

MEETING: CABINET
DATE: Thursday 23rd June, 2016
TIME: 10.00 am
VENUE: Birkdale Room, Town Hall, Southport

Member

Councillor

Councillor Maher (Chair)
Councillor Atkinson
Councillor Cummins
Councillor Fairclough
Councillor Hardy
Councillor John Joseph Kelly
Councillor Lappin
Councillor Moncur
Councillor Veidman

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Steve Pearce
Democratic Services Manager
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The Cabinet is responsible for making what are known as Key Decisions, which will be notified on the Forward Plan. Items marked with an * on the agenda involve Key Decisions
A key decision, as defined in the Council's Constitution, is: -

- 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
- 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

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

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

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A G E N D A

Items marked with an * involve key decisions

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Subject/Author(s)</u>	<u>Wards Affected</u>	
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 of Previous Meeting Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2016		(Pages 5 - 18)
* 4.	Customer Experience of Claiming Council Administered Benefits and Financial Support Report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance Councillor Kevin Cluskey, Member of the Working Group will attend the meeting to report on the work undertaken by the Working Group and the recommendations	All Wards	(Pages 19 - 68)
* 5.	Future of Area Committees Report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance	All Wards	(Pages 69 - 130)
* 6.	Revocation of Existing Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes Report of the Head of Regeneration and Housing	All Wards	(Pages 131 - 136)
* 7.	Sefton Housing Strategy 2016 - 2021 Report of the Head of Regeneration and Housing	All Wards	(Pages 137 - 152)

* 8.	Capital Programme Capital Allocations 2016/17	All Wards	(Pages 153 - 162)
	Report of the Head of Corporate Resources		

THE "CALL IN" PERIOD FOR THIS SET OF MINUTES ENDS AT 12 NOON ON WEDNESDAY 8 JULY 2016. MINUTE NO's 7 AND 8 ARE NOT SUBJECT TO "CALL-IN."

CABINET

**MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE
ON THURSDAY 26TH MAY, 2016**

PRESENT: Councillor Maher (in the Chair)
Councillors Atkinson, Cummins, Fairclough, Hardy,
John Joseph Kelly, Lappin, Moncur and Veidman

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor McGuire

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interest were received.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7 April 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

4. PRE-PAID CARDS SOLUTION

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Commissioning Support and Business Intelligence on proposals to commence a procurement exercise for the provision of a Pre-Paid Card service. The report also included details on the outcome of the Pre-Paid Card pilot and proposals for the subsequent implementation of a Pre-Paid Card service should approval be given to procure.

Decision Made: That:

- (1) approval be given to the commencement of a procurement exercise for a Pre-Paid Card service for a period of three years, plus two one-year extension options, utilising an existing framework operated by Surrey County Council as the mechanism to procure the service;
- (2) the criteria for the evaluation of tenders received in the procurement exercise be approved;
- (3) the Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care be granted delegated authority to award a contract, following the procurement exercise;

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- (4) Officers be authorised to include other Liverpool City Region Local Authorities in the procurement exercise, subject to them having secured the necessary agreement to participate;
- (5) Officers be authorised to provide the commissioning and procurement support, set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report, to other Liverpool City Region Local Authorities who may wish to implement a Pre-Paid Card Service in the future;
- (6) with regard to the implementation of a Pre-Paid Card service for Direct Payments recipients, approval be given to:
 - (a) service users not been charged for the use of a Pre-Paid Card, aside from them being charged for the costs associated with replacing any lost or stolen cards;
 - (b) the use of a Pre-Paid Card becoming the 'default' mechanism used by Sefton Council to make and administer Direct Payments;
 - (c) all existing Direct Payment Service Users been engaged with regard to transferring their Direct Payment onto a Pre-Paid Card within an agreed timeframe;
 - (d) A project team been established to manage the change detailed in point (c) above; and
- (7) Officers be authorised to investigate and if appropriate implement Pre-Paid Cards for use in other Council service areas.

