.
  - Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects.

### Recommendation(s):

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)** is recommended to: -

#### Revenue Outturn

- 1) Note the current position relating to the 2024/25 revenue budget.

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- 2) Note the actions being taken to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced position.
- 3) Note the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2024/25 revenue budget and acknowledge that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed, and remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved.

## **Sefton New Directions**

- 4) Note the progress made on transformation within Sefton New Directions, that a detailed report will be provided to it as shareholder at the November meeting outlining how a sustainable budget will be set for 2025/26 and how this will enable financial sustainability in the long term.

## **Capital Programme**

- 5) Note the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme (paragraph 8.1).
- 6) Note the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 August 2024 of £19.011m (paragraph 8.08); the latest full year forecast is £88.566m (paragraph 8.7).
- 7) Note that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director Corporate Service and Commercial to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council (paragraphs 8.10-8.12).

### **1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations**

To ensure Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) are informed of the current position in relation to the 2024/25 revenue budget.

To provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2024/25 and agreed allocations for future years.

To progress any changes that are required in order to maintain a relevant and accurate budget profile necessary for effective monitoring of the Capital Programme.

To approve any updates to funding resources so that they can be applied to capital schemes in the delivery of the Council's overall capital strategy.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 29 February 2024, Members approved the Budget for the financial year 2024/25. This budget was developed throughout the preceding nine months and took account of all known issues. Within that report, and as with previous years, the inherent financial risk within the budget, especially with respect to Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Excellence (Home to School Transport), was identified. This was further reflected within the reserves' strategy for the Council, as reported in the Robustness Report also presented to Budget Council.
- 1.2 This report is the second of the Council's monthly budget monitoring reports for 2024/25 and provides an early revenue forecast outturn position for all services, including the pressures that have materialised since the budget was set.
- 1.3 The report also outlines the current position regarding key income streams for the Authority, namely Council Tax and Business Rates. Variations against expected receipts in these two areas will also affect the Council's financial position in future years.
- 1.4 The capital section of the report informs Members of the latest estimate of capital expenditure for 2024/25 and forecast expenditure for 2025/26 and 2026/27. The capital budget to date is presented in paragraph 8.1. Paragraphs 8.2 to 8.9 review progress of the capital programme, including additional capital schemes. Finally, paragraphs 8.10 to 8.12 confirm that there are adequate levels of resources available to finance the capital programme.

## 2. Revenue Budget 2024/25 – Forecast Outturn Position as at the end of August 2024

- 2.1 Members are provided with updates of the Council's forecast financial revenue position each month during the financial year from July. As would be expected as the forecast develop through the year, they become more robust and can inform decision making. The Council adopted this approach by developing its in year remedial budget actions on the back of the mid-year review position and this report is the first step that will lead to that.
- 2.2 As at the end of August 2024, the forecast outturn shows a net overspend on services of £5.089m, which relates to potential additional pressures within Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Education Excellence (Home to School Transport). It should be noted that the majority of services are reporting a balanced position or are implementing local remedial actions to return a balanced position at this stage. As with all organisations at this time, the Council is operating in a very challenging financial environment. However, it is vital that the Council achieves a balanced forecast outturn position to ensure its financial sustainability.
- 2.3 The table below highlights the variations across services that make up the £5.089m forecast overspend:

	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Variance to July Forecast

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	£m	£m	£m	£m
<b><u>Services</u></b>				
Strategic Management	3.996	3.996	0.000	0.000
Adult Social Care	121.738	122.046	0.308	-1.692
Children's Social Care	81.226	86.226	5.000	1.500
Communities	11.387	11.387	0.000	0.000
Corporate Resources	10.466	10.466	0.000	0.000
Economic Growth & Housing	6.882	6.882	0.000	0.000
Education Excellence	17.931	18.931	1.000	1.000
Health & Wellbeing	19.870	19.784	-0.086	-0.033
Highways & Public Protection	10.886	10.886	0.000	0.000
Operational In-House Services	17.614	17.614	0.000	0.000
Property and Building Services	-0.528	-0.528	0.000	0.000
<b>Total Service Net Expenditure</b>	<b>301.468</b>	<b>307.690</b>	<b>6.222</b>	<b>0.775</b>
Council Wide Budgets	15.462	14.329	-1.133	0.170
Levies	37.290	37.290	0.000	0.000
General Government Grants	-95.740	-95.740	0.000	0.000
<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>258.480</b>	<b>263.569</b>		
<b><u>Forecast Year-End Deficit</u></b>			<b><u>5.089</u></b>	<b><u>0.945</u></b>

2.4 The key areas relating to the outturn position are as follows:

- Adult Social Care** – Initial forecasts assumed that the Adult Social Care budget would overspend by £2.000m during 2024/25. The forecast for this month has now been reduced to an overspend of £0.308m to reflect an assumption that there will be full achievement of savings proposed by the Service for the year (see below). However, there are a number of significant assumptions and uncertainties that could impact on this position before the year-end. The service has also committed to a number of efficiencies and savings that amount to £4.8m, in order to meet the savings approved as part of the approved 2024/25 budget plus additional savings to meet the additional budgetary pressures arising from the increases in provider fees approved at Cabinet meetings in May 2024. The achievement of these savings will be carefully monitored throughout the year. As at the end of August, £1.6m of the £4.8m of savings have been delivered. The current position reflects the delivery of these savings in full during this year which the Service has confirmed.

Like all councils, the Service is experiencing growth pressure with demand for services and are seeking to meet the cost of this within the resources available. As would be expected with a budget of this size and volatility, this remains a key risk during the current year, with the added uncertainty of whether additional winter pressures or other grant funding would be received in year. Work will continue to be undertaken throughout the year to understand the pressures arising and refine forecasts. As an adverse forecast outturn position is currently forecast work will be undertaken to explore options to ensure that any potential overspend is mitigated.

- Children's Social Care** – Initial forecasts assumed that the Children's Social Care budget would overspend by £3.500m during 2024/25. The current forecast for the service shows a potential overspend of £5.000m (see below). However, there are a number of significant

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assumptions and uncertainties that could impact on this position before the year-end. Further work continues to be undertaken to understand the pressures and refine forecasts.

Members will be aware that the 2023/24 approved budget included an additional £21m of investment in the service based on the requirement for additional staffing (including temporary funding for additional agency costs whilst more permanent staff are recruited to, including International Social Workers and from staff coming through the social work academy) as well as additional resources to reflect the number of packages at the time, some potential growth as well as resource for inflationary pressures. The 2024/25 approved budget included an additional £3m to reflect the number of packages at the time as well as resource for inflationary pressures.

The current forecast for staffing is an overspend of £1.400m. A report to Cabinet in May 2024 approved a new staffing structure within the Service, with the cost of the new structure being £2.450m more than the existing staffing budget. Cabinet approved the virement of £2.450m, to fund the increased cost of the new structure, from the Residential Care budget to the staffing budget based on the forecast reduction in packages across the year provided by the Service based on the improvement work that they are undertaking and the performance information that they produced. However, as the new structure is recruited to with permanent staff, significant numbers of existing high-cost agency placements have continued to be required, resulting in a significant overspend being forecast.

Certain areas of accommodation and support packages are now forecast to overspend by £3.600m, an increase of £1.5m since the July forecast. The report to Cabinet in May 2024 outlined that budget realignment would be undertaken to ensure budgets reflected the packages in place at the start of 2024/25 as well as the anticipated reduction in Residential Care packages across the year. This was possible because of continuing improvements in practice which have resulted in more children being placed in more appropriate settings at a lower cost. However, the Service had seen 14 additional children having to be placed in a residential setting at a cost of £0.090m per week (£4.5m for a full year). In addition, the costs of packages for Children with Disabilities had increased, although specialist work continues to be undertaken to ensure health are making the appropriate contributions to the cost of care. These were the two main areas driving the initial forecast overspend.

It was previously assumed that the increase in Residential Care packages would be short-term. However, further work has been undertaken to assess each case and the assumptions made which has identified that some placements will continue for longer than originally assumed. In addition, some further placements, and increases in package costs, have resulted in further spending pressure. There has also been an increase in the number of packages for Children with Disabilities.

Further work has also been undertaken to assess each individual case across the different care settings. This has identified some mitigating reductions in certain settings, including Family Support Packages and Secure Accommodation. This forensic analysis will continue each month to ensure forecasts for each individual case are as robust as possible.

In considering this forecast, work will also be undertaken to determine if any of this pressure is temporary or permanent in nature and needs reflecting in future budget setting processes. At present it is considered that the increase in Residential Care packages is short-term in 2024/25 and so it is estimated that the future years impact is modest at this stage. Together with Adult Social Care and Home to School Transport this is clearly the biggest risk to the Council's budget and a comprehensive review of all residential and other placements, and all agency staff, will continue to be undertaken in order to inform a revised forecast that will be reported as at end of September 2024.

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- **Education Excellence** - The current forecast shows a potential net overspend of £1.000m, which relates to Home to School Transport. Members will recall that in this budget, and in previous years' budgets, substantial funding was added to the Home to School Transport budget. However, this budget has come under further pressure due to the significant increase in the number of EHCPs being completed which result in travel support, including more expensive travel relating to out of borough placements.
- **Other Service Areas** – Most other service areas are currently showing a balanced position. However, based on the initial monitoring undertaken some services are forecasting minor overspends. Given these are early forecasts of the financial year, work will continue to refine forecasts as more information on expenditure and income becomes available. Services will need to ensure that additional cost control measures are in place between now and the end of the year, and mitigating savings are made to offset any forecast overspend, to ensure each service delivers a balanced position.
- **Corporate Budgets** – The Council continues to achieve positive investment returns on its cash balances. It is forecast that this will achieve additional income of £0.233m in 2024/25. However, due to the impact on cash balances of the High Needs deficit, the Council has had to take out additional borrowing earlier than previously planned for. This has reduced the forecast surplus by £0.170m since the July position was reported.

### 3. Revenue Budget Summary 2024/25

- 3.1 An overspend of £5.089m is currently forecast. However, as mentioned in section 2, this is a forecast based on a number of uncertainties and assumptions, particularly around Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, and Education Excellence (Home to School Transport), which all remain volatile. Additional work will continue to be undertaken across service areas to refine the forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced budget position. As also mentioned in section 2, within Children's Social Care a comprehensive forensic review of all residential and other placements and all agency staff will continue to be undertaken in order to inform a revised forecast that will be reported as at end of September 2024.
- 3.2 As mentioned, the Council must achieve an overall balanced position to ensure its financial sustainability. Given the overall forecast overspend, following completion of the September 2024 monitoring position, a remedial action plan to meet the residual balance will be produced and will be presented for Members' approval.

