



MEETING: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
(PERFORMANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES)

DATE: Tuesday 10 September 2013

TIME: 6.30 pm

VENUE: Bootle and Netherton Community Fire Station, Fleetwoods Lane,  
Netherton L29 1YB

**Member**

Councillor  
Councillor McGinnity (Chair)  
Councillor Byrom (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Ashton  
Councillor Booth  
Councillor Dawson  
Councillor M. Dowd  
Councillor Kermode  
Councillor P. Maguire  
Councillor McIvor  
Councillor Robinson

**Substitute**

Councillor  
Councillor McKinley  
Councillor Veidman  
Councillor S. McGuire  
Councillor Shaw  
Councillor Weavers  
Councillor Murphy  
Councillor Killen  
Councillor Roche  
Councillor Dorgan  
Councillor Roberts

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Paul Fraser  
Senior Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 0151 934 2068  
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E-mail: paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk

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

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# AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Members are requested to give notice of any disclosable pecuniary interest, which is not already included in their Register of Members' Interests and the nature of that interest, relating to any item on the agenda in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, before leaving the meeting room during the discussion on that particular item.

3. **Minutes**

(Pages 5 - 8)

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2013

4. **Youth Offending Team Improvement Plan - Presentation**

To receive a presentation from the Director of Young People and Families

5. **Monitoring of Budget and Achievement of Savings and Anticipated Further Budget Cuts to Local Authorities in 2014/15 - Presentation**

To receive a presentation from the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT

6. **Welfare Reform**

a) **Welfare Reform Update** (Pages 9 - 26)

Report of the Cabinet Members Welfare Reform Reference Group

b) **Foodbanks - Presentation**

Steph Prewett, Head of Commissioning and Neighbourhood Co-ordination will give a presentation on the current activity being undertaken with regard to the three Foodbanks in Sefton

c) **Council Tax Benefit Arrears**

Report of the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT to follow

d) **The Bedroom Tax in Merseyside** (Pages 27 - 38)

Copy of report produced by the National Housing Federation attached. A representative of a local Housing Association will attend the meeting to report on the impact of the Bedroom Tax in terms of income for the Registered Social Landlord.

7. **Strategic Asset Management Plan**  
Report of the Director of Built Environment to follow
8. **Equalities Review Update**  
Report of the Director of Corporate Services to follow
9. **Cabinet Member Reports** (Pages 39 - 60)  
Report of the Director of Corporate Services.
10. **Work Programme Key Decision Forward Plan** (Pages 61 - 80)  
Report of the Director of Corporate Services.

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

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (PERFORMANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES)**

### **MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT ON TUESDAY 11TH JUNE, 2013**

PRESENT: Councillor McGinnity (in the Chair)  
Councillors Byrom, Ashton, Booth, M. Dowd,  
Kermode, P. Maguire and McIvor

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dawson, Robinson and Weavers.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **3. MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **4. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Corporate Services that included the most recent reports from the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services and Performance and the Cabinet Member - Communities and Environment relating to those parts of their portfolios that fell within the remit of this Committee. Members' queries were noted for follow-up with the appropriate Officers.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update reports from the Cabinet Member – Corporate Services and Performance and the Cabinet Member – Communities and Environment be received;
- (2) the Head of Governance and Civic Services be requested to:-
  - (a) contact the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner with a request that she makes a presentation to this Committee on her proposals to reduce crime and disorder in Sefton; and
  - (b) contact the Sefton District Manager, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, with a request that the Committee undertake an inspection/tour of the new Bootle and Netherton Fire Station and thereafter hold the Committee's meeting at the station;

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- (3) the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT be requested to email the information below to all Committee Members:-
  - (a) the timescales and/or the level of arrears before registered social landlords will take action to evict their tenants following the implementation of the Government's Universal Benefit and "bedroom tax";
  - (b) why the tender process for all Insurances stipulated a 3 year period with an option to extend for a further 2 years. Why was a 3 year period selected?; and
  - (c) violence and intimidation used by illegal money lenders; and
- (4) the Director of Young People and Families be requested to submit a presentation to the next meeting on the Youth Offending Team Improvement Plan.

## **5. WORK PROGRAMME KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Corporate Services in relation to the Committee's programme of work and latest Key Decision Forward Plan for period 1 July – 31 October 2013.

The Chair requested that Members of the Committee consider potential topics to review for the Municipal Year 2013/2014.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) it be noted that the items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan had been considered by the Committee;
- (2) in connection with the Welfare Reform update key decision, the Head of Commissioning and Neighbourhood Co-ordination be requested to report on:
  - (a) the impact of the welfare reform changes on tenants in the private rented sector;
  - (b) the impact of the welfare reform proposals on the Sefton Welfare Rights service and the Citizen's Advice Bureau due to the increased demand for their services;
  - (c) the increase in the constituent case workload of Sefton's M.P.s due to the welfare reform changes;
  - (d) an update on the Sefton foodbank operation and uptake; and
  - (e) whether the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority would consider providing support by issuing free travel tickets/saveaways to enable recipients to travel to their local foodbanks;
- (3) in connection with Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) key decision, the Director of Built Environment be requested to submit a

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report to the next meeting updating on SAMP including the asset disposal policy/criteria; and

- (4) the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT be requested to:
  - (a) make a presentation to the next meeting on the monitoring of the budget and the achievement of savings; and
  - (b) submit a report on the anticipated further budget cuts to local authorities by Government in 2014/15.

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# Agenda Item 6a

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Corporate Services Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 10 September 2013

**Subject:** Welfare Reform Update

**Report of:** Cabinet Members Welfare Reform Reference Group **Wards Affected:** All

**Is this a Key Decision?** No

**Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes

**Exempt/Confidential** No

## **Purpose/Summary**

To update Overview and Scrutiny Committee on:

- A. the work of the Member led Welfare Reform Reference Group as set out in the attached Cabinet report of 18 July
- B. One Vision Housing to attend the meeting to update on latest position from a Registered Social Landlord perspective

## **Recommendation(s)**

It is recommended that:

1. the report to Cabinet on 18 July 2013 from the Welfare Reform Reference Group is noted and that the work of partners and the Council to mitigate impact wherever possible is recognised
2. that the update from One Vision Housing is noted

## **How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?**

	<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community	X		
2	Jobs and Prosperity	X		
3	Environmental Sustainability	X		
4	Health and Well-Being	X		
5	Children and Young People	X		
6	Creating Safe Communities	X		
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	X		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy	X		

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## Reasons for the Recommendation:

- (i) Ensure that the Committee is fully informed of the emerging impact of Welfare Reform and the work of the Welfare Reform Reference Group is noted

## What will it cost and how will it be financed?

### (A) Revenue Costs

Existing officer and partner time is the major resource. The use of the pump priming resource element of £200,000 agreed by Cabinet on 31 January 2013, is also supporting some of the infrastructure that is needed to mitigate the impact wherever possible.

### (B) Capital Costs

n/a

## Implications:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

Legal – Welfare Reform Act 2012 and S1 Localism Act 2011		
Human Resources		
Equality		
1.	No Equality Implication	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Impact on Service Delivery:** The partner Action Plan has been put into place and the Welfare Reform Reference Group established to mitigate wherever possible the impacts of Welfare Reform. However, it remains clear that even with partner engagement, the Council will only ever be able to make a marginal impact.

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

The Head of Corporate Finance (FD 2517/13) and Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD 1822/13) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

## Are there any other options available for consideration?

The proposed mitigation measures have been developed in partnership with key organisations such as JobCentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, One Vision Housing and

the voluntary, community and faith sector. Various options have been discussed and suggested at the vibrant and well attended partner workshops as well as internal workshops. All of these have been considered for deliverability and viability. The options put forward are those that are considered to have a practical and realistic outcome.

## **Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet/Cabinet Member Meeting

**Contact Officer:** Steph Prewett  
**Tel:** 0151 934 3485  
**Email:** [steph.prewett@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:steph.prewett@sefton.gov.uk)

## **Background Papers:**

The following papers are available for inspection by contacting the above officer(s).

*Partner Welfare Reform Mitigation Plan*

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## **ANNEX A**

**Report to:** Cabinet **Date of Meeting:** 18 July 2013

**Subject:** Welfare Reform Update

**Report of:** Cabinet Members Welfare Reform Reference Group **Wards Affected:**  
All

**Is this a Key Decision?** No

**Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes

**Exempt/Confidential** No

### **Purpose/Summary**

To update Cabinet on the work of the Member led Welfare Reform Reference Group which sets the direction for welfare reform mitigation which encompasses:-

- A. Impact of implementation of Welfare Reform legislation so far
- B. Work that partners and the Council are doing collectively around mitigation of impact where possible
- C. Preparation work for further Welfare Reform legislation impacts

### **Recommendation(s)**

It is recommended that:

- 3. The incredible energy and commitment from partners and within the Council to mitigate the impact wherever possible is noted and encouraged
- 4. The timeline for implementation of Welfare Reform legislation as set out in Appendix A is noted
- 5. The considerable progress to date on the Partnership Action Plan themes as set out in Section 2 is noted
- 6. The update on Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme (ELAS) as set out in Section 3 is noted
- 7. The emerging issues and proposed mitigation measures are understood and endorsed by Members as set out in Section 4
- 8. Priority short term support wherever possible is offered to families most affected by the Benefits Cap and that the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy is amended to include this priority as set out in para 4.2. d

**How does the decision contribute to the Council’s Corporate Objectives?**

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community	X		
2	Jobs and Prosperity	X		
3	Environmental Sustainability	X		
4	Health and Well-Being	X		
5	Children and Young People	X		
6	Creating Safe Communities	X		
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	<b>X</b>		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy	<b>X</b>		

**Reasons for the Recommendation:**

- (ii) Ensure that the Cabinet is fully informed of the emerging impact of Welfare Reform
- (iii) Enable the Council to focus efforts and capacity in the most appropriate ways to try and mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform wherever possible
- (iv) To put into place any mitigating actions if possible and work with partners to do so

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs**

Existing officer and partner time is the major resource. The use of the pump priming resource element of £200,000 agreed by Cabinet on 31 January 2013, is also supporting some of the infrastructure that is needed to mitigate the impact wherever possible.

**(B) Capital Costs**

n/a

**Implications:**

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<b>Legal – Welfare Reform Act 2012 and S1 Localism Act 2011</b>
<b>Human Resources</b>
<b>Equality</b>

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1.	No Equality Implication	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Impact on Service Delivery:** The partner Action Plan has been put into place and the Welfare Reform Reference Group established to mitigate wherever possible the impacts of Welfare Reform. However, it remains clear that even with partner engagement, the Council will only ever be able to make a marginal impact.

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

The Head of Corporate Finance (FD.....) and Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD.....) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

## **Are there any other options available for consideration?**

The proposed mitigation measures have been developed in partnership with key organisations such as JobCentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, One Vision Housing and the voluntary, community and faith sector. Various options have been discussed and suggested at the vibrant and well attended partner workshops as well as internal workshops. All of these have been considered for deliverability and viability. The options put forward are those that are considered to have a practical and realistic outcome.

## **Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet/Cabinet Member Meeting

**Contact Officer:** Steph Prewett  
**Tel:** 3485  
**Email:** [steph.prewett@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:steph.prewett@sefton.gov.uk)

## **Background Papers:**

The following papers are available for inspection by contacting the above officer(s).