Reasons for Decision:

The Council had undertaken a successful pilot of a Pre-Paid Card service, in relation to Social Care Direct Payments, which had highlighted significant benefits both to Sefton Council and to Service Users, together with ensuring that the actions detailed within the *Direct Payments Strategic Plan* (approved by Cabinet on 4 February 2016) are met. Following this Pilot it was recommended that a procurement exercise be undertaken, utilising an existing framework in place (operated by Surrey County Council), for the commissioning of a permanent Pre-Paid Card service in Sefton.

The existing framework would be used as it contains providers/suppliers who operate in the market and who would tender for services as part of an alternative procurement exercise. Sefton would also be able to utilise existing tendered costs within the framework. In addition, should other Liverpool City Region Local Authorities be in a position to also procure a Pre-Paid Card service at the same time as Sefton, then they can be included in the procurement exercise and also realise the benefits of the framework.

The framework also offers benefits with respect to Sefton being able to utilise existing agreements and processes for the evaluation of tenders. The framework also allows scope for Sefton to amend the service specification and tender evaluation criteria in order to ensure that any Pre-Paid Card service procured meets Sefton's requirements.

In addition, the pilot has identified that Pre-Paid cards could be implemented in other service areas, aside from Adults and Children's Direct Payments, which in turn may deliver greater efficiencies and improved ways of working. Such areas could include;

- Respite
- Carers payments
- Care Leavers payments
- Foster Care payments
- Emergency and discretionary payments
- Expenses and Petty Cash
- Council Tax
- Housing Benefit

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The following options were considered and rejected;

1. **Maintaining the status quo** – this was not considered a viable option due to issues identified with existing systems and working practices. The Pre-Paid Card pilot has highlighted significant benefits and outcomes for both Sefton Council and Service Users.
2. **Commissioning via a Sefton only formal tender exercise (above EU spend threshold)** – this option was rejected as it has been identified that any procurement exercise would attract the same suppliers currently on the Surrey County Council framework and therefore would not offer any significant benefits, including cost savings as tendered supplier rates are unlikely to be lower than those detailed within the framework.
3. **Commissioning via the establishment of a Framework with other Liverpool City Region (LCR) Local Authorities** – at this present time this is not considered a viable option as not all Liverpool City Region authorities have received approval via their own decision making processes to implement a Pre-Paid Card service. As with option 2 above, this exercise would be unlikely to attract any suppliers who are not currently part of the Surrey County Council Framework.

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5. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2016/17

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance which sought the appointment of Council representatives to serve on Outside Bodies set out in the report for 2016/17, or for periods longer than one year. Details of the proposed representation on Outside Bodies were set out in the report.

Decision Made: That:

- (1) the following Members be appointed to serve on the undermentioned Outside Bodies for 2016/17:

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES</u>	<u>REPRESENTATIVE(S)</u>
British Destinations	1	Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills (Cllr Atkinson) or nominee
Committee in Common – Healthy Living Programme	1	Cabinet Member – Health and Wellbeing (Cllr Moncur)
Formby Pool Trust - Board	2	Cllr Page and Head of Locality Services – Provision (Andrew Walker)
Frank Hornby Trust	1	Cllr Owens
Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (where 3 or less local authorities request the scrutiny of a substantial variation to a service)	3	Chair (Cllr Page) and Vice Chair (Cllr Dams) of the O & S Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) and one Lib Dem Member (Cllr Dawson) (Lab 2 / Lib Dem1 / Con 0 / Ind 0)
Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (where 4 or more local authorities request the scrutiny of a substantial variation	2	Chair (Cllr Page) and Vice Chair (Cllr Dams) of the O & S Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)

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to a service)

Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission	1	Cabinet Member – Children, Schools and Safeguarding (Cllr John Joseph Kelly)	
Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board	1	Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills (Cllr Atkinson)	
Liverpool City Region Housing and Spatial Planning Board	1	Cabinet Member – Communities and Housing (Cllr Hardy) (Substitute: Cabinet Member – Planning and Building Control – Cllr Veidman)	
Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership Board	1	Leader of the Council (Cllr Maher)	
Liverpool John Lennon Airport Consultative Committee	1	Cllr Roche (Substitute: Cllr Dams)	
Local Government Association General Assembly	1	Cllr Maher (5 votes)	
Local Solutions	1	Cllr Roche	
Mersey Forest Steering Group	1	Cllr Kevin Cluskey	
Mersey Port Health Committee	6	<u>Member</u> Cllr Burns	<u>Substitute</u> Cllr Linda Cluskey
		Cllr John Kelly	Cllr Brenda O'Brien

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Cllr Page Cllr Anne
 Thompson

Cllr Roche Cllr
 Robinson

Cllr Weavers Cllr Jo
 Barton

Cllr Bill Cllr Lynne
Welsh Thompson

(Lab 4 / Lib Dem 2 / Con 0/
Ind 0)

Merseyside Community Safety Partnership	2	Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing (Cllr Hardy) and the Head of Communities (Andrea Watts)
Merseyside Pension Fund Pensions Committee	1	Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Cllr Lappin) or nominee
Merseyside Playing Fields Association	1	Cllr Cummins (Substitute: Cllr Moncur)
North West Older Peoples Network	1	Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care (Councillor Cummins)
North Western Local Authorities’ Employers’ Organisation	1	Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Cllr Lappin) (Substitute: Cllr Moncur)
PATROL (Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London) Adjudication Joint Committee	1	Cabinet Member – Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough) (Substitute: Councillor Veidman)

Sefton Coast Partnership Board	3	Cabinet Member – Locality Services (Cllr Fairclough) and Councillors Booth and Dutton
Sefton Council for Voluntary Service	3	Cllrs Grace, Pullin and Robinson
Sefton Cycling Forum	2	Cllrs Kevin Cluskey and Weavers
Sefton Education Business Partnership	3	Cabinet Member - Children, Schools and Safeguarding (Cllr John Joseph Kelly) and Cllrs Keith and Moncur
Sefton New Directions Limited Board	3	Cllrs Brennan and John Joseph Kelly and Chief Executive (Margaret Carney)
Sefton Sports Council	3	Cabinet Member – Health and Wellbeing (Cllr Moncur), and Cllrs Cummins and Weavers
Southport Pier Trust	3	Cllrs Ball, Byrom and Hands
Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE)	3	Cllrs Grace, Keith and Pitt
The John Goore Charity, Lydiate	1	Cllr Sayers
Trans Pennine Trail Members Steering Group	2	Cabinet Member – Locality Services (Cllr Fairclough) and Cabinet Member - Planning and Building Control (Cllr Veidman) or their nominees

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OFFICER 1 Chief Executive (Margaret
APPOINTMENTS Carney)

One Vision Housing
Shareholders 1 Chief Executive (Margaret
Meetings Carney)

Southport Business
Improvement District
Board

(2) in relation to those appointments for a longer period than one year, the following persons be appointed to serve on the Outside Bodies indicated:

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES</u>	<u>REPRESENTATIVE(S)</u>	<u>TERM OF OFFICE EXPIRES</u>
Canal and River Trust – North West Waterway Partnership	1	Councillor Lappin	15.3.2019 (3 year appointment)
Merseyside Strategic Flood and Coastal Risk Management Partnership	1	Councillor McKinley (Deputy representative – Councillor Atkinson)	31.5.2017 (4 year appointment)
North West Reserve Forces and Cadets Association	1	Councillor Byrom	31.5.2017 (3 year appointment)
North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	2	Cllr Owens or nominee and Coast and Countryside Services Manager (David McAleavy)	31.5.2020 (4 year appointment)
South Sefton Development Trust (Regenerus)	1	Councillor Fairclough	30.5.2018 (3 year appointment)

CHARITIES:

Ashton Memorial Fund, Formby	1	Councillor Page	31.5.2019 (4 year appointment)
Consolidated Charities of Thomas Brown and Marsh Dole	2	Councillor Webster Councillor Pitt	26.6.2018 26.6.2020 (4 year appointment)
Halsall Educational Foundation	1	Cllr Grace	31.5.2018 (year appointment)

NHS
FOUNDATION
TRUST
GOVERNING
BODIES

Aintree University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Council of Governors	1	Councillor Cummins	31.5.2018 (3 year appointment)
Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust Council of Governors	1	Councillor Spencer	30.9.2017 (3 year appointment)
Mersey Care NHS Foundation – Council of Governors	1	Councillor Webster	1.5.2019 (3 year appointment)

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Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust – Shadow Council of Governors	1	Councillor John Joseph Kelly	31.9.2017 (3 year appointment)
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SCHOOL GOVERNING

BODIES

Clarence High School, Formby	1	Councillor Grace	31.5.2019 (3 year appointment)
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Peterhouse School, Southport	1	Cllr Hands	31.7.2019 (3 year appointment)
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Reasons for Decision:

The Cabinet has delegated powers set out in Paragraph 41 of Chapter 5 in the Council Constitution to appoint the Council's representatives on Outside Bodies.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

6. THE FUTURE PROVISION OF FINANCE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer on proposals to conduct a commissioning process to establish the sourcing strategy for financial and human resource transactional services and ICT services which are currently provided through a partnership agreement with arvato.

Decision Made: That:

- 1) it be noted that the contract period ends on 30 September 2018 and that the Council needs to determine its new requirements from that date;
- (2) approval be given to the procurement of consultancy support to prepare the sourcing strategy in preparation for the provisioning of these services;

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- (3) it be noted that the partnership agreement with arvato will continue until 30 September 2018, and that staff engagements will take place accordingly;
- (4) the Head of Corporate Resources be authorised in consultation with the Cabinet Member (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) to negotiate any interim arrangements to safeguard the continuity of services in the best interests of the Council as required; and
- (5) it be noted that the sourcing strategy, along with a detailed procurement and implementation plan will be reported to Cabinet for appropriate decision making in the latter part of 2016.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure that the Council reviews the future strategic needs of the organisation, in line with the Council priorities, the future resource plans and the development of new partnership working and service plans. The current contract with arvato runs until September 2018 and discussions between the Council and arvato have taken place, in line with the contract extension clauses. Both the Council and arvato agreed that the current contract is not appropriate in its current form to meet the future needs of the Council. This strategic review will be timely before formal procurement decisions are made in the Spring of 2017. The target date to have all commissioning in place and implementation underway is September 2017 to allow one year for a smooth implementation phase prior to October 2018.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None. The current Partnership Agreement with arvato has provision to extend the existing configuration of services for up to five years. However the needs of the Council have changed very significantly since the specification was prepared in 2007/08 and is no longer appropriate given the Council's financial position or its future priorities. The scale and scope of the changes required in the future are likely to be significant and could be open to legal challenge if the commissioning was not subject to future competition opportunities.

7. PUBLICATION OF PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE SEFTON LOCAL PLAN

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided details of the key issues arising from the receipt of the Inspector's Initial Findings on the Local Plan, and sought approval to publish the proposed Modifications for 6 weeks consultation, alongside the Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan (Modifications). Any comments received would be submitted to the Inspector following the conclusion of the consultation period.

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Decision Made:

That the Council be recommended to:

- (1) note the key issues arising from the Inspector's Initial Findings;
- (2) accept the Inspector's Initial Findings as the basis for preparing Modifications to the Local Plan;
- (3) authorise the publication of the Modifications (both Main and Additional Modifications) for comment, alongside the Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan (Modifications);
- (4) grant delegated powers to the Chief Planning Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Planning and Building Control, to make minor editorial changes and any changes required by the Planning Inspectorate or as a result of changes to Government guidance to the Modifications before they are published; and
- (5) following the end of the consultation period, authorise the proposed Modifications to be submitted to the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Sefton Local Plan, together with all comments received.