#### Other Proposed Remedial Actions

- 3.3 Given there is still a forecast overspend of **£5.089m**, it is proposed to continue with the adoption of financial principles used in previous years, to enable a balanced forecast outturn position to ensure the Council's financial sustainability. This will include cost control in relation to recruitment, non-essential expenditure and no further growth items / additionality.

#### Summary 2024/25

- 3.4 An overspend of **£5.089m** is currently forecast. However, this represents the current position that has been forecast to the year end- in the event that further pressure is experienced, further remedial action will be required. As a result of measures taken in 2023/24 to ensure a balanced outturn position, there is no flexibility left for the use of existing Earmarked Reserves or General Balances- as a result this pressure, and any further pressure, will need to be met from within the existing Council budget and delivery monitored carefully and reported to Cabinet. A remedial action plan to meet the residual balance will be produced and will be presented for Members' approval.



## 4. Sefton New Directions

- 4.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of Cabinet on 4 January 2024, a report was presented and approved that set out the transformation and development that would take place within Sefton New Directions to continue the evolution of the Company and ensure its financial sustainability moving forward. This reflected the changes in the care sector, the Council's objectives and the wider economy, all of which were naturally having an impact on the Company.
- 4.2 Cabinet as Shareholder of the Company will receive a detailed update on this, together with a proposed budget for 2025/26, at its meeting in November 2024, alongside the other wholly owned companies that the Council has. This is now an embedded part of the governance process with any financial implications feeding into next years' budget process.
- 4.3 In advance of that report, officers continue to meet with the Company to assess progress. At this stage the Company has an inherent budget shortfall of £1.135m for the year and this would see balances reduce to £1m at the end of the current financial year. Therefore, tracking the transformation and business changes is critical. From these discussions, the following financial improvement has been identified and will be delivered for 2025/26:
- £0.220m in respect of business efficiencies, including reducing agency costs
  - £0.134m in respect of James Dixon Court from full cost recovery through the charging model
  - £0.200m in respect of Chase Heys from increased health income and a reduction in cost of delivery, e.g., reduction in agency costs
  - £0.180m in respect of reablement
- 4.4 These proposals amount to £0.734m, with further work being undertaken across all aspects of the business, such as with regard to the realignment of budgets to reflect utilisation and in some areas a review of demand linked to the previously agreed transformation programme.
- 4.5 At this stage, with further work to be undertaken, the inherent deficit would reduce to circa £0.400m which would be a positive move forward in setting a balanced budget for 2025/26 and also ensuring financial sustainability but there is more work to do. The Cabinet report in November will see a detailed progress update being provided against each transformation proposal previously approved together with further work undertaken and will similarly detail each area where progress has not been made as approved, together with a proposed budget for 2025/26.
- 4.6 The Council remains committed to the Company and supporting it through its transformation and development programme and will ensure it remains financially sustainable in doing so.

## 5. Council Tax Income – Update

- 5.1 Council Tax income is shared between the billing authority (Sefton Council) and the three major precepting authorities (the Fire and Rescue Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Combined Authority – Mayoral Precept) pro-rata to their demand on the Collection Fund. The Council's Budget included a Council Tax Requirement of £169.759m for 2024/25 (including Parish Precepts), which represents 84% of the net Council Tax income of £202.200m.
- 5.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of August 2024 is a surplus of £0.154m. This variation is primarily due to: -

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- The surplus on the fund at the end of 2023/24 being higher than estimated (-£0.312m).
- Gross Council Tax Charges in 2024/25 being higher than estimated (-£0.778m).
- Exemptions and Discounts (including a forecasting adjustment) being higher than estimated (+£0.936m).

5.3 Due to Collection Fund regulations, the Council Tax surplus will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2024/25 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.

5.4 A forecast surplus of £1.548m was declared on the 16 January 2024 of which Sefton's share is £1.299m (83.9%). This is the amount that will be recovered from the Collection Fund in 2024/25.

## 6. **Business Rates Income – Update**

6.1 Since 1 April 2017, Business Rates income has been shared between the Council (99%) and the Fire and Rescue Authority (1%). The Council's Budget included retained Business Rates income of £65.692m for 2024/25, which represents 99% of the net Business Rates income of £66.356m. Business Rates income has historically been very volatile making it difficult to forecast accurately.

6.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of August 2024 is a deficit of +£1.158m on Business Rates income. This is due to:

- The surplus on the fund at the end of 2024/25 being lower than estimated (+£2.620m).
- Increase in the gross charge on rateable properties (-£1.687m).
- A number of reliefs announced for 2024/25 were assumed in the NNDR1 return with the loss of income as a result of these reliefs covered by Section 31 grant payments. It is now forecast that the value of these reliefs will be more than anticipated (+£0.521m).
- Adjustments relating to prior years (-£0.296m)

6.3 When taking into account the change in Section 31 grants due on the additional reliefs, a net deficit of £0.960m is forecast.

6.4 Due to Collection Fund regulations, a Business Rates deficit will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2024/25 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.

6.5 A forecast surplus of £11.119m was declared in January 2024. Sefton's share of this is £11.008m. This is the amount that will be distributed from the Collection Fund in 2024/25. Any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in 2025/26 and future years.

## 7. **High Needs Budget**

7.1 Cabinet and Council have agreed to receive regular reports from the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education and the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education) with regard to the High Needs budget and the changes that are proposed, details of sufficiency planning, the Council's engagement on the Delivering Better Value Programme and the current high needs deficit and the risk around future central government decision making in respect of this deficit.

7.2 A separate report on the High Needs funding position of the Council was presented to Cabinet in July 2025.

## 8. Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27

### Capital Budget

8.1 The Capital Budget and profile of expenditure for the three years 2024/25 to 2026/27 is as follows:

<b>2024/25</b>	<b>£88.644m</b>
<b>2025/26</b>	<b>£61.385m</b>
<b>2026/27</b>	<b>£33.476m</b>

8.2 The following updates have also been made to the capital programme budget since the previous budget report to Cabinet in September:

- **Corporate Resources**
  - £0.498m has been added to the 2024/25 budget for ICT Service Developments funded by prudential borrowing following approval by Council in September
  - £0.148m has been added to the 2024/25 budget for the Committee Meeting Microphone and Live Streaming System project funded by prudential borrowing following approval by Council in September.
- **Economic Growth and Housing** - £0.040m has been added to the 2024/25 budget for the Red Rose Park Works scheme funded by capital receipts following approval by Council in September.
- **Education Excellence**
  - Council in February approved the use of the 2024/25 Schools Condition Allocation (SCA) block grant of £2.242m for new capital schemes. The list of schools projects has now been finalised and approved by Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families and is listed below. Due to the timescales required for delivery, the majority of new schemes have been profiled to 2025/26.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Scope of work</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Planned Maintenance	General Planned Maintenance	£300,878
Birkdale CP	Phase 3 Pitched roof repairs	£100,000
Birkdale CP	Refurbish existing toilets	£40,000
Birkdale CP	Small power rewire & lighting upgrade	£90,000
Christ Church CP	Replace remaining roof	£30,000
Crosby High	Resurface carpark and install additional drains	£50,000
Farnborough Road Juniors	Roof replacement	£155,000
Farnborough Road Infants	Repointing brickwork	£10,000
Green Park Primary	Resurface play areas/paths	£20,000
Hatton Hill	Roof	£46,000
Hudson CP	Corridor roof & high-level windows	£130,000
Hudson CP	Concrete repairs/brickwork	£70,000
Larkfield / Presfield	ImprPage 19) carpark and access	£130,000

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	road	
Marshside CP	Small playground to rear & canopy	£50,000
Marshside CP	Remaining flat roof phase 3	£50,000
Marshside CP	Staff toilets refurb	£30,000
Marshside CP	Refurbish existing children's toilets	£50,000
Merefield	Replace flat roof / remove old AC units (phase 2)	£140,000
Netherton Moss CP	Roof to toilets	£55,000
Netherton Moss CP	Drainage upgrade	£15,000
Northway Primary	New flooring to classrooms	£10,000
Northway Primary	Replace roof to boiler room	£30,000
Norwood Primary	Resurface playground and install additional drainage	£140,000
Redgate CP	Security	£15,000
St Philips	Rewire and lighting upgrade & fire alarm phase 1	£90,000
Summerhill CP	Expansion and improvement work	£250,000
Waterloo CP	Roof / fire doors	£145,000
	<b>Total Programme</b>	<b>£2,241,878</b>

- £0.900m has also been added to the budget for new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities capital projects at Beford Primary (£0.450m in 2025/26) and Freshfield Primary (£0.350m in 2024/25 and £0.100m in 2025/26) funded from the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA) grant from DfE and approved by Cabinet Member under delegated authority.
- **Operational In-House Services**
  - £0.347m has been added to the 2024/25 budget for the Northern Forest Grow Back Greener Programme funded by grant from The Merseyforest Partnership and approved by Cabinet in September.
  - £0.300m has been rephased from 2024/25 to 2025/26 for the Crosby Flood and Coastal Scheme pending confirmation of the scope of works over the winter period.
  - £0.086m has been rephased from 2024/25 to 2025/26 for the Hesketh Park Legacy Project due to time required to assess the scope of conservatory works.

8.3 The following block capital grant allocations were approved by Council following recommendation by Cabinet for inclusion in the Capital Programme 2024/25:

<u>Capital Grant</u>	<b>2024/25 £</b>
<b>Adult Social Care</b>	
Disable Facilities Grant	5,261,093
<b>Education Excellence</b>	
Schools Condition Allocation	2,241,878
High Needs Provision Capital Allocation	4,740,380
<b>Highways and Public Protection</b>	
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement	10,766,000

8.4 Authority has been delegated to Cabinet Members to assign funding to individual capital schemes up to a value of £1m for Adult Social Care, Highways and the Schools block

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allocations listed above. A £3.5m budget for Disabled Facilities Grants and £6.8m for schemes funded by the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement have already been approved by Council in July and added to the programme. A further £2.2m of SCA and £1.4m of HNPCA capital schemes have been approved by Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families under delegated authority and allocated to the programme.

- 8.5 The list of schemes to utilise the remaining grant for 2024/25 is being fully developed and will be presented to the individual Cabinet Members for approval. A full list of the approved capital schemes will be presented in future reports to Cabinet.

## **Budget Monitoring Position to August 2024**

- 8.6 The current position of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of August 2024 is shown in the table below. It should be noted that budgets are profiled dependent upon the timing of when works are to be carried out and the anticipated spend over the financial year. The budget to date in the table below reflects the profiles of each individual scheme.