*Partner Welfare Reform Mitigation Plan*

## **1.0 BACKGROUND AND POLICY CONTEXT**

1.1. The previous Cabinet report of 31 January 2013 set out the implications of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. It outlined each element of Welfare Reform and the initial response of the Council working with partners in terms of mitigation. Agreed recommendations were as follows:

- Mitigation partner action plan endorsed

- Cabinet Member Reference Group established to oversee the direction of welfare reform
  - Progress report to be brought back to Cabinet every six months.
- 1.2. There are two significant groups looking at Welfare impact in Sefton and potential mitigation measures. These are the Welfare Reform Reference Group comprising Cabinet Members – Communities and Environment, Children, Schools, Families and Leisure and Health and Older People. This group meets monthly and provides leadership and direction for the Council on Welfare Reform and have delegated authority on Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme. This report as shown above is submitted on their behalf and shows the breadth of issues relating to welfare reform implementation- but also the depth, commitment and activity of partners across Sefton. The Welfare Reform Partners Group which is a sub group of the Sefton Borough Partnership Operations Board is the group that brings together key partners from Voluntary, Community and Faith sector, Citizens Advice Bureau, One Vision Housing on behalf of Registered Social Landlords, JobCentre Plus and the Council. This group looks at how collectively we can mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform on the community. The discussions and decisions from each group
- 1.3. This report sets out progress in terms of mitigation to date, reflection on the impact of some legislation now in place and how the Council and partners are planning actions as the reforms take further effect. A timeline of when changes will impact in each year is attached at Appendix A.

## **2.0 CURRENT POSITION – RESPONSE TO WELFARE REFORM SO FAR**

- 2.1 Work continues to progress the key themes identified in the Partner Mitigation Action Plan. This is based on the very well attended and positive workshops that have been held with partners. The following sets out “You Said” which is a collective term for all participants in the workshops and the partnership effort that has happened since:

### **2.1.1 Influencing Policy and Strategy**

#### ***You said:***

Don't produce lots of strategy documents but focus on influencing existing and new policies and strategies:

#### ***What has Happened:-***

- City Region Conference was convened in March 2013 to bring together key partners around opportunities for mitigation. Sefton was highlighted as an area of best practice in terms of its approach and activity relating to welfare reform mitigation. Further conference planned to assess impact of changes in near future.
- Cumulative impact tool has been developed for Welfare Reform which will also provide information to the Child Poverty Commission
- One Vision Housing has piloted paying housing benefit direct to tenants with mixed results which has informed their future plans.

### **2.1.2 Information and advice provision**

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## ***You said:***

Focus on providing specialist advice and information services to people potentially affected by welfare reform changes to build their resilience to cope with the changes.

## ***What has happened:-***

- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) are already commissioned by the Council to provide advice and information across Sefton. In April – mid June 2013 they provided initial gateway assessments to over 500 people in the Goddard Hall office. 51% of requests were for benefits advice
- CAB has produced a mapping tool showing where people can access advice and information. Posters are being displayed in accessible well used venues by the public i.e Council One Stop Shop, community centres
- CAB have successfully secured over £300,000 Lottery funding. Key elements include training frontline staff in public, private and not for profit organisations to be able to effectively signpost and make 'warm referrals', creation of a new central advice website with online referrals facility and a single telephone number for advice.

### **2.1.3 Awareness Raising/Training and Workforce Development**

## ***You said:***

Upskill organisations to make sure that they are aware and understand what the impending Welfare Reform legislation means and the impact on our communities.

## ***What has happened:-***

- CAB have successfully delivered training on Welfare Reform to over 145 people in the Council and partner organisations. The feedback from this has been exceptionally positive with 83.4% saying it was excellent. Further training will be available if needs be around particular areas and groups
- Welfare rights forum is currently being established to share best practice, manage workloads and influence social policy
- Limited funding has been provided to CAB to provide additional awareness and training sessions for partners on welfare reform as well as developing partner capacity

### **2.1.4 Financial Inclusion**

## ***You said:***

Tackle illegal money lending, payday loans and try and help people not to get into debt.

## ***What has happened:-***

- A successful Illegal Money Lending Event was held in February 2013 half term in conjunction with the local schools and community. It raised awareness of loan sharks and provided information about alternative ways of managing money.
- Several locally community organised welfare reform events have been held to raise awareness of advice and support offers. These have been well attended by residents and organisations and more are planned.
- Work is ongoing around community based bank accounts and how credit unions can support people to budget more effectively.



- CAB have secured two years funding from United Utilities to offer financial capability sessions for parents in South Sefton
- A very limited amount of funding has been allocated to tackle illegal money lending

## 2.1.5 Foodbanks

### ***You said:***

Create foodbanks to make sure that people in crisis have access to emergency food provision. Make sure that we work alongside existing food giving models.

### ***What has happened:-***

- Southport and South Sefton Foodbanks launched on 10 May 2013. By mid June they had fed 237 people. 76 from Linacre ward.
- Crosby Foodbank opened on 21 June 2013.
- Maghull Foodbank hopes to be open by September 2013
- Formby churches are sorting out being a distribution point for Southport Foodbank
- Pump priming funding has been made available for infrastructure costs associated with the development of Foodbank provision

## 2.1.6 Furniture Recycling

### ***You said:***

Focus on making sure that people in need have access to something to cook on, keep cold food in, sleep and sit on wherever possible

### ***What has happened:-***

- Sefton Helping Hand Service (SHSS), a local community organisation operate a crisis package (kettle, microwave, toaster, bed, fridge and settee) for those in need linked to Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme
- Council has provided temporary accommodation at Pendle Drive, Litherland to store furniture, etc
- One Vision Housing has agreed to give all pre-loved good condition furniture to them for redistribution and a potential base for the future.
- Sefton Credit Union offer affordable low cost loans for white goods.
- Limited pump priming for SHSS for infrastructure

## 2.1.7 Clothesbanks and Charity Shop Networks

### ***You said:***

Provide where possible cheap clothing or clothes swap schemes for people in need

### ***What has happened:-***

- Parenting 2000 have set up a school uniform bank with five schools in the South Sefton area
- The Council's Education Welfare Service collect school uniform donations and distribute to those in need
- New booklet showing all of the charity shops and services has been produced by Sefton CVS

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## 2.1.8 Communication

### ***You said:***

Lets have all the information about Welfare Reform in Sefton consistent with clear key messages shared by all partners

### ***What has happened:-***

- Sefton Borough Partnership Operations Board retain this as a strategic priority and monitor the strategic direction of partners on Welfare Reform
- South Sefton Area Partnership retains this as a strategic priority and is monitoring the impact on South Sefton, the area most affected by Welfare Reform
- Welfare Reform Partner Group as sub group of the Operations Board continues to meet and ensure that partners are fully engaged in supporting mitigation of Welfare Reform and communicating to their respective sectors
- Council website page operational and hyperlinked to partner websites with details of offers of support from partner organisations by area
- Specific workshops around welfare reform issues have been held with high levels of attendance (over 90 people at each one). These have covered development of specific actions such as foodbanks and created the overall action plan. In March 2013, a specific training/raising awareness session on illegal money lending to enable partner organisations and Council officers to spot the signs was held.
- Internal Council officer workshop has been held to share information on Sefton progress and to listen to officer experiences.

## 3.0 Update on Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme

- 3.1 ELAS at 25 June 2013 is at week 12 of its operation. Cash payments are coming to an end as arrangements have now been firmed up around the use of Foodbank vouchers and “Paypoint” services.
- 3.2 By 14 June 2013, 2,347 applications had been received from 1,811 applicants. 1,200 have been agreed. The average amount of the award is £43 which is less than the average DWP award of £62. The highest number of applications are from 16 - 45 year olds at 76%. 86.5% of applicants reside in South Sefton with over 36% coming from Linacre ward.
- 3.3 The Welfare Reform Reference Group has agreed that the operation of the ELAS scheme with its current temporary staffing arrangements should continue as planned until 31 December 2013 with a continuous rigorous review of performance and spend. All spending is on target and within the amounts awarded by the Council.
- 3.4 An analysis of Linacre ward ELAS applications has been undertaken at the request of the Welfare Reform Reference Group.

This showed that:

1. 712 applications were submitted with 379 being agreed.
2. Highest number of applications were from single females with dependent children (35.8%)

3. 333 (46.7) applicants had dependent children 16 and under. 220 of these had children under 5 years old
4. Four main categories for asking for help:
  1. Awaiting benefits 7%
  2. Benefit Sanctions- 5%
  3. Lost or stolen money– 7%
  4. Ran out of money – 81%

## **4.0 Emerging Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures identified by the Council and Partners**

4.1 Much of the work on Welfare Reform has been planning for the changes and putting some of the necessary infrastructure in place, especially with the voluntary, community and faith sector. However, the intention has always been to take stock of the actual impact of the changes as they start to hit and reflect on what potential mitigation measures could be put into place if anything. A further workshop for all partners is planned for September 2013 to share experiences and discuss potential mitigation from a resident and volunteer perspective.

4.2 The following sets out a snapshot of some experiences of our partners and the outcomes of an internal session with Council officers involved in the Welfare Reform agenda. There are potential mitigation measures included where possible, but these are very marginal and are “tinkering around the edges” as the Council and partners cannot mitigate the impacts in their entirety.

- a) **Impact** - One Vision Housing are experiencing a drop in income and a lack of demand for three bed roomed houses because of fears over the Bedroom Tax. They are currently considering their strategy for debt collection.

**Potential Mitigation Measures** - Debt collection policies and the real possibility of cumulative debt are being discussed by the Council and Registered Social Landlords

- b) **Impact** - CAB has seen over 500 people in their Bootle office from beginning of April 2013 to 10 May 2013 and on average are unable to see over 75 plus people a week. Request for benefits advice is rising from 40% of the Bureau workload to 51%.

A real issue of concern which comes through partners and Council frontline staff is the level of stress that communities are under. Staff and volunteers in some cases are struggling to provide support for people preventing in crisis as there is not a solution to the issues. Volunteers which are the lifeblood of organisations like CAB are under considerable stress and are reporting that they do not feel that they can make a difference which is what they signed up to do.

**Potential Mitigation Measures** - CAB has been awarded a further £200,000 from the Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme and the Community Support Fund. This is for work in South Sefton to enable them to recruit more volunteers and therefore undertake more assessments and extend the opening hours. The stress and pressure on staff and volunteers is a serious issue and building resilience is a key element of the draft Council Action Plan.

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- c) **Impact** - Concerns have been raised about the level of awareness and understanding of the impact of welfare reform by JobCentre Plus. For example, people are presenting at CAB asking for foodbank vouchers after being sent there by JobCentre Plus. The JobCentre Plus has the facility to provide foodbank vouchers direct and are potentially building up further capacity issues for CAB. Similarly, JobCentre Plus have referred people direct to the Council for ELAS when they offer a short term benefit advances loan for people whose benefits have not been paid.

Organisations have also requested details of where benefit sanctions have been applied to understand what support clients may need. Anecdotal experiences of where benefit sanctions have been applied have been told to organisations like St Leonards and Sefton@Work within the Council. Work is ongoing to see what information about benefit sanctions can be provided and if so to whom.

**Potential Mitigation Measures:** The above issues are being addressed by building up direct relationships with the local Job Centre Managers and this is a key priority action to keep flagging issues up and addressing them. This will become increasingly important as the Department Work and Pensions (DWP) Local Support Services Framework takes effect.

There is another City Region Welfare Reform Conference planned for September 2013 and this will be another opportunity for the Council and partners in Sefton to continue to lobby DWP about having realistic expectations of the capacity of Sefton to respond and the need for DWP to understand the needs of customers and potential access to support services.

- d) **Impact** - Arvato have seen the highest ever levels of customer contact in their One Stop Shops and Contact Centre in the last two months as a result of Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) and Welfare Reform, especially Housing Benefit concerns. In Sefton, there are 3,700 households affected by Housing Benefit reductions with the average reduction per household being £12.65 per week. The total reduction is likely to be £2.4m.

82 families who may be most affected by the Benefit Cap have now been identified by DWP. The impact for some families is expected to be at its highest £150 per week this relates to loss of Housing Benefit. Implementation date is between 15 July- September 2013. There is no indication of who will be affected first as the system works on National Insurance numbers.