Reasons for Decision:

To brief Members on the issues arising from the Local Plan Inspector's Initial Findings, and to seek approval to publish the proposed Modifications to the Local Plan for consultation, alongside the Sustainability Appraisal and the HRA of the Local Plan (Modifications).

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None. This is a statutory process that has to be followed as part of the process of securing a 'sound' Local Plan which the Council can adopt.

8. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER - MARGARET RAWDING

The Chair reported that this would be the last Cabinet meeting that the Chief Finance Officer, Margaret Rawding would be attending before she retires on 21 June 2016.

He referred to the hard and dedicated work she had undertaken for Sefton Council over the past five years and indicated that Margaret was very well respected by Councillors and Officers as a very professional officer who always strived to deliver the best possible services.

Decision Made.

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That the Chief Finance Officer, Margaret Rawding be thanked for her sterling work for Sefton Council over the last five years and best wishes be extended to her for the future.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	23 June 2016
Subject:	Customer Experience of Claiming Council Administered Benefits and Financial Support	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Report of:	Head of Regulation and Compliance		
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes	Is it included in the Forward Plan?	Yes
Exempt/Confidential	No		

Purpose/Summary

To present formally the final report of the Customer Experience of Claiming Council Administered Benefits and Financial Support Working Group.

Recommendations: That

- (1) the Cabinet supports the contents of the Customer Experience of Claiming Council Administered Benefits and Financial Support Working Group Final report and approves the recommendations as set out in paragraph 12 of that report; and
- (2) the Head of Corporate Resources be requested to submit a monitoring report to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 17 January 2017, setting out progress made against each of the recommendations set out in the report and that thereafter, monitoring reports be submitted to the Committee on a six monthly basis.

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		√	
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	√		

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Reasons for the Recommendation:

The Working Group has made a number of recommendations that require approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) and the Cabinet.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No alternative options were considered. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) established the Working Group to better understand the customer experience of claiming Council administered benefits and financial support with various objectives and the Working Group performed this task.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no financial implications arising for the Council as a direct result of this report. The implementation of recommendations that result in efficiency savings and any necessary financial investment will be the subject of separate reports.

(B) Capital Costs

As above

Implications:

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

Financial		
Legal		
Human Resources		
Equality		
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 of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

The implementation of the recommendations will help Sefton's citizens to receive an improved service not only in their engagement with Sefton Council but with partner agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions and One Vision Housing. As an example, the Final Report has been developed from the learning that has emerged starting from the case studies etc. However, particular regard was given to the interaction between centrally administered benefits, such as Universal Credit, Job Seekers allowance and the locally administered Housing Benefit and Council Tax support. Recognition was also given to the demands placed increasingly on the local Council by the Government's welfare reform agenda and how many low income working families in

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the Borough are seeking further support from the Council simply to meet their day to day needs, for example by the use of the Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD.4192/16) has been involved throughout the review work and would wish to add her appreciation of the support of Members and officers in throughout the review.

The Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD.3475/16) have been consulted and has no comments to add to the report.

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer: Paul Fraser

Tel: 0151 934 2068

Email: paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection

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Introduction/Background

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) established a Working Group to better understand the customer experience of claiming Council administered benefits and financial support with the following objectives:-

1. To improve access to consistent and high quality information.
2. To improve customer satisfaction with access to our services
3. To increase the resolution of customers' needs with one visit or call,
4. To simplify access to services by streamlining the whole process from first contact to resolution - thereby reducing the need for multiple return contacts.
5. To reduce failure demand by ensuring robust processes and accountability between front-line hubs and service areas, and clear ownership of complex cross-service enquiries.
6. To increase access to "self-service" information and automatic transactions where appropriate.
7. To reduce costs through eliminating duplication.

Accordingly, the Working Group has met on numerous occasions to undertake such review and its Final Report, together with associated recommendations, is attached.

The Final Report will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) at its meeting to be held on 21 June 2016 and the decision of the Committee will be reported verbally to Cabinet.