	<b>Budget to August</b>	<b>Actual Expenditure to August</b>	<b>Variance to August</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b><u>Services</u></b>			
Adult Social Care	1.788	1.788	-
Children's Social Care	0.172	0.172	-
Communities	0.210	0.204	-0.006
Corporate Resources	0.118	0.139	0.021
Economic Growth & Housing	2.863	3.636	0.773
Education Excellence	1.449	1.447	-0.002
Highways & Public Protection	4.305	4.305	-
Operational In-House Services	2.292	2.405	0.113
Property and Building Services	4.940	4.914	-0.025
<b><u>Total Programme</u></b>	<b>18.137</b>	<b>19.011</b>	<b>0.874</b>

## **Capital Programme Forecast Outturn 2024/25**

- 8.7 The current forecast of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of 2024/25 and the profile of budgets for future years is shown in the table below:

	<b>Budget 2024/25</b>	<b>Forecast Outturn</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Budget 2025/26</b>	<b>Budget 2026/27</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b><u>Services</u></b>					
Adult Social Care	7.593	7.703	0.110	1.850	-
Children's Social Care	2.298	2.298	-	-	-
Communities	1.767	1.764	-0.003	0.101	-
Corporate Resources	1.596	1.596	-	0.090	-
Economic Growth & Housing	19.470	19.397	-0.073	45.876	27.947
Education Excellence	13.661	13.550	-0.112	2.608	-
Highways & Public Protection	24.566	24.566	-	5.955	1.616
Operational In-House	9.8	9.8	-	2.406	1.525

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Services					
Property and Building Services	7.799	7.799	-	2.500	2.387
<b>Total Programme</b>	<b>88.644</b>	<b>88.566</b>	<b>-0.079</b>	<b>61.385</b>	<b>33.476</b>

A full list of the capital programme by capital scheme is at **appendix A**.

8.8 The current 2024/25 budgeted spend is £88.644m with a budgeted spend to August of £18.137m. The full year budget includes exceptional items such as £13.611m for Growth and Strategic Investment projects, £3.377m for new Council Housing schemes, £9.773m for major Highways projects, a £2.707m project for Southport Pier Decking, a one-off budget for a major property acquisition (£4.775m), new funding for refuse recycling and collection (£2.644m), a scheme to upgrade to LED Street Lighting (£3.809m), and £2.000m for Children's Social Care Transformation.

8.9 It should be noted that based on evidence from previous years, it is likely that further reprofiling of spend into 2025/26 will occur as the year progresses, as £89m of capital expenditure would be a significant programme delivered in year- it is therefore essential that all projects are reviewed in a robust manner in order that informed decision making in respect of financial management and member decision making can be undertaken.

## **Programme Funding**

8.10 The table below shows how the capital programme will be funding in 2024/25:

<b><u>Source</u></b>	<b>£m</b>
Grants and Other Contributions	61.270
Prudential Borrowing	18.618
Capital Receipts	8.543
Revenue Contributions	0.213
<b><u>Total Programme Funding</u></b>	<b>88.644</b>

8.11 The programme is reviewed on an ongoing basis to confirm the capital resources required to finance capital expenditure are in place, the future years programme is fully funded, and the level of prudential borrowing remains affordable.

8.12 The Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial will continue to manage the financing of the programme to ensure the final capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council.

## **2. Financial Implications**

All financial implications are reflected within the report.

## **3. Legal Implications**

None

## **4. Corporate Risk Implications**

This report highlights the financial position of the Council in 2024/25, which supports its Financial Sustainability in 2024/25 and future years.

## **5 Staffing HR Implications**

None

## 6 Conclusion

Based on current forecasts, the Council is again faced with a challenging financial environment during 2024/25 as a result of pressures within Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Education Excellence (Home to School Transport).

A revenue overspend of £5.089m is currently forecast. Within Children's Social Care a comprehensive review of all residential and other placements and all agency staff continues to be undertaken in order to inform a revised forecast that will be reported as at end of September 2024. Following completion of the September 2024 monitoring position, a remedial action plan to meet the residual balance will be produced and will be presented for Members' approval.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

<p><b>Equality Implications:</b></p> <p>There are no equality implications.</p>
<p><b>Impact on Children and Young People:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Climate Emergency Implications:</b></p> <p>The recommendations within this report will have a <b>Neutral</b> impact.</p> <p>The allocations of capital funding outlined in section 8 may be spent on projects that will have a high climate change impact as they could relate to new build, rebuild, refurbishment, retrofit and demolition proposals. Environmental consideration will be taken into account when specific projects are designed and tendered – which will help to mitigate negative impacts.</p>

### What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

#### (A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial is the author of this report (FD7788/24).

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5888/24) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

#### (B) External Consultations

None

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Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Cabinet decision.

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## **Appendices:**

The following appendices are attached to this report:

APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27

## **Background Papers:**

None



## APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27

<b><u>Capital Scheme</u></b>	<b>Budget</b>		
	<b>2024/25</b> £	<b>2025/26</b> £	<b>2026/27</b> £
<b>Adult Social Care</b>			
Disabled Facilities Grants	3,500,000	-	-
ICT Development & Transformation	730,316	2,708	-
ICT Connectivity in Care Homes and Support Living	86,546	-	-
Care Home Improvements	262,589	-	-
Integrated Health and Wellbeing on the High Street	400,000	-	-
Short Term Assessment Unit	1,661,222	1,847,000	-
New Directions Programme	270,329	-	-
Technology Enabled Care	335,401	-	-
Changing Places	36,071	-	-
Falls Prevention Schemes	45,000	-	-
Digitising Social Care	136,393	-	-
Community Equipment	128,963	-	-
<b>Children's Social Care</b>			
Support for Fostering Placements	194,509	-	-
Community Equipment	9,999	-	-
Springbrook Works and Vehicle	93,849	-	-
Children's Social Care Transformation	2,000,000	-	-
<b>Communities</b>			
Atkinson Arts Centre – Infrastructure & Windows	169,555	-	-
Local Authority Housing Fund	1,297,000	-	-
Leisure Centres – Essential Works	151,011	-	-
Libraries Projects	124,999	100,807	-
Neighbourhoods Schemes	24,869	-	-
<b>Corporate Resources</b>			
ICT Development & Transformation	688,498	-	-
ICT Data Centre Relocation	400,000	-	-
ICT Equipment Refresh	360,000	90,000	-
Committee Meeting Live Streaming System	147,806	-	-
<b>Economic Growth &amp; Housing</b>			
Cambridge Road Centre Redevelopment	170,983	-	-
Strategic Acquisitions – Ainsdale	155,000	469,303	-
Marine Lake Events Centre	5,651,282	37,866,796	21,280,701
Enterprise Arcade	1,252,977	35,418	-
The Strand – Maintenance & Improvements	120,330	-	-
The Strand – Repurposing Programme	6,097,159	6,666,667	6,666,666
Changing Places Facilities	109,168	-	-
Brownfield Housing Fund	1,032,281	-	-
Council Housing Early Acquisitions Scheme	-	750,000	-
Council Housing at Buckley Hill Lane	2,080,462	1,150	-
Southport Pier	2,706,736	86,580	-
Town Centre Vacant Sites	54,016	-	-

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	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £
Red Rose Park Works	40,000	-	-
<b>Education Excellence</b>			
Early Years	534,202	-	-
General Planned Maintenance	397,262	-	-
Schools Programme	8,421,149	2,005,683	-
Sporting Betterment of Schools	1,321,388	-	-
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities	2,987,132	602,001	-
<b>Highways and Public Protection</b>			
Accessibility	551,287	-	-
Healthy Lifestyles	190,141	-	-
Road Safety	74,956	-	-
A565 Route Management and Parking	214,035	-	-
A565 Northern Key Corridor Improvements	96,369	-	-
A59 Route Management Strategy	2,549,802	3,299,000	-
Strategic Planning	7,528,511	-	-
Traffic Management & Parking	36,560	-	-
School Streets Schemes	96,510	-	-
Highway Maintenance	4,519,560	-	-
Bridges & Structures	2,060,143	-	-
Drainage	115,930	-	-
Street Lighting	23,394	-	-
Street Lighting LED Upgrade	3,809,462	-	-
Urban Traffic Control	1,070,204	250,000	-
Highways Capitalisation	1,616,000	1,616,000	1,616,000
Transport Growth Programme	-	789,813	-
Completing Schemes	13,491	-	-
<b>Operational In-House Services</b>			
Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management	1,815,925	1,329,276	1,430,273
Countryside Stewardship	1,740	-	-
Parks Schemes	309,598	702,062	-
Tree Planting Programme	574,072	94,879	94,879
Golf Driving Range Developments	2,197	280,280	-
Ainsdale Coastal Gateway	543,739	-	-
Green Sefton – Vehicles, Plant & Machinery	1,996,237	-	-
Refuse Collection & Recycling	2,989,182	-	-
Vehicle Replacement Programme	1,659,104	-	-
<b>Property and Building Services</b>			
Acquisition of Magdalen House	4,775,400	-	-
Council Wide Essential Maintenance	524,070	-	-
Council Wide Essential Maintenance Phase 2	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,387,372
<b>Total Programme</b>	<b>88,644,071</b>	<b>61,385,423</b>	<b>33,475,891</b>

## Work Programme 2024/25, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan

Date of meeting:	22 October 2024		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer		
Portfolio:	Corporate Services Communities and Partnership Engagement		
Wards affected:	All		
Is this a key decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt/confidential report:	No		

### Summary:

To seek the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for 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; to advise of a change to responsibility for consideration of matters associated with asset management; and to advise of a date for a special meeting of the Committee to be held.

### Recommendations:

That:

- (1) the Work Programme for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be considered, along with any additional items to be included and thereon be agreed;
- (2) it be noted that responsibility for asset management issues now rests with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) and therefore, reference to the Disposal of Surplus Council Owned Land/Asset - Management Strategy should be deleted from the Work Programme;
- (3) the presentation on the Corporate Communications Strategy be made to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 14 January 2025;
- (4) the report on the Transformation Programme Update be submitted to the meeting of the

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Committee to be held on 14 January 2025;

- (5) the presentation on the Update on Progress of LCR Digital Inclusion Strategy be made to the special meeting of the Committee to be held on 20 January 2025;
- (6) 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;
- (7) 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;
- (8) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted; and
- (9) It be noted that a special meeting of the Committee will be held on 20 January 2025

## **1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations**

### **1.1 Work Programme 2024/25**

- 1.1.1 The Work Programme of items to be submitted to the Committee for consideration during the Municipal Year 2024/25, as approved by Committee in June 2024, is set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The programme had been produced in liaison with the appropriate Executive Directors/Assistant Directors, whose roles fall under the remit of the Committee.
- 1.1.2 The Work Programme was produced based on items included in last year's Programme.
- 1.1.3 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.
- 1.1.4 The Work Programme indicates that presentations would be made to this meeting of the Committee on the Corporate Communications Strategy and an Update on Progress of LCR Digital Inclusion Strategy; and that a report would be submitted on Transformation Programme Update. It is now recommended that these presentations and the report be made/submitted to the meetings to be held on 14 and 20 January 2025.