**Potential Mitigation Measures** - Work is ongoing in the Council and with partners to undertake some case management with these families if they wish to access support to try and help them to cope with reduced income and build their personal resilience. This will not replace the amount lost, but will try and mitigate some of the impact and potentially increased costs to the Council and partners.

A Discretionary Housing Payments Fund (DHP) of £547,790.00 is available to provide financial assistance for those affected by Housing Benefits reductions. In April and May 2013, the volume of applications has increased by 747% on the same period last year. By end of the first quarter to June 2013, £133,000 has been paid or committed. This equates to 24% of the available resource. No cases of benefits cap are included to end of June 2013 since this only comes into

effect in July 2013. Whilst a few cases have been committed for six months all will be reviewed after three or six months and the commitments arising from in year reviews have not been included in those figures. 686 decisions have been made with 354 being refused and 332 granted. It should be noted that in some cases 68% related to under-occupancy in the social rented sector.

The Discretionary Housing Payments may be used to support families affected by the benefit cap. There is pressure on this fund, however it is being managed to contain the range of demands within the budget available. It is accepted that this is challenging given the pressures of welfare reform. If the number of claims continues at the rate of this first quarter, this may lead to an overspend against the fund. However, it is anticipated that the first quarter will be the highest quarter, with the exception of the benefit cap. Members may wish to use the DHP to support families with the benefits cap.

CAB continue to provide debt advice through the One Stop Shops. Arvato work closely with RSLs and provide a dedicated officer to OVH to assist with priority cases.

A DWP employee will be co-located within the Council in the next few weeks to support the implementation of the benefit cap

The Welfare Reform Reference Group are asking Cabinet to prioritise support for those families most affected wherever possible. As a short interim measure, it is recommended that the Discretionary Housing Payments Fund includes them as a priority group for support and the policy amended to reflect this. Recommendation 5 refers to this.

Confirmation is also being sought from Avarto for resource arrangements beyond 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.

- e) **Impact** - There are reports of an increase in illegal money lending and payday loans which are both issues that the Welfare Reform Reference Group and Partner Group continue to look for ways to address them.

**Potential Mitigation Measures** - On 9 August 2013, there is a community event called Boofest, Council staff will be carrying out questionnaires about illegal money lending and providing information about it. Riverside Housing Association will be holding a raising awareness session outside the Strand- date to be arranged. Awareness raising days in Southport and work with local schools are being planned. Leaflets warning of the dangers of loan sharks are being put in every food parcel from the foodbanks in the south and north of Sefton. Ward Members will be kept fully informed and involved in this work as it develops.

It is acknowledged that providing alternatives to payday loans is still a major gap going forward. Work is going on at a national level which Sefton is looking at closely. Locally, Sefton Credit Union offers emergency loans to existing Council employees only. Work is ongoing around community bank accounts as a way forward. This is very much an area under development.

# Agenda Item 6a

- f) **Impact** – The fact that benefits are accessed online is a continuing issue for Sefton as digital exclusion is a problem in some of Sefton’s communities. CAB estimate that 37% of clients will need support to make this digital transition.

**Potential Mitigation Measure** – The Council recognises that capacity issues have hindered the pushing forward on this agenda. An internal workshop is in the process of being organised to identify what can be done. Sefton CVS are currently refreshing the mapping of all Voluntary, Community and Faith organisations that may be able to assist.

- g) **Impact** - Linked to Welfare Reform is the fact that 32,000 Sefton households have migrated from Council Tax Benefit to local Council Tax Reduction Scheme from April 2013. This has meant a further 17,330 Sefton households paying more Council Tax since April 2013. Council Tax collection is currently running at 0.5% below last year levels.

**Potential Mitigation Measures-** Initially for those residents in arrears and subject to Court proceedings – only cost is £3 that the court charges them. The approach to collection of money is one of encouragement to pay through letters and phone calls.

As above the Council and OVH and other RSLs are discussing cumulative debts and agreeing a common approach. An exceptional Hardship Fund does exist for those customers in financial difficulty with paying their Council Tax.

## 4.3 Initial Priority Actions Identified by Internal Council Workshop

4.3.1 These are initial priority actions proposed by the above which need to be explored in further detail:-

- Increase the availability and provision of information, advice and support.
- Identify further funding streams that exist within the council that are related to Welfare Reform linking in with the existing work already undertaken.
- Supporting families most affected back into work.
- Optimise the opportunities afforded to the council in the Local Plan for our residents and communities
- Training for frontline staff & support.
- To adopt a holistic to those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Utilise the options available through the Complex Families contract to improve residents skills.
- To monitor and mitigate the potential for increasing homelessness due to the impacts of Welfare Reform.
- To develop a sustainable model for community resilience
- More collaborative working with DWP
- Ensure that we have the right information in the right places.

5. Resources to support the impact of Welfare Reform are tabled below.

<b>Funding stream</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose of funding</b>
<b>CTRS hardship fund</b>	£143k	To assist CTR applicants to meet their CT liability

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<b>Welfare assistance</b>	£955k (Plus £250k administration)	To help Sefton residents to pay for items that they may need in a 'crisis'
<b>Troubled families</b>	£660k (Attachment fees)	<p>The Government has provided this funding in order to provide intensive interventions for 'troubled families'. The DCLG are providing an 'up front' attachment fee, with potential more funding to follow, based on results.</p> <p>The amount of funding for 2013/ 2014 is yet to be agreed, but is likely to be around £660k</p> <p>Arvato have worked with Sefton Council and have identified 11 'troubled families' that will be affected by the benefit cap</p>
<b>Children's Act (Section 17 funding)</b>	£60k	<p>Sefton MBC set aside Council money for 'Preventative and Support budgets', to support children and families. The £60k is the budgeted amount that Sefton receives for looking after children and care leavers. In reality, the team spends more than twice that amount as the budgets weren't aligned when the functions of the teams changed. The extra funding comes out of Sefton's budget</p>
<b>Homelessness</b>	£88k	<p>The Council has a Homelessness Prevention Grant of £88k. The vast majority of this funding is used for Southport Housing Centre.</p> <p>The centre helps with a wide range of housing related issues including rent arrears, tenant rights, landlord rights, disrepair and homelessness. They also advise and support landlords, tenants, homeowners and the homeless</p>
<b>Independent Living Fund</b>	Care package funding of circa £200 per week for the disabled person	<p>The ILF is a Non-Departmental Public Body of the Department for Work and Pensions and provides discretionary trust funding to allow disabled people to live independently.</p> <p>The ILF currently provides payments to 19,136 disabled people nationally. Local Authorities provide care packages to 16,128 of these disabled people of in excess of £200 per week. The funding comes out of Sefton's budget.</p> <p>The DWP carried out a consultation on the future of the ILF – the response is attached at Appendix 6.</p>

# Agenda Item 6a

		The Government will close the ILF in 2015 and will devolve funding to Local Government
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## Appendix A

### Welfare Reforms – Outline Timeline for Changes

The following timelines are subject to change, and some in relation to Universal Credit are 'best guess' estimations.

	CHANGE
2013	Abolition of Council Tax Benefit – Introduction of localised Council Tax Reduction Schemes
	Abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses – Introduction of localised Welfare Assistance Schemes
	Replacement of Crisis Loan Alignment payments with a new national scheme of Short Term Advances – Administered by DWP
	Introduction of Universal Credit in pathfinder area (Tameside) reduced to 1 pilot site, from initial 4.
	Introduction of Housing Benefit Size Criteria in Social Rented Sector (Bedroom Tax)
	Introduction of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to replace Disability Living Allowance for new claimants in pathfinder areas – Includes Merseyside
	Introduction of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to replace Disability Living Allowance for new claimants nationally
	Introduction of a Benefit Cap (Limiting the total amount of benefit payable to working age customers)
	Introduction of Universal Credit to replace Job Seekers Allowance
	Commencement of re-assessment of limited Disability Living Allowance awards
2014	National rollout of Disability Living Allowance re-assessments
	Migration of Incapacity Benefit claimants to Employment Support Allowance completed
	Introduction of Universal Credit for in work customers
	New out of work HB claims transition to Universal Credit commences
	Changes to Pension Credit to support customers with children in full time education
2015	New in work HB claims transition to Universal Credit commences
	Proposed closure of Independent Living Fund (ILF) and devolvement of funding to Local Government
	Change in Circumstance and JSA HB claims transition to Universal Credit commences
	All other HB claims transition to Universal Credit commences

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	CHANGE
	Pensioner HB claims move to Housing Support as part of Pension Credit
	Re-assessment of all Disability Living Allowance claims completed
	Transfer of all claimants on legacy benefits to Universal Credit completed

# THE BEDROOM TAX IN MERSEYSIDE



**100 days on**

# Agenda Item 6d

## INTRODUCTION

In April 2013, the coalition Government began cutting the housing benefit of people living in social housing who it believed had one or more unused rooms and gave them a choice: find the extra money to pay the rent, or move to a smaller property.

Known as the 'bedroom tax', the Government believes this measure will cut the amount spent on housing benefit and, in the process, tackle overcrowding and free up social housing. Yet this report shows that in Merseyside, one of the most deprived parts of the country, the bedroom tax is not achieving what the Government hopes.

Based on figures collected by 18 social landlords that own 91% of all housing association homes in Merseyside – over 130,000<sup>1</sup> – it shows the negative impact the new policy has had on local communities.

### The report shows that, across Merseyside:

- More than £22m to build desperately needed new homes could be lost a year.<sup>2</sup>
- Tens of thousands of families will be hit by the bedroom tax despite there being no local need for them to leave their homes.
- Thousands of households are spiralling into debt – many for the first time.
- There are not enough smaller social homes for people to move into.
- Disabled people will bear the brunt.

The evidence demonstrates that the bedroom tax doesn't work, that it will not save taxpayers' money and that it is not making available more social housing.

It is unnecessary and pushing people that already live in one of the poorest areas in England into further debt.

It is an unfair policy that must be repealed now.



<sup>1</sup> The housing associations reported stock holdings of 132,358 homes.  
<sup>2</sup> Sixteen housing associations estimated the financial impact of the bedroom tax on their properties. The National Housing Federation has extrapolated these estimates to cover all 18 associations, based on impact per property.

## THE FACTS

Merseyside has a tradition of building bigger family homes, so the area has a severe lack of smaller properties. This means a large number of households will have their housing benefit cut because of the higher likelihood of having one or more spare rooms.

According to the 18 Merseyside housing associations surveyed for this report, 26,446 of their households will be impacted by the bedroom tax. This number includes 17,279 households living in homes with one spare room and 9,167 in homes with two or more spare bedrooms.

The Government hopes the cut to people's housing benefit will encourage under-occupying families to look for smaller homes. The idea is that they swap homes with those needing more space – and so reduce overcrowding.

Across the North West there are 110,000 households living in social housing with a spare room<sup>3</sup> that will be hit by the bedroom tax and 25,000 social households that are overcrowded.<sup>4</sup> That's a ratio of more than 4 to 1. So while there is a problem with overcrowding, it does not require all 110,000 households to move.

This raises the prospect of tens of thousands of families being forced to try and find a smaller property to avoid the bedroom tax despite there being no reason for them to do so.

### CASE STUDY

Riverside has 2,347 households affected by the bedroom tax in the Liverpool City Region that require a one-bedroom home in order to avoid the cut to their housing benefit.

Riverside's research shows that around 407 of its one-bedroom homes become available in the City Region each year. Therefore, if all 2,347 households wanted to downsize (disregarding the local housing waiting lists) it would take nearly six years to move them all.

Riverside has an additional 1,231 households affected by the bedroom tax that require two-bedroom homes. It would take two years for them to be re-housed.

**26,446**  
households will be  
impacted by the  
bedroom tax



# Agenda Item 6d

## THE FACTS CONTINUED

Research by the Merseyside housing associations shows that families want to stay near their local support networks and relatives. But because of the local shortage of smaller homes, they wouldn't be able to, and would be forced to move across the country, potentially hundreds of miles away. This would unsettle communities, separate families and move people further away from their places of work.