The Cabinet is therefore requested, subject to any amendments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to support the contents of the Working Group Final report and approve the recommendations as set out in paragraph 12 of that report.

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



The collage consists of four distinct images. The top-left image shows the exterior of a modern building with a 'Sefton Plus' sign. The top-right image is a screenshot of the 'Benefit Claim and Calculator' website, showing a form with questions about household status and a 'Next' button. The bottom-left image shows the interior of a 'One Stop Shop' with a list of services including Housing benefits, Council Tax, Taxi Licensing, Business Rates, Payments, Self Service Computers, Parking Services, Blue Badges, Electoral Services, Refuse Collection, Recycling, Bulky Items Collections, Social Care Enquiries, Building Control, Planning, Roads & Highways, Street Lighting, Abandoned Vehicles, Pest Control, and Dog Wardens. The bottom-right image is a collage of logos for partner organizations: South Sefton and Crosby foodbank, citizens advice bureau, jobcentreplus, DWP (Department for Work and Pensions), OneVision HOUSING, and Sefton Council.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF CLAIMING COUNCIL ADMINISTERED BENEFITS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT JUNE 2016



Overview & Scrutiny



**'Valuing
Improvement'**

www.sefton.gov.uk
scrutiny@sefton.gov.uk

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LEAD MEMBER'S INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to introduce this Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) Customer Experience of Claiming Council Administered Benefits and Financial Support Working Group Final Report.

The Working Group adhered to its established terms of reference and objectives (see paragraph 3 below) in interviewing witnesses and its drafting of recommendations; and it is hoped that the recommendations will help Sefton's citizens to receive an improved service not only in their engagement with Sefton Council but with partner agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions and One Vision Housing.

I wish to thank all those people who gave up their valuable time to be interviewed by the Working Group. The input and expertise of interviewees greatly helped the Working Group in the formulation of its recommendations. Finally, I am extremely grateful to my fellow cross-party Working Group Members for their commitment to the well-being of our citizens and for their ideas and contributions.



Councillor Dave Robinson,
Lead Member, Customer Experience
of Claiming Council Administered
Benefits and Financial Support
Working Group

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF WORKING GROUP

The Working Group focussed on the customer experience of claiming Council administered benefits and financial support. This Final Report has been developed from the learning that has emerged starting from the case studies etc. However, particular regard was given to the interaction between centrally administered benefits, such as Universal Credit, Job Seekers Allowance and the locally administered Housing Benefit and Council Tax support. Recognition was also given to the demands placed increasingly on the local Council by the Government's welfare reform agenda and how many low income working families in the Borough are seeking further support from the Council simply to meet their day to day needs, for example by the use of the Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme.

This Final Report reflects on the experiences of using different channels of communication through which the relevant services are delivered.

Customers increasingly want to access Council services on line with self-serve using the Council's website www.sefton.gov.uk to find out information, contact us, pay, report and apply for services and assistance.

A lot of good work is already being undertaken by service areas. More web based services are being developed at a pace, with on line Council Tax billing and web chat recently being launched. Most of the Council's application forms for financial assistance and support can be completed and submitted on line at any time of the day or night and are routed through to back office services immediately. However, not everyone has the internet or the technology. PC's are available for the public to use at both our One Stop Shops located in Southport (north of Borough) and Bootle (south of Borough), all Sefton libraries and the OVH offices in Bootle Village. Free Wi-Fi is available at a number of Council public locations (such as Bootle and Southport Town Halls, Magdalen House reception areas). In terms of website accessibility Browse Aloud and Google translate are featured.

There is strong support from its customers for face to face contact at our One Stop Shops, particularly for people with complex circumstances and also for those with language/hearing or sight impairments. Waiting times in the main are viewed as reasonable, particularly if the customer's enquiry can be dealt with at first point of contact. There is a high level of customer satisfaction overall. Over 96% of customers stated that they were satisfied with the number of visits needed to resolve their enquiry. However, not everyone can get to the One Stop Shops. Our customer advisors have developed skills in debt management in partnership with CAB, received dementia awareness and sign language training, provided outreach work and attendance at events such as at the Salvation Army centre in Southport; Ability Network; Lydiate and Maghull Community Groups and invited a local Portuguese group into the One Stop Shop for a briefing session.