#### **1.1.5 Asset Management**

The Work Programme indicates that a presentation would be made to this Committee about "Disposal of Surplus Council Owned Land/Asset - Management Strategy".

Following a review of Cabinet Member/officer responsibilities a number of service area functions have changed. One such change has resulted in the responsibility of asset management being transferred from this Committee to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills).

Accordingly, this Committee's Work Programme should be amended by the deletion of reference to asset management issues.

## 1.2 Scrutiny Review Topics 2024/25

- 1.2.1 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.
- 1.2.2 However, over the last number of years the Committee agreed to hold informal meetings to consider topics for review rather than establishing Working Groups.
- 1.2.3 The Committee's views are therefore sought on topics for review by informal meetings of the Committee.
- 1.2.4 For the information of Members, a criteria checklist for selecting and rejecting potential topics to review is attached at **Appendix 2**.

## 1.3 Pre-Scrutiny of Items in the Key Decision Forward Plan

- 1.3.1 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.
- 1.3.2 The pre-scrutiny process assists Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.
- 1.3.3 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.
- 1.3.4 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.
- 1.3.5 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.

## 1.4 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 1.4.1 As Members will be aware, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees considered a report on the guidance produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government relating to Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities following on from the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's inquiry into Overview and Scrutiny. This Committee considered the matter at its meeting held on 22 October 2019 (Minute No. 20).
- 1.4.2 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 (LCRCOA&S) be included in the Work Programme report considered at each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

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1.4.3 In accordance with the above decision, information on the LCRCAO&S is set out below.

## 1.4.4 **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.

## 1.4.5 **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.

## 1.4.6 **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 are Councillors Steve Radford and Pat Moloney respectively.

## 1.4.7 **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.

## 1.4.8 **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>

Since the last meeting the LCRO&S has met on 11 September 2024 and details of matters considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Financial Performance April - July 2024
- LCR Freeport and Innovation Zone Progress Report
- Work Programme Update 2024-25
- Liverpool City Region Long Term Skills Plan

1.4.9 The next meeting of the LCRCAO&S will be held on 23 October 2024. At the time of writing this report the agenda for **Page 30** on 23 October has not been

# Agenda Item 5

published. Details will be provided as part of the next Work Programme update report.

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

## 1.5. Special Meeting of the Committee

- 1.5.1 As can be seen from the Work Programme, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, it is anticipated that a large number of items are due to be considered at the next meeting to be held on 14 January 2025. This is partly due to a number of reports/presentations being deferred from this meeting.

Anecdotally, the items on Air Quality Monitoring and Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme generate much member interest and debate. The deferred items, being presentations, tend to take longer than if a report was submitted. There is therefore the potential for the meeting on 14 January 2025 to be an extremely lengthy one.

- 1.5.2 To allow Members to give due consideration to items on the agenda, it has been agreed by the Chair of the Committee to hold a special meeting at 6.30 p.m. on 20 January 2025 at Bootle Town Hall.

As three of the items on the Work Programme relate to ICT/digital it has also been agreed that the special meeting consider these themed matters.

- 1.5.3 Members are requested to note the date of the special meeting of the Committee.

## 2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 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

## 3. Legal Implications

- 3.1 None. Any legal 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.

## 4. Risk Implications

- 4.1 None. Any risk 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.

## 5. Staffing HR Implications

- 5.1 None. Any staffing/HR implications arising from the consideration of a key

# Agenda Item 5

decision or relating to a recommendation arising from a Working Group/informal meeting review will be reported to Members at the appropriate time.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Committee is requested 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

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

### Equality Implications:

There are no equality implications. Any equality 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.

(Please note that Council have agreed care experience should be treated like a protected characteristic.)

### Impact on Children and Young People:

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 Neutral impact.

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.

## What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

### (A) Internal Consultations

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

Executive Director – Regeneration, Economy and Assets  
Assistant Director - Highways and Public Protection  
Executive Director - Corporate Services arPage 32cial



Assistant Director - Strategic Support  
Chief Personnel Officer

## **(B) External Consultations**

None.

### **Implementation Date for the Decision:**

With immediate effect.

Contact Officer:	Paul Fraser
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2068
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk">paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk</a>

### **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

### **Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

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

<b>Tuesday, 11 June 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Southport</b>	
<b>Report/Item</b>	<b>Report Author/Organiser</b>
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
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

<b>Tuesday, 10 September 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Bootle</b>	
<b>Report/Item</b>	<b>Report Author/Organiser</b>
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
Corporate Communications Strategy	Andrew Daniels
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones/Helen O'Reilly
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

<b>Tuesday, 22 October 2024, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Southport</b>	
<b>Report/Item</b>	<b>Report Author/Organiser</b>
Financial Performance Monitoring	Stephan Van Arendsen/Paul Reilly
Disposal of Surplus Council Owned Land/Asset -Management Strategy <b>(this matter is now the responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills))</b>	Stephan Van Arendsen/Dom Ellis
Update on Progress of LCR Digital Inclusion Strategy	Andrea Watts
Transformation Programme Update	Stephan Van Arendsen/Wayne Leatherbarrow
Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update	Margaret Jones/Helen O'Reilly
Corporate Communications Strategy	Andrew Daniels
Cabinet Member Update Reports	Paul Fraser
Work Programme Update	Paul Fraser

<b>Tuesday, 14 January 2025, 6.30 p.m., Town Hall, Bootle</b>	
<b>Report/Item</b>	<b>Report Author/Organiser</b>
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

<b>Tuesday, 11 February 2025, 6.30 p.m., Budget Meeting - Town Hall, Bootle</b>	
<b>Report/Item</b>	<b>Report Author/Organiser</b>
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/Dom Ellis
Robustness of the 2025/26 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – Local Government Act 2003 – Section 25	Stephan Van Arendsen

<b>Tuesday, 4 March 2025, 6.30 p.m. Town Hall, Southport</b>	
<b>Report/Item</b>	<b>Report Author/Organiser</b>
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

<b>Criteria for Selecting Items</b>
▪ 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

<b>Potential Criteria for Rejecting Items</b>
▪ 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

<b>DO</b>
◆ Remember that Scrutiny <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Is about learning and being a "critical friend"; it should be a positive process</li><li>◆ Is not opposition</li></ul>
◆ 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

<b>◆ DON'T</b>
◆ 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 NOVEMBER 2024 - 28 FEBRUARY 2025**

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](http://www.sefton.gov.uk)

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

Some reports to be considered by the Cabinet/Council may contain exempt information and will not be made available to the public. The specific reasons (Paragraph No(s)) why such reports are exempt are detailed in the Plan and the Paragraph No(s) and descriptions are set out below:-

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## APPENDIX 3

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](http://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 - Former Bootle High School site, Brown's Lane, Netherton	Suzanne Rimmer <a href="mailto:suzanne.rimmer@sefton.gov.uk">suzanne.rimmer@sefton.gov.uk</a>
Q1 & Q2 (2024) Corporate Performance Report	Wayne Leatherbarrow <a href="mailto:wayne.leatherbarrow@sefton.gov.uk">wayne.leatherbarrow@sefton.gov.uk</a>
Corporate Mobile Telephone Contract Retender	David Harris <a href="mailto:david.harris@sefton.gov.uk">david.harris@sefton.gov.uk</a>
Counter Fraud Strategy	David Eden <a href="mailto:david.eden@sefton.gov.uk">david.eden@sefton.gov.uk</a>
Digital Strategy	Helen Spreadbury <a href="mailto:helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk">helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk</a>
Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – November Update	Paul Reilly <a href="mailto:paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk">paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk</a> Tel: 0151 934 4106
Treasury Management Position to September 2024	Graham Hussey <a href="mailto:graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk">graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk</a> Tel: 0151 934 4100
Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – December Update	Paul Reilly <a href="mailto:paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk">paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk</a> Tel: 0151 934 4106
Gas Supply Contract Renewal	Stephanie Jukes <a href="mailto:stephanie.jukes@sefton.gov.uk">stephanie.jukes@sefton.gov.uk</a> Tel: 0151 934 4552
ICT Managed Service Contract	Helen Spreadbury <a href="mailto:helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk">helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk</a>
Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – January Update	Paul Reilly <a href="mailto:paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk">paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk</a> Tel: 0151 934 4106
Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base 2025/26	Diane Turner <a href="mailto:diane.turner22@sefton.gov.uk">diane.turner22@sefton.gov.uk</a>
Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – February Update	Paul Reilly <a href="mailto:paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk">paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk</a> Tel: 0151 934 4106
Q3 (2024) Corporate Performance Report	Wayne Leatherbarrow <a href="mailto:wayne.leatherbarrow@sefton.gov.uk">wayne.leatherbarrow@sefton.gov.uk</a>



## APPENDIX 3

### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Asset Disposal - Former Bootle High School site, Brown's Lane, Netherton</b> 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	7 Nov 2024 Decision due date for Cabinet changed from 03/10/2024 to 07/11/2024. Reason: due to ongoing business case work			
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 – Regeneration, Economy and Assets			
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 <a href="mailto:suzanne.rimmer@sefton.gov.uk">suzanne.rimmer@sefton.gov.uk</a>			

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## APPENDIX 3

### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Q1 &amp; Q2 (2024) Corporate Performance Report</b> Corporate Performance report showing performance for January 2024 to September 2024 against the Corporate Plan and Council priorities
Decision Maker	Cabinet
Decision Expected	7 Nov 2024
Key Decision Criteria	Not a Key Decision – As a matter of local choice significant non-key items are considered by Cabinet.
Exempt Report	Open
Wards Affected	All Wards
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services
Lead Director	Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Executive Leadership Team and Strategic Leadership Board
Method(s) of Consultation	Meetings and briefings
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Q1 & Q2 (2024) Corporate Performance Report
Contact Officer(s) details	Wayne Leatherbarrow wayne.leatherbarrow@sefton.gov.uk