Such a population shift would also put a huge strain on the local authority. There are currently 47,350 people on the waiting list in Merseyside.<sup>5</sup> If 10% of households affected by the bedroom tax requested a smaller home, social housing waiting list figures in Merseyside would go up by 5.6%. One in 13 households would be stranded on the housing waiting list.

Only 155 households out of the 26,446 hit by the bedroom tax in Merseyside managed to relocate to smaller homes in the social housing sector during the first month of its imposition.

The Government hopes that the private rented sector will be able to accommodate families moving out of their social homes. But private landlords are reluctant to rent out property to people claiming benefits.

And because people living in social housing are on low incomes, and private rents are higher than social rents, they won't be able to afford all of the rent. This means the Government will have to help pay some of the housing costs in the form of housing benefit.

Halton Housing Trust estimates that for every social housing resident in Halton moving into a private rented home, an additional £1,500 is added onto the housing benefit bill each year.

### CASE STUDY

Mary, 59, has lived in her three-bedroom home in Merseyside with her son for nearly two decades, but is now deemed to be under-occupying by one bedroom and has to pay the bedroom tax shortfall of £50.60 a month.

With a long-term health condition, Mary is reluctant to move as her neighbours provide her with much needed support and care. She has applied to the council for a Discretionary Housing Payment<sup>6</sup> but there are no guarantees she will get it.

Mary has no choice but to sell the jewellery her late mother bought her as birthday gifts. When the jewellery is gone she will have no way of paying the bedroom tax.

**“Halton Housing Trust estimates that for every social housing resident in Halton moving into a private rented home, an additional £1,500 is added onto the housing benefit bill each year.”**

<sup>5</sup> CLG Housing Statistics Live Tables (2011)

<sup>6</sup> Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) grants were introduced by the Government to provide financial support for people who would struggle to cope with a cut to their housing benefit

## HITTING THE POOREST

Many social housing residents live hand-to-mouth and their ability to manage their low incomes is crucial for them to be able to survive and look after themselves and their families.

The bedroom tax cuts an average of £14 a week from a household with one spare room, or £25 a week for two or more.<sup>7</sup> For these families, not having this money to pay their rent<sup>8</sup> will push them into greater hardship, forcing them to choose between eating and paying their bills and rent.<sup>9</sup>

Between April and May 2013, during the first four weeks of the bedroom tax, 14,197 households across Merseyside got into arrears with their rent. For nearly 6,000 of these households it was the first time they had ever fallen behind on their rent.

Since the bedroom tax came into force, Merseyside housing associations have seen a considerable rise in the number of families using food banks to make ends meet. A number of new food banks have opened across the area, alongside furniture and school uniform recycling schemes.<sup>10</sup>

Helena Partnerships has issued 39 fuel-debt relief loans since April, compared with 39 loans issued for the whole of the last financial year. SLH Group has issued 23 food vouchers since April, compared with 35 in the last financial year.

### CASE STUDY

Living on the poverty line can have consequences on people's mental health. Many social housing tenants are vulnerable and in finely balanced situations and a sudden change in their circumstances can cause huge stress and bouts of depression.

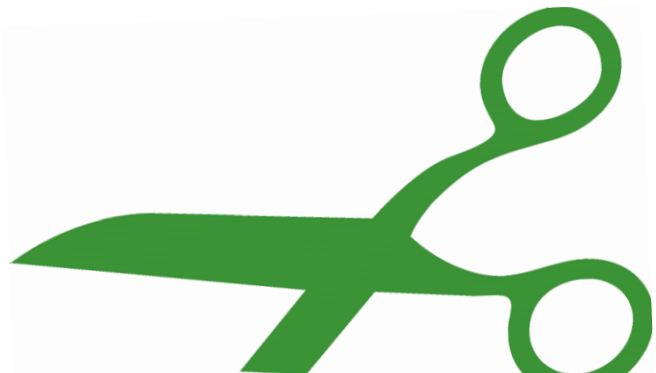
Riverside has encountered an increase in residents calling its staff to express suicidal thoughts and has arranged for the Samaritans to train its customer service staff so they have the skills and confidence to talk to those at risk.

### The bedroom tax cuts:

**£14 / £25**

a week from a household with one spare room

a week for two or more



<sup>7</sup> DWP impact assessment: [www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/social-sector-housing-under-occupation-wr2011-ia.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/social-sector-housing-under-occupation-wr2011-ia.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Based on 16 housing association responses to National Housing Federation survey

<sup>9</sup> Based on 13 housing association responses to National Housing Federation survey

<sup>10</sup> Anecdotal information and data taken from National Housing Federation survey of Merseyside housing associations

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## Disabled households

The nature of the bedroom tax also means that the majority of those hit – two-thirds<sup>11</sup> – are disabled. The National Housing Federation estimates that there are 19,055 disabled people in Merseyside affected by the bedroom tax who are set to lose a total of £13.872m a year.<sup>12</sup>

Many of these residents live in homes that have been adapted to meet their individual needs. This includes things such as widened doorways for wheelchairs, hand rails, additional rooms for vital equipment, or spare rooms that are used by carers.

Unless found in a specialist residential housing development – which are highly sought after with spaces rarely becoming available – adapted homes are scarce. The needs of individuals are often unique, so in the event of one of these homes becoming free, it will more than likely be unsuitable and in need of additional work.

Installing these adaptations is a time consuming and costly process. A wheelchair ramp, for example, can cost as much as £500 while, on average, the cost of a walk-in shower reaches £3,600.<sup>13</sup> The average amount of grant awarded for adapting a home is £6,500<sup>14</sup>.

“... there are 19,055 disabled people in Merseyside affected by the bedroom tax ”



The average cost of adaptations is

**£6,500**

11 Figure estimated by the National Housing Federation using total number of Merseyside households impacted by the bedroom tax and the Government's DWP Impact Assessment data

12 Figure calculated by the National Housing Federation using DWP impact assessment

13 Cost based on Riverside estimates

14 Department for Work and Pensions (2008) Fraud and Error in the Benefit System: April 2007 to March 2008



## THE SUPPORT

### Government

In response to the high number of disabled households that will struggle with a cut to their housing benefit, the Government has said Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) grants will be available to support people in the most extreme situations.

But there simply is not enough money to go around. In Merseyside, £4.2m in DHP is available.<sup>15</sup> If this sum was divided equally between the 26,446 households affected by the bedroom tax they would each receive just £3.07 a week. That means they would still lose a total of £15.03m a year.

DHPs are also for other people who will need financial assistance under the welfare reforms. They may be used, for instance, by councils to help families at risk of homelessness under the benefit cap or for people struggling to adapt under Universal Credit. With the impact of these measures yet to be clear, it is possible that even less money will be available for people hit by the bedroom tax.

These grants are only short-term fixes. In Merseyside, DHPs are available for mostly six months or less. The majority of people affected by the bedroom tax were not in a position to move home after the first six weeks of the measure, so such temporary assistance will not solve their long-term problems.

The Government has provided £25m of additional national DHP funding and asked local authorities to prioritise its distribution to people living in significantly adapted properties. However, the short-term and discretionary nature of the awards is unlikely to give households the certainty and security needed to stay in their homes.

### Housing associations

Housing associations are non-profit community organisations created to provide affordable homes for people around the country. They are in business for the well-being of their residents and are doing all they can to help their residents prepare for and cope with the bedroom tax.

In addition to including information in leaflets and tenant newsletters, over the last year Merseyside housing staff have been going door-to-door and holding drop-in sessions, meeting 16,616 residents to give advice on the welfare reforms.<sup>16</sup> Social landlords are providing more of these services, with 83% of Merseyside housing associations<sup>17</sup> increasing resources for welfare or money advice.

Sixty-seven per cent of Merseyside housing associations funded initiatives for job and skills support – giving advice on employment and training opportunities to nearly 5,000 residents last year.<sup>18</sup> Of these residents, 1,356 have successfully moved into work, back into education, enrolled on training courses or secured apprenticeships.<sup>19</sup>

Social landlords are also helping people to reduce what they spend on utility bills by, for example, helping them look for better deals or advising on ways to save energy or water. They are also helping residents get more income by ensuring they are accessing all the benefits to which they are entitled.

Events where people with a spare room can meet those looking for a larger property are another way housing associations are helping their residents. Landlords are also helping residents to sign up to the HomeSwapper scheme: one Merseyside housing association that operates nationally has seen almost 200 tenants sign up since the bedroom tax began – an increase of almost 40%.

<sup>15</sup> Data from: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> Based on 15 housing association responses to National Housing Federation survey

<sup>17</sup> Based on Merseyside housing association responses to National Housing Federation survey

<sup>18</sup> 4,949 residents were given employment/training advice. Based on responses to National Housing Federation survey

<sup>19</sup> Based on 9 housing association responses to National Housing Federation survey

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## THE SUPPORT CONTINUED

### CASE STUDY

Liverpool Mutual Homes (LMH) is helping vulnerable residents impacted by the bedroom tax with intensive advice and support. The housing association recently supported a 61-year-old woman who had fallen into debt with loan sharks and was facing further debt because of the bedroom tax.

LMH helped her apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment and also managed to negotiate a repayment plan for a long-standing debt with the water authority.

### CASE STUDY

SLH Group (SLH) is offering residents affected by the bedroom tax additional support to help them find a job. Working with external partners, the housing association is offering residents training programmes to provide them with all the necessary skills to get back into work.

If the residents successfully complete the course, SLH will recognise their commitment to covering the bedroom tax shortfall for the duration of the eight-week training course. This money is covered by SLH's social enterprise schemes.

### CASE STUDY

Riverside has appointed a team of dedicated money advisors based at its head office in Liverpool and local offices across the country that provides telephone and face-to-face advice to tenants.

The money advisors help residents maximise their income by helping them claim for Discretionary Housing Payments to meet the shortfall in housing benefit and helping them claim for other benefits they don't realise they're entitled to.

They also help them reduce their outgoings and deal with debt. In 12 months, Riverside has helped 1,670 tenants nationally access around £2m in unclaimed benefits. It has also helped people avoid eviction and remain in their homes by reducing rent arrears of over £133,000.

This approach is also being taken by many other housing associations across Merseyside. Liverpool Housing Trust<sup>20</sup> recruited dedicated welfare reform advisors who supported more than 1,200 residents prior to the bedroom tax coming into force. LHT's welfare benefits, money guidance and debt advice team have also helped residents access more than £500,000 in unclaimed benefits.



**£3.07**

**Discretionary Housing Payment** a week for six months

**“ In 12 months, Riverside has helped 1,670 tenants nationally access around £2 million in unclaimed benefits.”**

## THE CONSEQUENCES

The bedroom tax is causing upheaval and hardship for residents across Merseyside. The majority of residents hit with the benefit cut are finding the extra money to pay, but many are finding it very difficult and are entering into arrears. If the amount of arrears continues to build up, it will have a negative knock-on effect on the wider community.

As non-profit organisations, housing associations put every penny they make back into building desperately needed homes, delivering community services, and improving and maintaining homes for their residents.

Not receiving rent puts these activities at severe risk and threatens housing associations' ability to tackle England's housing crisis. Landlords have no choice but to collect the rent.

Across Merseyside, 16 housing associations estimated that the total financial cost<sup>21</sup> of the bedroom tax could be £17.3m over the 12 months between April 2013 and March 2014. Applied to the area as a whole,<sup>22</sup> housing associations could lose an estimated £22.9m over 12 months. This lost money could pay for the construction of 250 new homes in Merseyside.<sup>23</sup>

Moving households out of larger properties when there is no urgent need to vacate them could also see a rise in the number of empty homes (known as voids). On 31 March 2013, Helena Partnerships, a housing association in St Helens, had 63 three-bedroom voids. This number almost doubled to 123 three-bedroom voids by the end of June 2013.<sup>24</sup>

South Liverpool Homes estimates that each void property costs on average £3,000 in repairs, lost rent and increased staff costs. This money could be used for building new homes.