## APPENDIX 3

### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Corporate Mobile Telephone Contract Retender</b> To procure a new contract to replace the expiring contract for the ongoing provision of mobile telephony including handsets, SIM cards and associated products for use by Council staff to conduct their duties			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	7 Nov 2024 Decision due date for Cabinet changed from 03/11/2024 to 07/11/2024. Reason: Work on the tender is ongoing			
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 – Corporate Services and Commercial			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	ICT Staff; Helen Spreadbury, Stephen O'Brien, Jamal Aslam. Highways and Public Protection Staff; Paul Scott			
Method(s) of Consultation	Meetings held with ICT Staff and Highways and Public Protection staff who currently use SIM cards in Traffic Signals as part of the Councils current mobile phone contract			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Corporate Mobile Telephone Contract Retender			
Contact Officer(s) details	David Harris david.harris@sefton.gov.uk			

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## APPENDIX 3

### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Counter Fraud Strategy</b> Provide a Counter Fraud Strategy for decision detailing the proposed activity to improve the Council's approach to detect and prevent fraud.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	7 Nov 2024 Decision due date for Cabinet changed from 05/09/2024 to 07/11/2024. Reason: Work is ongoing on the production of the Strategy			
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 – Corporate Services and Commercial			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Executive Leadership Team, Cabinet Member – Corporate Services			
Method(s) of Consultation	Meetings			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Counter Fraud Strategy			
Contact Officer(s) details	David Eden david.eden@sefton.gov.uk			

## APPENDIX 3

### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Digital Strategy</b> To submit for approval the Councils Digital Strategy for the next three years			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	7 Nov 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 – Corporate Services and Commercial			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Officers - Executive Leadership Board and wider staff via ICT Champions and Digital working groups Members - all via IPC Members of the public via formal consultation			
Method(s) of Consultation	The digital strategy has been circulated to all members of ELT via Executive Board meetings, comment has also been sought on draft copies via Informal Policy Cabinet. Staff consultation has been completed with all officers involved in the delivery of key digital strands and wider staff engagement has been completed via ICT Digital Champions Meetings Formal public consultation on the proposed strategy took place over summer 2024, with 55 responses received both electronically and via hard copy			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Digital Strategy			
Contact Officer(s) details	Helen Spreadbury helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk			

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## APPENDIX 3

### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – November Update</b> Financial updates and Policy decisions relating to the Council's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan, including the monthly Revenue and Capital budget monitoring reports			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	7 Nov 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 – Corporate Services and Commercial			
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 – November 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	<b>Treasury Management Position to September 2024</b> This report provides Members with a review of the Treasury Management activities undertaken to 30th September 2024.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet  Council			
Decision Expected	7 Nov 2024  14 Nov 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 Position to September 2024			
Contact Officer(s) details	Graham Hussey graham.hussey@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4100			

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## APPENDIX 3

### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – December Update</b> 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	5 Dec 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 – Corporate Services and Commercial			
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 – December 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	<b>Gas Supply Contract Renewal</b> procurement of the corporate gas supply contract for the period 2025/26 - 2029/30			
Decision Maker	Cabinet  Council			
Decision Expected	5 Dec 2024  16 Jan 2025			
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				
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services; Assistant Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (Strategic Support); and Framework providers			
Method(s) of Consultation	Emails; meetings; and Framework providers via formal interviews and written documents/responses			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Gas supply contract renewal			
Contact Officer(s) details	Stephanie Jukes stephanie.jukes@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4552			

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## APPENDIX 3

### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>ICT Managed Service Contract</b> To review and make a decision in relation to the award of a new contract for an ICT Managed Services Contract to commence 1st October 2025.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	5 Dec 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			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Stephan Van Arendsen - Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services; Richard Clegg, Principal Lawyer; Mark Woodward , Procurement Category Manager; Marie Lambert, HR Manager , Operations; and Paul Reilly, Service Manager, Finance			
Method(s) of Consultation	The procurement team includes representation from Legal , Finance, HR and the Central procurement team, therefore consultation and engagement will take place on the proposed decision via this Procurement teams regular board meetings chaired by the Executive Director for Corporate Resources and Customer Service, Consultation with the Cabinet member will be completed via a Cabinet Member briefing session. which are schedule on a fortnightly basis.			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	ICT Managed Service Contract			
Contact Officer(s) details	Helen Spreadbury helen.spreadbury@sefton.gov.uk			



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### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – January Update</b> 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	9 Jan 2025			
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 – Corporate Services and Commercial			
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 – January Update			
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	<b>Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base 2025/26</b> The report provides a review of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the current year 2024/25 and a proposed scheme for 2025/26. An updated Council Tax Base for 2025/26 is also provided.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet  Council			
Decision Expected	9 Jan 2025  16 Jan 2025			
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 – Corporate Services and Commercial  Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Precepting authorities - Merseyside Fire & Rescue, Police and Crime Commissioner and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.			
Method(s) of Consultation	Details of the proposed local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base for 2025/26 are provided to the precepting bodies, Merseyside Fire & Rescue, Police and Crime Commissioner and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base 2025/26			
Contact Officer(s) details	Diane Turner diane.turner22@sefton.gov.uk			

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### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 – February Update</b> 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	6 Feb 2025			
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 – Corporate Services and Commercial			
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 – February Update			
Contact Officer(s) details	Paul Reilly paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4106			

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### SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Q3 (2024) Corporate Performance Report</b> Corporate Performance report showing performance for Q3 (October 2024 to December 2024) against the Corporate Plan and Council priorities
Decision Maker	Cabinet
Decision Expected	6 Feb 2025
Key Decision Criteria	Not a Key Decision – As a matter of local choice significant non-key items are considered by Cabinet.
Exempt Report	Open
Wards Affected	All Wards
Scrutiny Committee Area	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services
Lead Director	Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Executive Leadership Team and Strategic Leadership Board
Method(s) of Consultation	Meetings and briefings
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Q3 (2024) Corporate Performance Report
Contact Officer(s) details	Wayne Leatherbarrow wayne.leatherbarrow@sefton.gov.uk

## Cabinet Member Report – September 2024 to October 2024

Date of meeting:	22 October 2024		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)		
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer		
Portfolio:	Corporate Services		
Wards affected:	All		
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 September 2024 to October 2024 relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### Recommendation(s):

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

#### 1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations

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.

#### 2. Financial Implications

2.1 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

(B) **Capital Costs** – see above

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## 3. Legal Implications

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

## 4. Risk Implications

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

## 5. Staffing HR Implications

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

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees. This report has therefore been submitted to comply with the decision of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

### 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.

#### **Equality Implications:**

There are no direct equality implications. Any equality implications arising from the consideration of any decisions contained in the update would have been/will be reported to members at the appropriate time.

(Please note that Council have agreed care experience should be treated like a protected characteristic.)

#### **Impact on Children and Young People:**

There are no direct children and young people implications. Any children and young people implications arising from the consideration of any decisions contained in the update would have been/will be reported to members at the appropriate time.

#### **Climate Emergency Implications:**

The recommendations within this report will have a Neutral impact.

There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report. Any climate emergency implications arising from the consideration of any decisions contained in the update would have been/will be reported to members at the appropriate time.

## 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 :

With immediate effect.

Contact Officer:	Paul Fraser
Telephone Number:	0151 934 2068
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk">paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk</a>

### Appendices:

Cabinet Member - (Corporate Services) update report.

### Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

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<b>CABINET MEMBER REPORT</b>		
<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny</b>		
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Period of Report</b>
Christine Howard	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services	22 October 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 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024, when the budget for 2024/25 was set along with the Council Tax for the year. The latest budget monitoring report, showing the August position was reported to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024. The next report to Cabinet in November will show the September position. This will be the Mid-Year Review position and will include action being taken to mitigate the forecast overspend on the Council's Revenue Budget.

Work continues to be undertaken on updating and expanding the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 – 2027/28. This includes an assessment of any potential ongoing issues from the 2024/25 budget as well as new pressures. A report presenting the updated MTFP will be presented to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Officers will also be assessing any announcements made in the Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024 that impact on the financial position of the Council and these will also be incorporated into the report.

The Council's revenue outturn position for 2023/24 has been finalised and was reported to Cabinet at the end of July 2024.

The Government has now implemented legislation for "backstop" date to be introduced for early December 2024 by which time audit certificates will need to be issued for all outstanding audits up to 2022/23. Officers are currently working with its previous external auditors, EY, to ensure they can finalise their audit opinions for the two open audits for 2021/22 and 2022/23. As the work on these audits won't be fully complete the audit opinions will be qualified on that basis. This will be in line with many other outstanding audits across local government. A special meeting of Audit and Governance will take place on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to consider the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23, as well as the external auditor's report.

The production of the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 was finalised and published by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024 in line with the statutory deadlines. The Council's new auditors, Grant Thornton from the 2023/24 financial year, have been undertaking the audit since then, including work for informing the Council's Value for Money assessment. Significant progress has been made and the main work on auditing the Statement of Accounts to approve the final, fully audited, Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 in advance of the "backstop" date for that year.

## **Customer Centric Services**

The Service continues to deal with high workloads but has made great progress in recent months to reduce both outstanding volumes and customer response times, especially in the Council Tax team.

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## **Customer Services**

Typically, the Council's Customer Services Contact Centre answers approximately 16,000 calls each month. In August 2024, a total of 15,360 telephone calls were handled; this is approximately 12% less than the 17,468 telephone calls that were handled in August 2023.

The salutation message that is relayed at the start of each incoming call encourages customers to use 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).

The excellent workload progress that is being made by the Council Tax team continues to have a positive impact in relation to the number of telephone calls being received. In August 2024, there were a total of 2,588 telephone calls handled for Council Tax compared to 4,141 handled in August 2023 (37% reduction). The salutation message for this service continues to encourage customers to go online if they are able to do so and to register for 'My Account' where they are able to view and manage their account online.

Enquiries relating to Cleansing due to operational issues across the borough, the availability of brown bins, missed collections and bulky item collections remain consistently high. Various telephony messages are prepared and relayed to inform customers when their revised collection is due to be made, however a number of customers prefer to stay on the line to speak to a Customer Service Advisor.

Demand continues to be high at the One Stop Shops, with approximately 2,500 customers attending Bootle One Stop Shop each month. Typically, the team continues to deal with a high volume of taxi license applications and related enquiries, Council Tax, Parking or benefits enquiries, with the remaining customers seeking general council-related advice at reception.

At Southport, approximately 500 customers attended the Atkinson each month, booking an appointment to discuss their Council Tax and/or benefit, with others seeking general council-related advice at reception.

## **My Account Portal - Council Tax / Business Rates**

Since the Council Tax and Business Rates online account portal went live in October 2023, there has been a month-on-month increase in the volume of registrations with around 18,600 households and businesses now successfully signed-up for My Account, and around 21,800 households and businesses signed up for paperless billing.

Since go-live to the end of September 2024, approximately 25,680 work items have been submitted via the Council Tax portal, e.g. new requests /amendments for discounts, Direct Debits, contact details etc. with approximately 56% of those work items automatically updating Council Tax records instantly upon receipt and without manual intervention; with the remaining items being manually processed within two-weeks of receipt due to level of checks required.

## **Council Tax Sole Occupier Discount Review**

The Council recently commenced a Council Tax Sole Occupier Discount review to help ensure that households are being charged correctly for Council Tax. At the end of August 2024, a review letter was issued to just under 50,000 households asking them to report any household changes by 30<sup>th</sup> September if they were no longer the only occupier. Any changes reported by 30<sup>th</sup> September will be effective from the date the change was reported.

# Agenda Item 6

As at 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024, 1,063 households have cancelled their Sole Occupier Discount online of which 87% have been automated via the My Account Council Tax portal to generate a revised Council Tax bill.

The Council Tax team is now working with software provider, NEC, to plan the next phase of the Sole Occupier Discount review.

Advice and guidance has been provided to householders contacting the Council to enquire about entitlement to available discounts, e.g. student discounts.

## **Taxi-Licensing**

The updated Taxi Licensing system consisting of an online portal went live at the beginning of April 2024. The system allows taxi drivers, vehicle owners and operators to upload various evidence documents as well as pay all licensing fees via an online portal.

Some drivers continue to experience issues accessing the portal and creating an e-mail account. Technical support remains available at Bootle One Stop Shop and assistance is also being provided by trade representatives at selected garages. Contact has also been made with Sefton's Adult Education team to see if they can offer any digital support.

Following a request from the trade, the taxi licensing area of the Council website is being revamped to make it more user-friendly. Work is now taking place with the colleagues from the Communications team to have the update completed in the near future.

A review of fees for a vehicle licence and driver licence is also currently underway. Work is being undertaken to assess the time and effort it takes to produce each licence. When this has been done, the new fees will then be calculated, and a proposal will be put to the trade by Licensing colleagues. In addition to the new licence fees, a £50.00 non-refundable application fee will be imposed.

Regular meetings between Customer Services and Taxi Licensing continue and the trade are given regular updates on progress.

## **Risk and Audit**

The **Internal Audit** team are continuing to work on delivering the 2024/25 internal audit plan with a current focus on reviews of:

- Review of number of Schools.
- Fuel Cards
- Sefton New Directions
- Risk Management Health Check
- Code of Conduct
- Credit and Debit Cards
- ASC recruitment and retention
- CSC Procurement
- Marine Lakeside Event Centre procurement
- Supplier Management
- Bulky Waste
- Planning Financials
- Sundry Debtors
- Council Tax
- Children with disabilities
- Out of Area Placements- ASC

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- Alleyway Waste
- Childrens Placements
- CSC Market Sustainability
- ASC Market Sustainability

Following a re-structure a Trainee ICT Auditor has been appointed and started in September 2024 and a Principal Auditor post is currently being advertised.

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

- The Team are currently finalising 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. The renewal figures increased in line with expectations although there was reductions in costs to reflect a number of schools that transferred to Academies.
- The Team have proposed the use 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.
- The Team 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 and have received positive feedback.
- The Team assisted in arranging material damage cover for 25 Catholic schools where the Diocese was unable to offer terms from their existing insurer. A consultation exercise on a re-valuation of the affected schools to ensure that the properties have accurate re-building costs is currently being undertaken. This will help to prevent under insurance and potential restrictions of cover in the event of a claim.
- The Team continues to work extensively with Service Teams including Highways on car parking, 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.**

The Team 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 are currently

- 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
- Working on the Southport Recovery Cell

# Agenda Item 6

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.
- Completed a planned review of the Council's Health and Safety Policy.
- Completed a review of the Council's grey fleet driving standards to ensure compliance with the Council's statutory responsibilities to ensure that staff are eligible to drive and have vehicles that are insured and safe to be on the road. Further guidance will be provided to colleagues across the Council.
- 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.
- 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.

The **Counter Fraud** function has been focused on improving the governance and counter fraud during the quarter developing a Fraud Strategy as well as improving communication to staff. In addition, the team are working on the National Fraud Initiative ensuring that data is uploaded on time for the 2025/26 exercise.

## 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), and Data Centre relocation. Further developments are underway to improve Sefton's Cyber Security capabilities, and the team has also initiated an improvement programme to upgrade and refresh the corporate Wi-Fi across the estate over the next 18-24 months. The client team is pleased to be able to report that the Website upgrade project is now completed,
- Work has also been completed to scope out the technical requirements associated with implementing Power Apps across the Council, this work is well underway and we hope to start piloting the use of these additional services within HR over the next few months.
- Data centre rationalisation and right sizing complete 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 move of the existing comms capacity to Magdalen House is now nearing completion, this includes the reconfiguration of all dark fibre connections in Bootle and the installation of new air conditioning and UPS systems. The Agilisys team have now

# Agenda Item 6

successfully relocated into their new office location within Magdalen House. Plans are well underway to move the remaining small data centre footprint within St Peters to a purpose-built data centre in Liverpool, all the new equipment is ordered with timelines for the connectivity piece with Virgin now firmed up, this means that all relocation works should be completed by the end of the calendar year.

- The Cloud telephony project is now closed, the team has completed the identification of telephony lines commissioned by departments directly and work is underway to transfer these to the corporate system (less than 30 lines). In addition, the team have completed a positive a proof-of-concept in relation to Teams Telephony to inform the strategy moving forwards, a further report will be made available regarding this during Autumn.
- The Council's CXP solution continues to be developed. A new internal data breach process is now built with final work in progress to develop the reporting element. A new ELAS process is in development. Work continues to make Contact Centre-only processes available online, with the first of these (Traffic) currently in UAT. Work on the configuration of the new FOI process is progressing well, with testing now in progress with the service lead. Phase 3 of the eforms migration has been slightly delayed due to the impact of the Southport incident. New processes have been requested for Registrars (due to commence December 2024), Trees & Sefton Arc amongst others. Regular changes and improvements to existing processes are ongoing.
- The ICT Procurement team continue to be busy; work has completed on several key procurements including the network connectivity for schools, the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement for all licencing and GIS with Leisure now completed. A forward plan has been developed in partnership with central procurement colleagues and work has now started on procurement for Payroll and HR, Inform CPI for Revenues and Benefits, a Digital Social Care Pricing System, Fleet Management and Egress (secure email).
- The ICT client is working in partnership with Agilisys colleagues to deliver a refresh programme for end user devices that will not meet the requirements of Windows 11 next year (approximately 600 devices are impacted). Windows 10 will be end of life in October 2025 and the team is already testing Windows 11 deployments with a view to migration of all staff prior to this date. As part of this project, we are taking the opportunity to upgrade the standard specification for laptops and desktops purchased by the authority to ensure that our devices are fit for purpose over the next 3 – 5 years. New devices will start to be deployed to the relevant staff prior to Christmas 2024.
- 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. A Cyber Security briefing was completed for Full Council during July and a schedule of ongoing training is in place for all members.
- Consultation on the new Digital Strategy for Sefton is now complete, all responses have been reviewed and the final version of the strategy will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet during Autumn.
- Due to the Agilisys contract ending on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 work is underway to procure a Managed Service provider for ICT from October 2025. The tender documents were released to suppliers in July this year with a deadline of the 8<sup>th</sup> of August for bid submissions. Evaluation of bids took place during August/September with a report recommending preferred bidder due to Cabinet in December this year.

## Legal Services

Legal Services continue to busy providing support across a range of areas including: Childrens' and Adults' Social Care; Contracts and Commercial; Property and Planning and Prosecutions and Regulations and Employment Law. In addition to business as usual there follows some highlights:

- The Principal Lawyer Team has led on a project to ensure HMRC compliance in terms of off-payroll working arrangements. This has been a significant audit and HMRC have confirmed the case is closed (with one exception). New controls to manage HMRC compliance have been developed and are in the process of being rolled out, including a new off-payroll policy, an off-payroll panel and training.
- School academisations: The Legal Team have assisted colleagues across the legal department in the negotiation of Commercial Transfer Agreements and Property Agreements relating to the academisation of a number of schools within the borough. This has been a significant amount of work all to tight deadlines set by the Department for Education. There are 18 schools that have indicated they will transfer to Multi Academy Trusts this financial year. The Team are also leading on developing a process to improve efficiency of the process and to better protect the Council.
- The Property Team continue to handle a wide and varied caseload of instructions from the Councils estates team for disposals, acquisitions and other property related matters including supporting on academies as above. In Planning we are now starting to have to actively deal with applications subject to the new Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) regime as required by the Environment Act 2021, as well as getting to grips with the myriad of changes being proposed by the new government in regards to grey-belt (reforming green belt policy), new NPPF revisions and reversion back to mandatory housing targets
- The Contracts and Commercial team continue to support the procurement department in preparing for the implementation of the new Procurement Act which has been pushed back to February 2025 and has led on a project to redraft the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The Team continues to assist colleagues with a range of projects including the Marine Lake Events Centre, the Strand Transformation Project and in relation to the delivery of new Council housing.
- The Childrens' Social Care legal team - the cases being managed by the team continue to be complex in nature, often involving several parties and international elements where the team must liaise with Central Authorities worldwide. The team have recently successfully defended a Judicial Review in the high Court on behalf of Children's social Care.
- The Lawyer designated to supporting the Special Educational Needs department with a rise in cases before the Special Educational Needs tribunal seen during this academic year.
- The Prosecution team have had some great successes. This includes a successful prosecution of a landlord who had let his property out to tenants in dangerous conditions and a significant fine for the landlord of £20,000 see [Negligent landlord who ignored safety risks penalised in court \(smbc.loc\)](#). The team also secured a prosecution of a parent for failing to send her son to school, resulting in a significant fine and costs.
- The Debt recovery team recovered a further £112,000 in unpaid debts.

# Agenda Item 6

## Democratic Services Team – Overview

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

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 3 September 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside – Sefton Place Update
- Health Provider Performance Dashboard
- Adult Social Care Assurance
- Shaping Care Together Programme
- Cabinet Member Update Reports
- Work Programme Update

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 15 October 2024.