Some housing associations have been able to re-classify their properties – changing the status of some two-bedroom homes into one-bedroom homes. While this is fortunate for some residents, it is sadly not a long-term viable solution. This is because housing associations, who are already operating in an environment where funding has been drastically cut, re-invest all the income they receive.

The amount housing associations could lose over 12 months

**-£22.9m**



The number of new homes this lost money could pay for

<sup>21</sup> This is a self-reported figure and each association may view the financial impact differently and have therefore used different methodologies to calculate this

<sup>22</sup> The financial impact per home held by the 16 associations responding to this question was calculated. This figure was then multiplied against the total stock holdings of all 18 associations involved in the research to produce a total impact of £22.9m

<sup>23</sup> National Housing Federation calculations using impact modelling

<sup>24</sup> Data as of 21 June 2013

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## THE HUMAN COST

### CASE STUDY

Teresa, 61, has lived in her home for over 20 years in Speke, Liverpool. Her granddaughter stays over for several nights a week as her daughter, a single mother, works night shifts. Without this vital support from Teresa, her daughter would be unable to carry on working and would be forced to claim benefits.

Under the bedroom tax, Teresa is deemed to need just one bedroom. She is not in work and is struggling to meet the increase of nearly £100 a month in her rent due to the bedroom tax.

Teresa will qualify for pension credit in Jan 2015 and will be able to avoid the tax. Until then she has to somehow find the extra money, or downsize – but this would mean her granddaughter would have nowhere to sleep and her daughter would have to give up work.

### CASE STUDY

Vanessa, 42, lives in a three-bedroom home in Garston, Liverpool with her 15-year-old daughter, Sommer. Born with hypoplastic left heart syndrome – a condition where only half the heart functions – Sommer has had open-heart surgery five times.

Because of Sommer's needs, Vanessa is unable to work. They have lived at their home for over 13 years and don't want to move because Sommer has network of close friends that live in the community.

SLH Group supported Vanessa to successfully apply for Discretionary Housing Payments, but this financial assistance is only available for a year. Next year the family may have no other option but to move home.

### CASE STUDY

Paul and Diane, both in their 50s, had worked all of their lives and owned their own house. But one day Paul collapsed and ended up in hospital, fighting for his life. He survived, but is now severely disabled – unable to walk unaided and struggling with liver disease, muscle wastage and other health problems.

Paul couldn't to return to work and Diane was made redundant. They were forced to sell their home. Today they live in a three-bedroom Cobalt Housing<sup>25</sup> home where Diane is his full-time carer. Paul sleeps in one bedroom; the second is filled with medical equipment, while the third is used by Diane to get some respite and a night's sleep.

The Government says the two rooms are 'spare' and now Paul and Diane have to find another £23 a week to pay their rent. They became overdrawn and were penalised with bank charges.

They have been awarded Discretionary Housing Payments – but only for 13 weeks from 1 April. It is uncertain if they will be able to apply for another grant when the current payments run out.



## AN UNFAIR POLICY

The Government's frequent defence of the bedroom tax is that 'it is about fairness' and that the housing benefit bill is out of control and must be cut.

But nothing is fair in forcing out an older parent from a home in which they have lived for decades because their child has flown the nest and left a spare room. Nor is it fair to cut the benefits of a disabled person who cannot find a smaller home with the same crucially needed adaptations.

The housing benefit bill is not high because people are living in larger properties. It is high because there is a severe lack of affordable housing. This is pushing up rents to a level that is so unaffordable to ordinary people in work that they need Government assistance to pay their rent.

Despite this, the choice given to residents by the Government – move or pay – is false. The fact is there aren't enough smaller social homes in Merseyside for people to avoid the bedroom tax even if they wanted to move. If they rented in the private sector, where costs are higher, this would more than likely increase the benefit bill – which raises questions on why they have been asked to move in the first place.

The reality is that many people will stay in their homes and will be forced to live on less money in a country where living costs and utility bills are rising.

Housing associations are doing all they can to lessen the blow. They are visiting residents, trying to get them back into work, helping them look for ways to downsize or finding better ways with which they can manage their money.

Sadly, many residents will struggle and, given the choice between feeding their families and heating their homes, could fall behind on their rent and risk the roof over their heads. The increase in arrears will damage the ability of housing associations to provide homes and services for the rest of the community – and to steer Britain out of its housing crisis.

Housing associations opposed the bedroom tax from the beginning and this report shows that their concerns were justified.

They warned that the policy will not work – and it is not working. They warned that it will not make the savings the Government hopes – and it is not. They warned that families across the country will face financial hardship and struggle to make ends meet – and they are.

The bedroom tax is hurting the most vulnerable people in Merseyside. It is time to face the facts. It is time to repeal this unfair policy now.

**“There aren't enough smaller social homes in Merseyside for people to avoid the bedroom tax even if they wanted to move.”**

# Agenda Item 6d

National Housing Federation

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**NATIONAL  
HOUSING  
FEDERATION**

Find us or  
follow us on:



The National Housing Federation is the voice of affordable housing in England. We believe that everyone should have the home they need at a price they can afford. That's why we represent the work of housing associations and campaign for better housing.

Our members provide two and a half million homes for more than five million people. And each year they invest in a diverse range of neighbourhood projects that help create strong, vibrant communities.

The following Merseyside housing associations contributed evidence to this:

Crosby Housing Association  
Halton Housing Trust  
Helena Partnerships  
Knowsley Housing Trust (First Ark Group)  
Liverpool Mutual Homes  
One Vision Housing  
Plus Dane Group  
Regenda Group  
Riverside  
SLH Group  
Steve Biko Housing Association  
Symphony Housing Group –  
BBCHA, Cobalt Housing, Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT)  
Venture Housing Association  
Wirral Methodist Housing Association  
Wirral Partnership Homes  
Your Housing Group

# Agenda Item 9

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**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee    **Date of Meeting:** 10 September 2013  
(Performance and Corporate Services)

**Subject:** Cabinet Member Reports

**Report of:** Director of Corporate Services    **Wards Affected:** All

**Is this a Key Decision?** No                      **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** No

**Exempt/Confidential**                      No

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## **Purpose/Summary**

To submit Cabinet Member Reports relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **Recommendation**

That the Cabinet Member Reports relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

## **How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?**

	<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community		√	
2	Jobs and Prosperity		√	
3	Environmental Sustainability		√	
4	Health and Well-Being		√	
5	Children and Young People		√	
6	Creating Safe Communities	√		
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	√		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy	√		

## **Reasons for the Recommendation:**

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

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?** N / A

**Implications:** N/A

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The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<b>Legal</b>	
<b>Human Resources</b>	
<b>Equality</b>	
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Impact on Service Delivery:** N/A

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?** N/A

The Head of Corporate Finance and ICT has no comments on this report because the contents of the report have no financial implications for the Council. (FD 2516/13)

The Head of Legal Services has been consulted and has no comments on this report. There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report. (LD 1821/13)

**Are there any other options available for consideration?** N/A

**Implementation Date for the Decision**

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

**Contact Officer:** Paul Fraser

**Tel:** 0151 934 2068

**Email:** [paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## 1. Introduction/Background

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

1.2 Attached to this report, for information, are the most recent Cabinet Member reports for the following portfolios:-

- Corporate Services and Performance; and



# Agenda Item 9

- Communities and Environment (relating to the Neighbourhood Coordination, Youth Offending Team and Domestic Violence elements of the portfolio).

## **2. Recent Developments**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 30 August 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board proposed that, in future, Cabinet Member reports will be published on the Modern. Gov library and an e-mail alert will be sent to Scrutiny Chairs. In the event that Chairs identify any issues they would like to raise for discussion at their next Overview and Scrutiny Committee, they should alert the appropriate officer and this will enable appropriate officer attendance at that meeting.
- 2.2 The attached Cabinet Member update report has been e-mailed to the Chair of the Committee. The Chair has indicated that he would wish the report to be included on the agenda in order for Members of the Committee to receive updates.
- 2.3 Accordingly, the appropriate officer attendance has been requested at the meeting.

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<b>CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT</b>		
<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee (Performance &amp; Corporate Services)</b>		
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Period of Report</b>
Cllr Hardy	Communities & Environment	July - September 2013

## **CORPORATE COMMISSIONING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-ORDINATION**

### **Strategic Partnerships**

- **Operations Board**

The Operations Board has maintained its focus upon the key priorities:

- Considered impacts of Welfare Reform that have been implemented since April 2013. Under consideration was information on who was accessing foodbanks; impact on agencies such as CAB who are seeing increased demand and reducing volunteer hours due to pressure; increase in void properties and rent arrears for Housing Associations. Pieces of work arising from this session are to look at the possibility of identifying a Sefton Living Wage and how this could work; Council and Housing Associations working together around decision making
- The group shared successes around gun and gang crime in terms of the progress of MARGG and community reassurance activities
- Overarching Council priorities were shared with partners for comment and consideration about areas of shared priority
- The main focus for the Ops Board at its meeting in June was to consider community resilience and what this means for partners in Sefton. Further work to be undertaken on how to identify vulnerabilities within communities and what creates them in order to determine where resilience may need to be developed most
- Ops Board have engaged in the Health and Wellbeing Board peer challenge review and will undertake some joint action planning in August

- **Area Partnerships**

Area Partnership priorities have been identified as follows:-

Sefton East	Health focusing upon access to services and issues of obesity. The 'grow your own' priority is progressing in conjunction with the CCG.
	Anti social behaviour focusing on youth behaviour and youth disorder. An area wide mapping exercise of youth provision has been discussed with the intention of providing better links between providers.
Formby	Safety primarily low level ASB and looking at what is available for young people to engage them. Looking at how the youth bus can be used in the area to benefit the young people.
	Health and well being with a focus on the ageing population and issues around social isolation and support via VCF organisations in the area. It is possible that work ongoing in Church ward in respect of Older People may be used as a framework in Formby.
Crosby	Regeneration of local businesses. The Partnership has been updated on the position with regard to local businesses. A town team has been brought together with a view to overseeing a masterplan for Crosby village.
	Food and fuel poverty. Updates on the Crosby foodbank, looking at how the partnership can help in its development.

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Southport	Private Sector housing stock Jobs and Prosperity - looking at the retail and tourism industry as one. Health and Well being – reducing alcohol related admissions; reducing childhood obesity; and staying well in winter.
South Sefton	Welfare reform - the Partnership will be looking at the roll out of foodbanks in the area, identifying issues or problems that need to be considered. Gang and gun crime (including community safety ASB) – working to develop local approaches to tackling the issues, looking at prevention and exit.

- **Safer Communities Partnership**

- Focus of the last meeting was on Sefton’s provision with regards support for victims, looking at the approaches in relation to victims of ASB, Hate Crime and Domestic Violence. Issue of uncertainty of future resources for this type of work was raised as a key issue for the partnership and one to be raised with the PCC, as arrangements for commissioning (MoJ funding) local victims services on Merseyside will transfer to the Police and Crime Commissioner from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014.
- MARGG has continued to meet and has demonstrated positive partnership working in responding to individuals involved or on the periphery of gun and gang crime
- Work is in progress on SIA, Partnership Plan and Domestic Violence strategy
- Continue to meet with colleagues across Merseyside and via Merseyside Community Safety Partnership

## Neighbourhood Co-ordination

### Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU)

The table below highlights performance figures of the Sefton Anti-Social Behaviour Unit as at June 2013.

<b>ASB Incidents reported on HUB</b> (Police, RSL’s, Elected Members etc)	<b>29</b>
<b>ASB Incidents reported through Sefton Contact Centre</b> (Victim self referrals)	<b>42</b>
<b>Anti-Social Behaviour Orders</b> (Not obtained now due to cost implications)	<b>0</b>
<b>Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Anti-Social Behaviour Injunctions</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contracts</b> (A.B.C.’s)	<b>9</b>
<b>Parental Control Agreements</b> (P.C.A.’s)	<b>4</b>
<b>Vulnerable Victims</b> (Numbers per Vulnerable Victim, not case loads)	<b>24</b>

Neighbourhood Co-ordination activities have continued in the areas with recent involvement including:

- An event to celebrate Netherton’s Jubilee took place on 25 July at Marian Square, Marian Gardens and the Feelgood Factory. Activities included face painting, horse

riding, go-karts and the event was well attended. The event provided an opportunity to consult with residents about their priorities for the area from the L30's million.

- Community reassurance event undertaken with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, following a double fatality house fire in Southport. A neighbourhood risk assessment carried out in the area identified fly-tipping, obstructed rear alley gates and overloaded skips that have been actioned and formed part of a joint MFRS and Sefton Council action plan for the area. MFRS also carried out home fire safety checks.
- In Southport, four separate Street Games programmes arranged through Southport Operational Group and financed through Area Committee ward budgets. Sessions will run throughout the summer holidays at various parks across Southport.

## **Town Centres**

Southport BID have appointed a Manager from the Private sector and a Council officer to support and work towards the "YES" vote.

£300k has been identified from the Capital Priorities Fund to be used for community resilience within Town and Village centres. Mapping of all shopping areas in the borough has taken place and now proposals are being drafted to support the areas in most need.

Already agreed are:-

- Support to Marian Square in Netherton with Lighting and security updates (£30k)
- Wi-Fi in Formby Town Centre (£15k)

Bootle held its second Market on 26 July. It was well attended and the traders commented that it was busier than the previous Christmas Market. Plans are now being made for an Autumn Market in October and another Christmas Market in December.

Crosby Town Team has started to access their Portas and HIF allocation. Contact has been made with Waterloo and Maghull Town Teams to discuss future plans.

- Waterloo TT is hoping to develop plans to encourage "Another Place" visitors into the shopping and leisure areas of the Town
- Maghull TT are opening a start up incubation space in a vacant shop in Central Square and are looking at developing an idea for a community Radio/TV station to promote businesses
- Crosby TT are working towards a master plan for the Village Centre and are holding events for businesses to share ideas and expertise.

## **Halloween and Bonfire Night Planning**

Further meetings have taken place and will continue up to and including the bonfire period. MFRS have been given the target to reduce incidents by a further 10% this year. The following have been secured:- skips in hotspot areas using last year's data; a minimum of 16 skips provided during the four weeks before Bonfire Night; Street Cage Soccer arranged and funded for Marian Square, Litherland and Ford; Probation Service is providing a vehicle and team for a six week period to assist with removal of detritus - this will be in addition to the core cleansing service providing a team for 3 weeks.

## **Community Resilience**

A series of key projects have been identified under the umbrella of community resilience to consider how we work with specific communities to develop resilience for example through promotion of what activities may be available locally, encouraging independence in travel and social engagement, and addressing potential issues of social isolation.

# Agenda Item 9

Third sector partners are keen to work with the Council around delivering against key needs and priorities and work is to be undertaken to identify the best way to do this.

## VCF Thematic Option

A draft framework has been developed to guide how the Council does business with the VCF sector. A piece of work is currently being undertaken to pull together all relevant information on what is being delivered by the VCF sector to better understand the full range of the Council's engagement with the sector and to begin to move forward in working with the sector to deliver against Sefton's priorities. The VCF sector are keen to work with the Council around some of the areas where services are changing and work is currently being done to identify the best ways of taking this forward and achieving it.

## Domestic Violence (Vulnerable Victims Advocacy team)

### MARAC Referrals

	Number of Referrals	Number of Repeats
April 2013	34	5
May 2013	67	11
June 2013	44	9

The current MARAC repeat rate is 31%

### VVA Team Open Cases

As of **30.6.2013**, VVAT currently have 51 open cases.

### VVA Team Tracking Cases

As of **30.6.2013**, VVAT currently have 76 tracking cases.

### Sanctuary security assessments

Between April and June 2013, 6 Sanctuaries have been installed on behalf of the MARAC.

## Equalities

Further to recent training, work is now underway to review the Equality Objectives and refresh them to reflect current circumstance. These will be consulted upon with both the Corporate Equalities Group and Sefton Equalities Partnership to ensure that they are fit for purpose. A simple equalities guide is to be produced to support departments to embed equalities within service plans and delivery and to ensure equality assessments are carried out and documented as required.

The Hate Crime MARAC continues to meet on a regular basis to discuss and agree actions relating to incidents of hate crime. Hate Crime awareness training developed by officers from the agencies attending the MARAC has commenced with two sessions delivered so far and more being booked for the autumn. There is a lot of demand from officers in the Council and other partner agencies for the training and it has been well received so far.

Merseyside Police 'Summer of Action' on hate crime reporting has commenced and this is being promoted with partners. The MARAC Coordinator is working with Sefton VCF groups regarding hate crime reporting, attending meetings of groups who are at risk of hate crime and advising about reporting and the role of MARAC.

## Welfare reform – food banks and illegal money lending

### Welfare Reform

The Council has created an internal officer group to look at how we mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform. The officer group first met in June and has held a subsequent meeting in August. It was agreed that a sub-group of this group meet regularly to be a driver of the agreed action plan with the wider group meeting quarterly.

The benefit cap was introduced in Sefton in July. A group of officers and partners from Citizens Advice Sefton and Avarto have been examining ways of how to support those residents affected and how to support them going forward in terms of money management, debt and finding employment. It is expected that between 60 & 70 households will be affected by the benefit cap in Sefton, however, this will fluctuate with on-flow and off-flow claims.

The Council has recently agreed to support Citizens Advice Sefton further to improve capacity for Gateway assessments and to train more volunteers. Citizens Advice Sefton have recently advertised for these positions and are hopeful of recruiting speedily.

A further Welfare Reform Partner workshop will be held on Friday 27 September at Linacre Methodist Mission with a focus upon Digital Exclusion.

### Foodbanks

- South Sefton Foodbank opened on Friday 10 May 2013 407 people have been fed. (273 Adults and 134 Children)
- Southport Foodbank opened on Friday 10 May 2013 180 people have been fed. (102 Adults and 78 Children)
- Crosby Area Foodbank opened on the 21 June 2013 18 people have been fed. (14 Adults and 4 Children)

Sefton East Foodbank is planned to open in September.

The National Tesco Foodbank collection took place on 5 and 6 July. All three Foodbanks collected in their local stores and nearly five and a half tonnes of food was collected. Tesco will add 30% to the total.

### Illegal Money Lending

Meetings held with the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) have identified both victims and perpetrators of illegal money lending. Based on this information, co-ordinated awareness raising within the Birkdale area is planned with targeted leafleting and delivery of beer-mats advertising the IMLT's services to local public houses. A day of 'awareness raising' is to take place in August at Farnborough Road Children's Centre. A further Community Day is also planned for the October half term period.

### Fulfilling lives: Ageing Better – Big Lottery Fund Bid

The Council submitted its Expression of Interest (EOI) by the deadline of 17 May. The Big Lottery have assessed all EOI's received and the Council was informed on 23 July that our Bid had been unsuccessful. Whereas our EOI had been assessed as being suitable for shortlisting, the Panel, who then considered all shortlisted EOI's, preferred others and as a result our Bid will not progress. The final 32 areas progressing to the next stage included some which had strong partnerships in place already and others where BLF wanted to encourage new learning.

# Agenda Item 9

## YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM UPDATE

Inspection Improvement Plan:

### Governance

- July – Management Board agree new terms of reference to reflect inspection improvement priorities. Sub-groups established to support strategic and operational improvements (Health, Education Training & Employment and Safeguarding). Merseyside Probation state their commitment to support Sefton YOT Board following previous non-attendance,

### Practice Assurance

- July – Youth Justice Board assurance review of practice re case audit April/May whilst identifying some improvements in key processes, management oversight and the quality of assessments re vulnerability have not improved. A further case audit in September/October should identify improvements in areas identified above.

### Learning & Development

- August – review of training plan that has supported inspection improvement over the last 6 months. Impact of training to be measured against September/October case audit findings

### Re-structure

- Key recommendation was for greater clarity re ‘case worker’ role. This underpins inspection improvement. Cabinet reports in August outlines re-structure principles and rationale. Re-structure resource neutral.

### Partnership Funding

- Partnership staffing and funding contributions confirmed for 2013/14, largely sustain 2012/13 levels.



<b>CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT</b>		
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Period of Report</b>
Cllr Paul Tweed	Corporate Services and Performance	June - September 2013

## **PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT**

### **A. Operational Issues**

1. Weekly meetings with the trade unions continue on a wide variety of employee related matters including restructuring exercises to achieve budget reductions.
2. A full case load of disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work issues are being progressed and this includes those that are related to school employees.
3. Preparation for the next TUPE transfer of 75 Capita staff is in progress and will take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013.

### **B. Pay & Grading Review/Equal Pay**

4. Since the last report a further 22 Job Evaluation appeals have been resolved leaving a balance of approximately 150 to complete. However, progress on reducing these numbers has been limited by the need respond to 7 large restructuring exercises where many roles have to be re-evaluated.
5. The number of outstanding Equal pay claims lodged at the Tribunal currently stands at 244. A further 14 claims were lodged during the months of June –July 2013. Alongside the above work the JE Team are conducting a review of all Hay graded posts.

### **C. Establishment Control, Pensions, Payroll & HR Transactional Services**

6. Regular Client meetings are continuing with the objective of improving processes and data quality. The Council and arvato are currently mapping all the recruitment processes to ensure consistency.
7. The Pensions Officer is continuing to work closely with the Transformation team and Personnel Officers to provide the necessary redundancy/pension information.
8. The Council have now received notification of the 1% Local Government pay award from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 and new rates and back pay will be paid in September 2013.

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9. The Establishment Control Panel is now embedded and occurs every 2 weeks, to consider requests to release vacancies and approve any changes to the Establishment held in ResourceLink. All changes to the Establishment are being mapped by the Council and arvato to ensure correct procedures are followed.
10. The Council has implemented Real Time Information (RTI) in June 2013, to comply with HM Revenue & Customs.
11. Capita employees will TUPE transfer to the Council on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013 and work is currently being undertaken to ensure a smooth transition, so the employees who transfer in are paid correctly for October 2013 payday.

## **D. Health Unit**

12. The Health Unit has now relocated to Magdalen House on the second floor. The new location did cause a little disruption over gaining access to the Health Unit, however this has now been resolved with a meet and greet situation.
13. HR colleagues have also benefited from the relocation of the unit, which is now more assessable to them for information.
14. Administration support for the unit has been provided by Personnel Department with three members of staff now trained in the Health Unit's systems. This will ensure there is little disruption to the service if staffing issues arise.
15. Work continues to be carried out by Healthwork Ltd for the Council, with arrangements working well for both parties.

## **E. People Development Service**

16. A range of learning and development continues to be delivered across the Council, Partners and the wider social care sector. From 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013 a total of 2,071 places have been provided.
17. Of this figure, 883 places went to Adult and Children's Social Care Providers (including VCF, Partner Organisations and Foster Carers). 43 places went to Sefton Schools staff, predominately accessing Health & Safety and Autism Training. 1,145 places were taken up by Council staff on a variety of events.
18. The Team continued to support social care staff following the implementation of the ICS and IAS Systems with 25 events were delivered these included Team and Business Area specific training and one-to-one sessions.
19. A range of Leadership and Management events have been delivered including Building Personal Resilience and Exploring and Developing Collaborative Leadership, these are new courses for 2013/14 identified

# Agenda Item 9

following the Training Needs Analysis that was undertaken in November 2012.