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

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 24 September 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Cabinet Member Update Reports
- Children’s Services Improvement Programme
- Social Work Practice and Improvement
- Education Scorecard
- Ofsted Inspections
- Work Programme Key Decision Forward Plan

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 12 November 2024.

- **Children’s Services and Safeguarding Parents/Carers Sub-Committee**

The last meeting of the Sub-Committee was held on 17 September 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Attendance of Parents/Carers - Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

The next meeting of the Sub-Committee will be held on 10 December 2024.

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

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 17 September 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority – Service Delivery Plan 2024/25 - Presentation
- Winter Maintenance Policy & Operational Plan
- LCR Local Nature Recovery Strategy - Update and Next Steps Towards Approval of Draft LNRS
- Work Programme 2024/25, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan
- Cabinet Member Report – June 2024 to September 2024



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The Committee has agreed that following the submission of cleansing related reports over the next two meetings, consideration be given at the March 2025 meeting to arranging an informal meeting to look into cleansing services.

On 28 August 2024 the Committee held an informal meeting to consider the provision of housing for former looked after children who were now care leavers. Recommendations agreed by the informal meeting were endorsed by the Committee on 17 September 2024 and the Work Programme has been updated to include subsequent actions.

Due to the unavailability of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee the next meeting, scheduled to be held on 5 November has been rearranged and will now take place on 25 November 2024.

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

The last ordinary meeting of the Committee was held on 10 September 2024. Details of items considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Customer services activity
- Financial Management 2024/25 to 2027/28 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2024/25 - September Update
- Levels of Disciplinary, Grievance, Dignity at Work and Sickness Absence
- Work Programme 2024/25, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan
- Cabinet Member Report – June 2024 to September 2024

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 22 October 2024.

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

- Liverpool City Region Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny Link - Councillor Hart
- Update on Informal Meetings and Working Groups
- Centre for Governance and Scrutiny - Newsletters
- Training session for Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs

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

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

Since the last Cabinet Member update of the LCRO&S has met once on 11 September 2024. Details of matters considered at the meeting are set out below:

- Financial Performance April - July 2024
- LCR Freeport and Innovation Zone Progress Report
- Liverpool City Region Long Term Skills Plan
- Work Programme Update 2024-25

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- Appointments of Scrutiny Members to the Audit & Governance Committee 2024/25

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. The Chair of the LCRCOA&S cannot be a member of the majority group. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee for 2024/25 are Councillors Steve Radford and Pat Moloney respectively.

Sefton's appointed Members are Councillors Desmond, Hart and Hinde. Councillor Hart is Sefton's Scrutiny Link. Councillor Hart and Councillor Desmond have been appointed to the Audit and Governance Committee. Councillors Desmond and Hart have been appointed as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee respectively.

The next meeting of the LCRO&S will be held on 23 October 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 ended 18 July 2024. In this period over 200 appeals were listed and heard. The number of appeals was lower than in recent years, with more applicants being offered schools from their initial preferences. However, a number of late appeals and a backlog of in-year transfers has meant that 7 days of appeals have been listed in September which has continued to be busy. Additionally, another two days have already been booked for early October.

Two of the new Panel members have completed their training and sat on Panels during September.

## **Civic and Mayoral Services**

Tickets are now on sale for the Mayors Charity Cabaret Night on 19 October 2024 and the Burns Night on 25 January 2025.

On 20 August we welcomed HM King to Southport, this visit was a timely boost for the Town, and for the King to meet the families affected by the events of 29 July.

From 22 August to 25 August a delegation from Sefton visited Mons, which included the Mayor of Sefton, Deputy Leader of the Council and the MP for Bootle. The purpose of the visit was to discuss and start planning for upcoming projects for 2026 & 2027. The visit was a great success and we look forward to welcoming a delegation from Mons from 25 to 28 October to plan these projects further.

## **Member Development**

### Mandatory Committee Training

A mandatory training session for the Licensing and Regulatory Committee took place on 10 June 2024 and was well attended. A mop-up session took place on 27 June 2024 via Microsoft Teams.

## 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 27 June 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for 23 October 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**

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 4 September 2024 and the Committee considered the following items:

- Corporate Risk Management
- Risk and Audit Service Performance
- Treasury Management Outturn 2023/24 and Position to July 2024
- Current Position relating to the Audits for 21/22 and 22/23
- Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2023-2024
- Review of Members Code of Conduct Complaints 2023-24
- Review of the Council's Constitution
- Work Programme Update Report

### **Health and Wellbeing Board**

The last meeting of the Board was held on 5 June 2024 and the Board considered the following items:

- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board
- Psychological Support offer following Southport Incident on 29th July 2024
- Child Poverty Strategy
- Public Health Annual Report 2023/24
- Sub-Group Updates

### **Licensing and Regulatory Committee**

The last meeting of the Committee was held on 10 June 2024 and the Committee considered the following items:

- Taxi Licensing Annual Report 2023/2024
- Local Licensing Annual Report
- Proposed Traffic Regulation Orders – Southport Town Centre – Receipt of Objections
- Hastings Road and Windy Harbour Road Southport, School Street Traffic Regulation Order
- Birkdale, Weld Road Accessibility Improvements
- Southport Eastern Access Highway Improvements

The next meeting of the Committee has been moved from 2 September 2024 to 7 November 2024.

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## **Electoral Services**

The annual canvass for the 2025 register of electors has now started. The programme was delayed due to the UK Parliamentary General Election in July and as such the 2025 register will be published on the 1 February 2025 rather than the annual publication date on the 1 December.

Interest in the General Election added over 7,000 new electors to the register, so we go into the canvass period with 217,596 registered elector details to update at 133,329 residential properties. The canvass will focus on encouraging young people to register to vote, as this is the area we have seen the most significant drop off in recent years. We will also concentrate on the number of new builds across the Borough to capture those who recently moved in these areas.

Alongside the annual canvass, we are carrying out a piece of work required because of the Elections Act 2022 to review the registration status of all European Union Citizens registered to vote in the Borough. For these people, eligibility to register to vote now depends on whether they are a citizen of Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal or Spain, who the UK have reciprocal voting rights with, or are an EU citizen of any other EU country who, on or before the 31 December 2020, had permission to enter or stay in the UK.

The Elections Act 2022 also makes changes to how we manage information on electors who are registered to vote by post. Previously, those electors with a permanent postal must refresh their signature (used for verification) every 5 years. New rules now require permanent postal to make a new application every 3 years. Given that we now have in the region of 45,000 postal voters across Sefton, this is a significant piece of work, which, like EU electors is an ongoing task.

The Boundary Commission published the final recommendations for Sefton in July, and we are now waiting for a report to be laid before Parliament for approval and necessary order to be made. Once the order has been made, we will then need to carry out a review of polling districts and polling stations to put a new polling scheme in place ahead of the all-out elections in May 2026.

## **PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT**

### **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.

1 Casual Senior HRBP casual arrangements has ended, this post was predominantly supporting the schools, although they did cross over into the wider Children's Services and had a section of the service within their portfolio. An offer of placement for an agency worker has been made for the interim Senior HRBP and clearances are now being sought. This post will provide day to day operational support to Children's Services freeing up the two Senior Business Partners to focus more on the delivery of the restructure and the work surrounding the strategy agreed for improved collaborative working between Corporate Resources and Children's Services.

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

- Children's Social Care Whole Service review and restructure. The restructure is well underway. In addition to the update in the last report, the following has now also been implemented:

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All Support and Protection Posts including Court Advisory and Team Around a Baby posts have been populated where assimilation was possible. Posts that remain vacant (some covered by Agency workers) have been advertised. All Family Support Worker posts have been recruited to and onboarding is in process. Advertisements for Social Workers and Assistant Team Managers remain open.

All Immediate Support has been populated where assimilation is possible. Posts that remain vacant (some covered by Agency workers) have been advertised.

Planning is underway to move the three Academy Graduate Teams into vacant teams in both Support and Protect and within Immediate Response's Assessment teams. Further planning is underway to transfer the Academy into teams that sit within the structure rather than have them as a standalone entity. This is to support with the challenges previously recognised when transferring from the Academy, into teams across the Service. This will also support with the ongoing recruitment campaign of 'growing our own'.

Adoption and Fostering and the Safeguarding Service implementation plans were presented to the JTU on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 and staffing meeting are set to follow this week and early next week. This will be an assimilation process in the main and then recruitment activity will follow to fill the remaining vacant posts.

The next Services set to be implemented are CWCN, Cared for and Care Experienced and Practice improvement. This will leave 2 full-Service areas in phase 1 implementation and Early Help and Youth Justice remaining areas to complete. Phase 2 will see the implementation of Business Support and Work is already underway to develop what that restructure will look like.

- A further mop up onboarding event was held. Agency workers were sent an appointment from the AD Early Help, Support and Protect. It was attended by a handful of workers and to date, we have not received any paperwork to onboard.
- The posts of Safeguarding Service Manager and Service Manager CWCN are currently out for advert with interviews taking place set to take place on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> October.
- The posts of Service Manager – Cared for and Cared Experience is set to be released early next week.
- A presentation was made to Children's Services SLT in September and agreements were made surrounding Collaborative Working between Children's Services (excluding Schools) and Corporate Resources. The team working with Corporate Learning and Development colleagues continues working towards this plan.
- 2 Schools are set to academies in November and 1 further School set to go in December 2024. 2 other schools remain on the watch list for academisation, although at this time they are not progressing.

## **Pay & Grading, Job evaluation, projects and Occupational Health Unit.**

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.

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

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

The team undertakes the review of HAY graded positions for new posts and the evaluation of HAY posts stemming from any revised proposals to the HAY grading structure.

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

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. The Council and UNISON reached an agreement in March 24 to take forward an overarching settlement process. Individual settlement offers have been formulated in accordance with this agreement. 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 Senior HR business partner and the newly recruited HR business partner that make up the policy team responsible for undertaking reviews of policy, procedures and guidance and introduce new policies as required in line with current legislation have been transferred under the remit of the HR Operational Support Team.

Officers are involved in supporting employing departments with elections pay and payments for onboarded Exercise instructors. Officers are also looking at the implications of the Holiday pay and entitlement reforms and will be producing a paper for discussion and implementation in due course.

The Occupational Health Unit manages the Councils OH provision for Council employees and schools. The unit has 3 providers Premier Physical for Physio services, Optima for OH Dr appointments, and pension assessments and Listening Ear who are the providers of Counselling, and CBT services.

Following concerns regarding the performance of the Optima provision a procurement waiver is in place to enter into arrangements with alternative service provider. The legalities of the contract provision are under discussion with the contract holders with assistance from the legal team.