20. A range of manager briefing sessions have been held in relation to Managing Sickness Absence, Disciplinary and Grievance Investigations and Application and Appointment Processes. A total of 74 Council managers accessed these workshops.
21. Welfare Reform Training continues to be offered to support the workforce in Sefton. Bespoke sessions continue to be offered to suit the needs of individual groups of staff and services. The delivery of a Hate Crime Awareness workshop was supported in May and further sessions are planned throughout 2013/14.
22. Think Family Safeguarding continued, with 81 delegates attending sessions in July. The training is now delivered by Splinter Training and remains a high quality interactive theatre session delivered at a lower cost. Bespoke safeguarding children training was delivered to 60 Aiming High staff who are supporting children/ teenagers with disabilities as part of the Aiming High holiday programme.

## Workforce Planning and Organisational Development

23. Work continues with the support of the redesign in both Children's and Adult's Social Care. Workshops have been facilitated for Children's Social Care Managers and Lead Practitioners to enhance their skills in identified areas. Adults Social Care has been supported with the development of its new structure, Job Descriptions and interview schedule. Interview and presentation skills support sessions are being offered to staff. The Early Intervention and Prevention service is also being supported with a programme of Children and Families (CAF) training and with a number of parenting skills programmes including the L4 "Working with Parents" as part of the Troubled Families agenda.
24. Signs of Safety training is being delivered across the children's workforce, this will enable a consistent approach to evidence based-assessment across partner agencies in Sefton.
25. The induction process for public health staff continues to be supported
26. To support Response to Redundancy, a Planning for the Future session was attended by 12 Council staff who may be potentially at risk of redundancy or are considering retirement. Application and Interview Skills sessions have been delivered to 13 Council staff who are at risk of redundancy.
27. **Apprenticeships:** Recruitment for an Advanced Administration Apprentice has taken place within the Learning and Development Team. Along with Leisure (aquatics team); they have recruited an Administration Apprentice.

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Thomas Gray primary school have recruited 5 Apprentices, start up support was given once they have selected the young people.

Recruitment is ongoing with Finance, Chief Executives office and Holy Family High School.

A review of the current pay grades for Apprenticeships is underway; a strategy paper is currently being drafted.

All eligible employees have been signed up to L3 and L4 Apprenticeships / NVQ before the 1<sup>st</sup> August deadline. Anyone who is aged 24+ and would like to complete Level 3 and above qualifications will be offered a student loan to pay for their qualification – no funding is available.

28. **Preparation to Work programme:** This programme supports young people Leaving Care and Looked after Children in gaining employability experience, skills and knowledge.
- Two young people have progressed to paid employment
  - Two young people have started stage 1 of the programme
  - Another place has been put out to the Corporate Parenting Team
29. Funding streams have changed and additional programmes have been created via the Skills Funding Agency therefore a review of the Preparation to Work Programme will be undertaken by the monitoring group.
30. **Digital Inclusion:** Two Information sessions were held on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July for Sefton employees and the wider community. The sessions were to make individuals aware of the benefit changes and IT support that they can access through Unionlearn and Sefton's Adult Learning.

## CORPORATE FINANCE & ICT

### Financial Management

31. The Division is working with staff from PricewaterhouseCoopers in order for the audit of the Accounts to be completed by early September. The Statement of Accounts will subsequently be considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on 25th September.
32. The project to upgrade / replace the Council's Financial Management System is starting to gather pace, with the first formal meeting of staff from all directorates and Arvato meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> August. This process will identify the timetable, likely staffing resource requirements (both internal and external) and the options available for any replacement system. The anticipated completion date of the project is October 2014.
33. Finance staff are continuing to work closely with service departments in the monitoring the achievement of agreed saving targets for 2013/14, as

# Agenda Item 9

well as providing regular reports to the Strategic Leadership Team on the overall budget monitoring position of the Council.

34. Finance staff continue to support the ASC Department with 'mop up' / reconciliation of queries arising as a result of the implementation of Phase 1 the new Integrated Adult System (IAS) / liquid logic. Phase 2 of this project had been delayed while clarification was sought as to the key priorities / outcomes to be delivered from this phase in the project. This has now been quantified and implementation will now commence, and includes direct billing of clients and payments to contractors.
35. Phase 2 of the implementation of the Integrated Children's System (ICS) / liquid logic has also been agreed. This phase does include the financial payments module however this will not be implemented until later on in the process of Phase 2. Finance staff are currently mapping out the financial processes involved in supporting Looked After Children in anticipation of the roll out of this module.

## **Client Unit (Management of arvato contract)**

### **Customer Contact:**

36. Front line staff continues with increases in demand. The Contact Centre received increased calls on some services – Anti Social Behaviour, Benefits, Parking, Revenues and Social Care. The increase is mainly due to the welfare reform changes, with a high volume of customers querying CTRS bills and applying for discretionary housing payments and exceptional council tax hardship payment.
37. Whilst volumes of enquiries increased, waiting times did not. This was due to customer service advice resource being moved to support a number of customers at reception to provide a filtering service and customers with detailed enquiries being seen at the booth.

### **Benefit Service:**

38. The Benefit Service is part of a working group for the implementation of the Benefit Cap. Since 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013, 49 claimants have had their benefit reduced as a result of the cap. A range of support is available to affected households and all claimants are invited to claim discretionary housing payment, Only 2 claimants have made an application for discretionary housing payment. The roll out of the benefit Cap is expected to affect 80 households and the implementation for roll out is due to be complete by the end of September. New claimants will continue to be introduced to the cap by the DWP.
39. New claims for Housing benefit / local Council Tax Reduction Scheme are processed in an average of 21 days against a target of 25 days.

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40. The volume of changes now equates to approximately 2- weeks work (i.e. 4000 items). The oldest date for outstanding changes is the 20<sup>th</sup> June. Priority claims are escalated for urgent assessment.
41. Clearance of the residue automated claimant changes from the DWP and HMRC continues. In total 110,607 processes were received and over 103,000 dealt with. The earliest date for this work is now at November 2012 with a plan to clear the processes the beginning of October 2013.

## **Revenues Service**

42. National league tables published on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013 show that Sefton is now the highest performing authority on Merseyside for council tax collection.
43. The table also show that Sefton is now in the top quartile for collection performance for both council tax and business rates when compared to other Metropolitan authorities. Sefton are joint 6<sup>th</sup> best performing for council tax and 7<sup>th</sup> for business rates.
44. Enforcement action has commenced for CTRS claimants. In many cases attempts will be made to claim payment through attachment to benefits or earnings. However, where this is not possible cases will be passed to debt collection agents rather than bailiffs in the first instance.

## **ICT:**

45. Sefton MBC, along with other local authorities, was required to submit a new Government Connect / Public Sector Network compliance statement, as part of the Cabinet Office's new Zero Tolerance programme. Sefton was given three months to achieve compliance or risk disconnection, but arvato and Sefton staff were able to complete the exercise and achieve compliance within two months.
46. The second phase of the Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH) is underway, whereby Merseyside Police and NHS officers will be co-located with council officers in St Peter's House. arvato is undertaking the necessary ICT works, in line with the security stipulations outlined by Merseyside Police.
47. Early implementation work has now commenced on the secondary data centre, following final Cabinet Member approval. Implementation is scheduled to complete by the end of December 2013..
48. The ICT elements of the in-sourcing of Technical Services from Capita Symonds are in the final stages, and arrangements are in place for a smooth transition on 1 October 2013.
49. The final phase of the Microsoft migration continues, with the transfer of data from Novell servers to Microsoft servers due to commence in Autumn 2013.

## **Risk and Audit Service**

### **Internal Audit**

51. The Annual Report for Internal Audit for 2012/13 was presented to the Audit & Governance Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013. This included a self assessment of Internal Audit which measures the Internal Audit Teams compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government (2006), it was identified that in the majority of cases the Team are fully compliant, where there is partial or non-compliance these issues have been outlined in an Action Plan which will aid improvement in performance in 2013/14.
52. The Annual Report further outlined the significant number of days allocated to Advice, Consultancy and Investigation work with – actual days 437 against planned 200 however this is a decrease from 2011/12. The number of days spent in these areas is a positive reinforcement of the Council's willingness to contact the Team for advice, support in projects and requests for ad hoc pieces of assurance work which aid Management in the running of their services.

### **Risk & Resilience**

#### ***Insurance***

53. Following the independent review of Insurance and Action Plan has been prepared outlining the improvement process for the team for 2013/14, this includes a review of the Insurance Claims Management system, working methodologies and practices and changes to the Council's internal Insurance arrangements. As changes are developed they will be continued to be reported in this report to Cabinet Member.
54. Tenders have been received for the Councils Insurance and Claims Handling arrangements and the Council's brokers are in the process of undertaking the evaluation, the outcome will be reported in due course. The contract is due to commence 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013 for 3 years plus an option to extend for a further 2.

#### ***Health & Safety***

55. The Health & Safety Audit Plan for 2013/14 was approved at the Audit & Governance Committee at its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013. A number of audits have commenced and progress against the plan will be reported to the Health & Safety Committee and the Annual Governance Committee twice per year.
56. The Health & Safety Team are working with Departments to support them in establishing Health & Safety Committees / Forums within each Department and will continue support by attending meetings of these groups.

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## ***Emergency Planning***

57. There has been a review of the Merseyside Resilience Forum's business which has challenged structure, how risks are identified, the capability of agencies and how prepared agencies are to respond to scalable incidents. Sefton have played an integral part in leading this change which will impact on interoperability, the quality and usability of multi agency plans and the quality training across services.
58. Further the risk and resilience team have engaged in the following areas:-
  - creation of a guidance document for Emergency Duty Co-ordinators (EDC's) to support them in the early stages of an incident
  - set up training for EDC's to develop knowledge in responding to incidents

## **CORPORATE LEGAL DEPARTMENT**

### **Legal Services**

59. A development agreement and associated legal agreement with Keepmoat for residential development at the former St Winifred's School, Bootle has recently been concluded.
60. The General Vesting Declaration for the Thornton to Switch Island Link Road Compulsory Purchase Order, recently confirmed by the Secretary of State for Transport is expected to be concluded in late **August** to enable possession of the land to be taken for the road scheme.
61. A dual use agreement with the Litherland High School for joint use of sports park at the school is expected to be completed shortly.
62. The legal dept successfully prosecuted a benefit fraud prosecution case. The Defendant was sentenced to **2 months** custody, suspended for 12 months with a requirement for 180 hours unpaid work to be carried out in the community. The full costs of £518.49 were awarded.
63. The Legal Department have now taken over the prosecution of Education Welfare matters. We have prosecuted 8 education welfare matters, 3 parents received conditional discharges and 5 parents received fines. The value of the fines; 3x £400, 1x £100 and 1x £70. The Council was awarded £120 costs in respect of each of the cases where a fine was imposed.
64. Benefit fraud prosecution. The defendant failed to declare a property in Spain and that his wife was living with him and in employment. He was sentenced to 16 week curfew order 20.00 – 07.00 daily. He does have a pre-arranged holiday 30.08.13 – 17.09.13 & the tag will be lifted during this time. The costs of £466.40 & the £40 victim surcharge was imposed. Payment of the £506.40 was ordered to be paid in full within 28 days.



65. The Children and Social Care Team are continuing their preparations for the introduction of a new protocol for dealing with care proceedings cases called the Public Law Outline in October 2013. Staff have received training and consultations have taken place with the Cheshire and Merseyside Family Justice Board and the Designated Family Judge for Cheshire and Merseyside. Staff also attended a lunch time meeting with the President of the Family Division His Honour Mr Justice Munby to discuss the implications for local authorities. The Legal team have also commenced a training programme for social workers.