## **Service Development, Reporting, Establishment Control, Recruitment, and Transactional HR Services.**

There are backlogs in the teams due to process, reporting and resource issues. Additional temporary resource has been taken on within the Recruitment team and THR to address the backlog and a plan is being put in place to ensure this is being brought up to date within the next 6 months. This plan will sit alongside business as usual work which is being prioritised.

The role of Establishment Control has expanded to include the management and control of the temporary end dates relative to all fixed term contracts.

The Recruitment Team and Establishment Control Team have also taken on management of the Matrix contract relative to the recruitment of Agency workers. Agency recruitment continues to be

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at an all-time high relative to social worker and associated positions especially within Children's Services

Development work for automation of the DBS process using the robotics blue prism software has been completed and this has been live since June 24.

Reusing positions has been in place 6 months plus and this has provided improved data accuracy within iTrent. NB: Data cleansing remains outstanding for CSC as this service is still under ongoing a full structural review.

Development work to relaunch Managers Self Service is planned by the end of September to enable managers to see more information about their own teams and to be more proactive when managing future expected changes.

Development work to start at the end of August on an electronic Establishment Control form, this is expected to take around 6 months to scope, build, test and roll out across the business using Granicus CXP.

Scoping to record and maintain annual PDR's and monthly 1:1/supervision meetings has commenced with MHR 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. The build and test period will overlap with the PDR schedule this year, therefore it is expected that PDR forms will be completed outside of the system but managers will be able to upload these and report on their teams objectives and completion dates.

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

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

## **Employee Support – Payroll and Pensions**

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.

There are backlogs sending pension leaver forms to Local Government Pension funds and these are being worked on and are reducing, each week.

The 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 pay awards for NJC staff, Councillors, Coroners and Chief Executive have not yet been agreed.

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The 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 pay award for Teachers is currently laid before Parliament and is expected to be ratified in November and will be processed in December pay.

The 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 pay award for Soulbury and Youth workers is still to be agreed.

HMRC came to Sefton 17<sup>th</sup> September to discuss National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage (NLW) compliance. HMRC are going to contact Sefton again, in the near future and they are going to request a 6-year compliance check.

HMRC wrote to Sefton querying the apprentice levy payments from April 2020 to March 2024 and Sefton responded, saying we believe we have overpaid. We are awaiting further contact from HMRC but have raised a call with MHR (the payroll software supplier) as the functionality is not working as it should.

## Workforce Learning and Development (CLC)

### Apprenticeships

We continue to procure new apprenticeship standards via the YPO portal to support succession planning. The latest standards procured includes the **Level 6 Improvement Leader** qualification.

We have 3 cohorts of staff enrolled on the **Level 6 Social Work Apprenticeship Degree** – all are progressing well with their studies, and we are planning to recruit a further 6 apprentices (3 staff from Adult Social Care and 3 from Children's Services) who will commence their studies in January 2025.

Staff enrolled on **Level 6 Occupational Therapy Degree** are progressing well and 3 Senior Managers will undertake the new **Public Management and Leadership Level 7 Apprenticeship** at the University of Birmingham from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024. The 2 year programme aims to support Senior Managers/Leaders to gain the practical knowledge and skills required to be an effective and dynamic leader across the public sector.

8 Managers are enrolled on the **Level 5 Operational/Departmental Manager Apprenticeship standard** and are making good progress. We agreed a second cohort with LCR colleagues and 2 managers commenced the programme this month.

We have 1 member of staff from the Public Health Team enrolled on the **Level 6 Environmental Health Practitioner Degree** and they are continuing to make 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 went live with the upgraded version of Me Learning on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The implementation went well, and the new upgrade has been well received by the workforce. However, like any new system, we are working on some minor technical issues following feedback from users, this feedback is invaluable and will help us to make further improvements to the Me Learning system.
- **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



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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.

- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training delivery is going well. To date, we have trained 278 Sefton Council and schools' staff. An increase of 9 since the last report.
- **LCRCA Race Equality Training** – we delivered a further six Race Equality Training sessions for staff and managers in May, June, July and September 2024. To date, 186 managers have completed the managers course and 314 staff have completed the non-managers course.

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.

- **Oliver McGowan (OMMG) Training** – We are continuing to roll out OMMG Tier 1 eLearning to ALL staff across Adult and Children's Services. A total of 362 staff have completed to date. The next phase of the training will be to deliver Tier 1 (3 hour training) and Tier 2 (1 day training) to back office and front line staff and to assist with this, we have produced an options paper which includes different delivery options for review and signoff by Adult Social Care and Children's Services Senior Leadership Teams. We are hoping to commence Tier 1 and Tier 2 training from late January 2025.
- Staff in the team continue to support **Adult Social Care** to prepare for CQC inspection. We provided all relevant evidence to support the self-assessment process and are fully engaged in the Strategic Workforce and Adult Social Care Improvement Board meetings to ensure workforce activity regarding learning and development needs, recruitment, retention, data is captured.
- We attended a meeting on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> August with **Children's Services** to review their CPD offer and training priorities going forward. We agreed to reinvigorate the Training Governance Group, refresh the terms of reference and present the approach to Children's Services Senior Leadership Team early October 2024 to seek buy in and agreement for this particular approach.

## 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. This new technology is being adopted to support the development of the new council wide Corporate Performance framework (aligned to the new Corporate Plan) and the first performance report will be presented to Cabinet in November 2024. The team is continuing to support the detailed analysis 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. They are also producing and distributing the school data booklets which help the LA, school improvement groups and schools understand the statistics comparative performance in education attainment across the borough, regionally and nationally.

The team have been supporting the Southport Recovery Programme, gathering, analysing and presenting data in the 'Southport Profile' which shows baseline data that typically explains the demography and economic context for Southport, and is now gathering quantitative & qualitative data/insight that demonstrates the impact that recent events. A key part of this work will be

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qualitative social research and analysis to gather insights collected through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and observations. It is intended that the profile will inform the Council's community impact assessment and recovery planning.

Work continues with the Chief Executive and senior managers across the Council as part of the transformation programme to review our capacity and capability to deliver better quality information and analysis. The project group are exploring the gaps across specific services and the opportunities to align existing data analysis and performance resources with the corporate team to improve performance management, to develop skills, create opportunities for growth, and to retain staff.

## **Consultation & Engagement.**

The Service continues to support consultation and engagement activities across the Council and is providing support to teams on accessible information and co-production. The findings of the extensive consultation and engagement on the refresh of the Children & Young People's Plan were presented to the Children & Young People Partnership Board in August to inform the next version of the Sefton Children and Young People Plan. The team continues to service the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel and support the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnership Engagement, in their role as Chair. In October, the team are also holding another Accessible Information awareness training for elected members.

## **Information Governance, Complaints and Subject Access.**

The Service continues to provide comprehensive support, information, advice, and guidance across the Council on all matters relating to information governance, data sharing and data protection and managing data security breaches. The team continues to co-ordinate and provide timely advice and guidance relating to the responses to information requests covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. The team also continues to respond to request from individuals who wish to access and receive a copy of their personal data as held by Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care; and other supplementary information that the Council holds, diligently and sensitively along with disclosure requests from the Police, NHS partners, solicitors and other Local Authorities.

The challenge of increasing demand and complexity of ASC, CSC and SEND complaints continues to pose a risk to complaints not being responded to within agreed and published standards, which in turn poses a reputational risk to the Council. The Chief Executive and Executive Directors for ASC and Children's Services have considered the arrangements for administering complaints in these areas specifically, with a view to improving performance, improving the number of complaints resolved first time, increases satisfaction amongst complainants, and improving 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. Colleagues in this team have also provided support to the Access to Files Officers. Once their contracts end in December of this year, capacity within Access to Files team may be challenged, resulting in delays with meeting statutory deadlines.

## **Strategic Support**

The team continues to provide support across the various services with policy & strategy development, service reviews and transformation activity. Officers in the team have been aligned to provide project support to each of the six key transformation projects identified under the theme

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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. These six key pillars are now being reduced to four; 1) Children's Services, 2) Council Housing, 3) ASC Better at Home and 4) In House Operational Services, with CSC, SEND and H2S transport collapsed into the Children's Services pillar. Officers have supported the development of the Project Initiation Documents (PIDs), clearly defining project scope, rationale, objectives/deliverables, key stakeholders, timescales and finances, and have been heavily involved in analysing financial savings, mitigations and costs to deliver change, informing the development of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2027/28. The Team has developed the Council's Transformation Plan, which is aligned to the Corporate plan and the Council's priorities, and provides detail on the four pillars of change (Everyday Excellence, Better Outcomes, Sustainable Services, Setting us up to Success and Growth – Redefining Place).

The team has supported the development of new Service Planning Guidance and Templates to be used across the Council, and will be providing support to managers across the Council on how to complete their service plans.

Finally, the team are supporting the production of the next iteration of the Sefton Children and Young Peoples' Plan, using the extensive information gathered through the consultation and engagement activity to shape the priorities for all agencies delivering services to children, young people and their families.

## **Communications**

The team continues to provide comprehensive support across the Council following the tragic incident in Southport. A dedicated officer has been appointed to support the communications activity linked to the council's recovery plan, supporting the recovery working groups.

The team is supporting the communication of the new corporate plan, the transformation plan, and the new service planning guidance and templates. The team is also supporting the preparation of key documents for the Care Quality Commission assessment of ASC, and will continue that support throughout the next quarter.

The team continues diligently to support communication of major events such as the recent Musical Fireworks Championship in Southport, and broadcast of key news including progress on Sefton's first new council housing and the demolition of Southport in preparation for the MLEC development through 'This is MySefton' and its social media presence.

## **Procurement**

The team are now working updating the Councils' Procurement Strategy, incorporating the new Procurement Act 2023 legislation changes, the Transforming Public Procurement (TPP) programme, and changes to the threshold and applicability of procurement waivers. The Act is now expected to come into force in 24 February 2025, and all procurements started after that date will have to comply with the new rules. The team is continuing to work with law firm DLA Piper (who are supporting the roll-out of the Act) so that the key officers across Council understand these new rules and the various steps required to run a successful and fully compliant procurement. With the rules governing public procurement changing, this is likely to place increased demand on the procurement team to ensure readiness for implementing the new regime, to familiarise themselves and advice others with the new regime, understand potential impact on procurements scheduled to commence under the new Act, and address these eventualities. Officers in the corporate team will be expected to assist, escalate issues and promote best procurement practice within the Council. Consequently, the structure of the team is being reviewed to ensure it has the necessary capacity and capability. In the interim, the team continues to support procurement activity across the Council.

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