## **GOVERNANCE AND CIVIC SERVICES**

### **Democratic Services**

66. In addition to the provision of administrative support for meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Area Partnerships, the Section has organised and clerked school admission appeal hearings involving 46 applications for 7 High Schools and 102 applications for 34 Primary schools during the period from 14 May to 13 August 2013. In addition, arrangements were made for a further 23 appeals to be heard during this period, which were subsequently withdrawn and 1 appeal was deferred.
67. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services) established a Working Group to investigate Employment Development and Development of Local Town Centres and Economies. The Group agreed to investigate the topic in two parts. They have made good progress and various key witnesses have been interviewed for the first part of the review relating to Employment Development which will be completed by September 2013.

### **Civic & Mayoral Services**

68. The Mayor of Sefton attended the opening of the Southport Flower Show on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August.
69. The Mayor of Sefton's Civic Sunday Service was held on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July which was well attended by both Councillors, officers and other Civic Heads from the Merseyside Region.
70. Planning for Remembrance Sunday is well underway in partnership with the Armed Forces, British Legion and Hugh Baird College. Staff from across Governance and Civic Services will be assisting to deliver these important services across the Borough.

### **Electoral Services**

71. A by-election on behalf of Maghull Town Council was conducted on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

# Agenda Item 9

72. New election management software has been installed which was jointly procured with all Merseyside Authorities and Preston City and Warrington Borough Councils. The new software will assist the team in implementing Individual Elector Registration.
73. The process to refresh postal voter's signatures from 2008/9 has now begun and letters have been sent to those electors affected.

## **Procurement**

74. Further work on developing a new approach to corporate procurement has been undertaken and development of an action plan and strategy is underway.

## **Corporate complaints**

75. The corporate complaints policy is being reviewed in line with best practice. Initial improvements to the handling of complaints under the existing policy have been implemented and a new policy is being developed alongside the administrative processes to support the new policy.

## **CORPORATE COMMISSIONING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-ORDINATION**

### **Commissioning**

76. The Corporate Commissioning training session, which will form part of the Leadership Development Programme (LDP) is to be delivered in the next few months. However, as yet, no decision has been made regarding learning lunch sessions or other ways of communicating the issue. The draft Commissioning Toolkit is complete and is currently being reviewed.

### **Community Right to Challenge**

77. A steering group of Council officers, which included the Director for Built Environment, met in April to evaluate the expression of interest regarding Highways Management & Traffic Control and recommended to Cabinet Member for Transportation that the bid be rejected on the grounds that it was inadequate in certain material particulars. Cabinet Member took the decision to reject the expression of interest on 6<sup>th</sup> June and the call in period expired on 14<sup>th</sup> June.
78. The second expression of interest which relates to Children's Centres was evaluated by senior Council officers on 16<sup>th</sup> July and recommendation will be made to Cabinet Member for Children, Schools, Families and Leisure that the bid be rejected on several grounds but primarily because the contracts for Children's Centres have already been agreed prior to the March window for accepting expressions of interest.

## **Welfare Reform**

79. A leaflet outlining the changes to welfare benefits reform has been produced and can be found on the Council's website using the links: Advice & Benefits \_ Benefits. This leaflet is accompanied by location maps with links to our various partners offering advice in the area. The maps can be found using the links: Advice & Benefits \_ Where to get help in Sefton.

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# Agenda Item 10

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**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date of Meeting:** 10 September 2013  
(Performance & Corporate Services)

**Subject:** Key Decision Forward Plan 1 October 2013 to 31 January 2014

**Report of:** Director of Corporate Services **Wards Affected:** All

**Is this a Key Decision?** No **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** No

**Exempt/Confidential** No

---

## **Purpose/Summary**

To submit to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the latest Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

**Recommendation:** That the Committee considers:

- (1) items for pre-scrutiny from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions; and
- (2) a possible topic for review during 2013/14.

**How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?**

	<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community		√	
2	Jobs and Prosperity		√	
3	Environmental Sustainability		√	
4	Health and Well-Being		√	
5	Children and Young People		√	
6	Creating Safe Communities	√		
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	√		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy	√		

# Agenda Item 10

## Reasons for the Recommendation:

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

Any work programme topics should be chosen to demonstrate that the work Overview and Scrutiny undertakes adds value to the Council.

## What will it cost and how will it be financed? N / A

## Implications: N/A

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<b>Legal:</b> There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report	
<b>Human Resources</b>	
<b>Equality</b>	
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Impact on Service Delivery: N/A

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

The Head of Corporate Finance and ICT has been consulted and has no comments on this report. **(FD 2454)**

The Head of Corporate Legal Services has no comments on this report because the contents of the report have no legal implications **(LD 1759)**

## Are there any other options available for consideration? N/A

## Implementation Date for the Decision N/A

Immediately following the Committee.

**Contact Officer:** Paul Fraser

**Tel:** 0151 934 2068

**Email:** [paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk)

## Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## **1. Introduction/Background**

- 1.1 Members may request to pre-scrutinise items from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Such items must fall under the remit (Terms of Reference) of this Committee. The current latest Forward Plan is attached at **Appendix A** for this purpose. The pre-scrutiny process assists the Cabinet and Cabinet Members to make effective decisions by examining issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.
- 1.2 For ease of identification, items listed on the Forward Plan for the first time appear as shaded.
- 1.3 The Committee is invited to consider items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan.

## **2. Work Programme Topics**

- 2.1 The Committee normally appoints a working group to undertake a review during the Municipal Year.
- 2.2 A criteria checklist for selecting topics for review is attached for Members' information.
- 2.3 The Committee is requested to consider a possible topic for review during 2013/14.

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## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 2013 - 31 JANUARY 2014

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

As a matter of local choice, the Forward Plan also includes the details of any significant issues to be initially considered by the Executive Cabinet and submitted to the Full Council for approval.

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 7DA 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

# Agenda Item 10

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

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

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Cabinet and Council which are held at the Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle or the Town Hall, Lord Street, Southport. The dates and times of the meetings are published on [www.sefton.gov.uk](http://www.sefton.gov.uk) or you may contact the Committee and Member 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.*

**Margaret Carney**  
**Chief Executive**

## FORWARD PLAN INDEX OF ITEMS

Item Heading	Officer Contact	Page No
Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) and Asset Disposal Policy (ADP)	David Street david.street1@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 2751	4
Council Tax Base and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082	5
Revenue Budget Savings	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082	6
Revenue Budget Savings	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082	7
Revenue Budget Savings	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082	8
Revenue Budget Savings	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082	9
Fees and Charges for the Council	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082	10
Council Tax Base and National Non-Domestic Rates	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082	11

# Agenda Item 10

## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) and Asset Disposal Policy (ADP)</b> To agree the Council's SAMP and ADP. The Council's SAMP is a key document that establishes how the Council proposes to align its property assets, both operational and non-operational, to enable the delivery of Council services. The Council's ADP sets out why and how the Council selects property assets for disposal and why a particular disposal method is chosen for any particular asset.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	10 Oct 2013			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	No			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Performance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Lead Members Strategic Capital Investment Group Asset Management Group			
Method(s) of Consultation	Briefings Through Capital Strategy Governance Structure			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	None			
Contact Officer(s) details	David Street david.street1@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 2751			

## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<p><b>Council Tax Base and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme</b></p> <p>The Council Tax Base and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme were approved by Council 24 January 2013. The Council at its meeting held on 28 February 2013 agreed a budget proposal for 2014/15 which requires a change to the Council Tax charges for vacant properties (unoccupied and substantially unfurnished). This report will seek approval to progress the Council Tax technical change for Council approval in 2014. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been operating since April 2013. The report will review the scheme and consider any options for change and the resulting financial implications.</p>			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	10 Oct 2013			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	No			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Performance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Head of Corporate Finance and ICT Head of Corporate Legal Service Police and Fire Authorities Council tax owners outside the borough Various stakeholders			
Method(s) of Consultation	Meetings Direct communication – via letter Stakeholder events including partnership meetings with landlords. Members			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	None			
Contact Officer(s) details	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082			

# Agenda Item 10

## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Revenue Budget Savings</b> To update the position on the achievement of Revenue budget savings for 2013/14, and to determine actions to be taken. It is essential for financial planning that the Council achieves its agreed targets. Where there is an expectation that a saving will not be achieved, it is essential that that compensatory action is taken to ensure the Council is not adversely affected financially.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	10 Oct 2013			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	No			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Performance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Internal consultation			
Method(s) of Consultation	Direct Contact with relevant officers			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Report of the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT on the Council's performance in achieving the agreed saving options for 2013/14			
Contact Officer(s) details	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082			

## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Revenue Budget Savings</b> To update the position on the achievement of Revenue budget savings for 2013/14, and to determine actions to be taken. It is essential for financial planning that the Council achieves its agreed targets. Where there is an expectation that a saving will not be achieved, it is essential that that compensatory action is taken to ensure the Council is not adversely affected financially.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	7 Nov 2013			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	No			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Performance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Internal consultation			
Method(s) of Consultation	Direct Contact with relevant officers			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Report of the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT on the Council's performance in achieving the agreed saving options for 2013/14			
Contact Officer(s) details	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082			

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## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

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Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	5 Dec 2013			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	No			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Performance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Internal consultation			
Method(s) of Consultation	Direct Contact with relevant officers.			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Report of the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT on the Council's performance in achieving the agreed saving options for 2013/14			
Contact Officer(s) details	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082			



## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Revenue Budget Savings</b> To update the position on the achievement of Revenue budget savings for 2013/14, and to determine actions to be taken. It is essential for financial planning that the Council achieves its agreed targets. Where there is an expectation that a saving will not be achieved, it is essential that that compensatory action is taken to ensure the Council is not adversely affected financially.			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	16 Jan 2014			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	No			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Performance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Internal consultation			
Method(s) of Consultation	Direct Contact with relevant officers.			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Report of the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT on the Council's performance in achieving the agreed saving options for 2013/14.			
Contact Officer(s) details	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082			

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## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Fees and Charges for the Council</b> To set the 2014/15 Fees and Charges for the Council. This includes fees for the following services – Corporate Services and Learning and Development			
Decision Maker	Cabinet			
Decision Expected	16 Jan 2014			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	Yes
Exempt Report	No			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Performance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Internal consultation			
Method(s) of Consultation	Direct Contact with relevant officers			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Reports approved by each relevant Cabinet member on fees and charges. All current fees and charges can be accessed on the internet via the attached link: <a href="http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s44810/Updated%20Proposed%20Fees%20Charges%20Booklet%20for%20201314.pdf">http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s44810/Updated%20Proposed%20Fees%20Charges%20Booklet%20for%20201314.pdf</a>			
Contact Officer(s) details	Margaret Rawding <a href="mailto:margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk">margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk</a> Tel: 0151 934 4082			

## SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

Details of Decision to be taken	<b>Council Tax Base and National Non-Domestic Rates</b> Setting the Council Tax Base and National Non-Domestic Rates Return 1 for 2014/15. This is a procedural issue that the Council has to complete and return to the Department of Communities and Local Government. The figures, based on known / expected levels of Council Tax and Non-domestic properties are used to determine estimates of income that the Council will receive in 2014/15.			
Decision Maker	Council			
Decision Expected	27 Jan 2014			
Key Decision Criteria	Financial	Yes	Community Impact	No
Exempt Report	No			
Wards Affected	All Wards			
Scrutiny Committee Area	Performance and Corporate Services			
Persons/Organisations to be Consulted	Internal consultation			
Method(s) of Consultation	Direct Contact with relevant officers.			
List of Background Documents to be Considered by Decision-maker	Reports derived from the Northgate Council Tax system, and ad hoc reports provided by arvato Government Services. DCLG updates.			
Contact Officer(s) details	Margaret Rawding margaret.rawding@sefton.gov.uk Tel: 0151 934 4082			

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## 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.

## 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

# Agenda Item 10

◆ 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.

## 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?

# Agenda Item 10

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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