Written communication is valued in that there is a record of contact and a point of reference. However, concerns were identified about written communications not always being accessible or understandable. Some customers need help from



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advocates, such as care workers, to understand what they are being asked to provide or pay. Some customers simply ignore letters and turn to loan sharks to repay debt.

Telephone contact is good for ease of access but customers sometimes have to wait in a queue and their enquiries may not always be dealt with at first point of contact. There are certain barriers faced by some customers due to mobile phone charges, although this has been mitigated by the use of 0345 number of late, or struggle to be understood or understand what they are being told.

The Council should identify the customers preferred method of receiving information.

The Council is looking to extend its customer survey to cover more aspects of the services and to adapt its services to better respond to public feedback.

Whilst it is acknowledged that lots of good work is being undertaken, in its recommendations, the Working Group has identified opportunities to make further improvements, simplify processes and address customer concerns.

It is encouraging to note that projects such as First Point of Contact and digital initiatives such as web chat, 'Browse Aloud' are now gaining momentum.

A range of recommendations, many of which have already been actioned, are progressing, or for decision in due course can be found in Section 12.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 14 July 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services), upon consideration of its Work Programme, agreed to establish a Working Group to review the topic of "customer experience of claiming Council administered benefits and financial support".
- 2.2 Councillors Cluskey, Dawson, McGuire, Owens and Robinson were appointed to serve on the Working Group.
- 2.3 At the first meeting of the Working Group held on 10 August 2015 Councillor Robinson was appointed as its Lead Member.

3.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The Terms of Reference and Objectives of the Working Group were approved as part of the scoping exercise at the first meeting and are set out below. The comments of the Working Group are set out below each Terms of Reference and Objectives.
- 3.2 Terms of Reference



To better understand and make recommendations regarding the customer experience of claiming Council administered benefits and financial support.

Working Group Comments:-

The Council recognises that the customer experience is critical to its role as a provider of the many services that it facilitates and delivers. By looking at the experience of customers who claim benefits and financial support and how well the Council interacts and handles their claims, what is viewed as the most important aspects of a good customer experience and the most frustrating aspects of a poor customer experience and the expectations for self-service, social and mobile channels, improvements may be identified and resources aligned accordingly.

3.3 Objectives

1.	<p>To improve access to consistent and high quality information</p> <p>Working Group comment –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters, forms, website should be under continual review with assistance of the Council’s Adult Social Care team’s Easy Read consultant. Plain English should be used, avoiding jargon and tailored to meet individual needs. • Browse Aloud now on Sefton’s website (support software which adds speech, reading, and translation to the website facilitating access and participation for people with Dyslexia, Low Literacy, English as a Second Language, and those with mild visual impairments. Online content can be read aloud in multiple languages). • Google Translate/Language line also available. • Use of a redesigned customer survey to capture customer feedback.
2.	<p>To improve customer satisfaction with access to our services</p> <p>Working Group comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will continue to monitor and respond to customer feedback from Customer Care Satisfaction Surveys. A series of quarterly surveys on the One Stops Shops is being reviewed in line with Corporate Standards. Feedback from the Consultation panel in May 2016 is to be considered. . • The Council is to consider widening the scope of the One Stop Shop survey to all contact streams using “e-consult” survey software for a trial 3 month period when customers will

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	<p>be asked, amongst other questions, about their preferred method of communication and if they have tried to resolve their queries on line before contacting the call centre, One Stop Shop or writing to us.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charges applied to the Council's 0845 number have been resolved by the Council introducing 0345 number. • "Rate this Page" and "Comments, Complaints and Feedback" analysis to be kept under review.
3.	<p>To increase the resolution of customers' needs with one visit or call</p> <p>Working Group comment –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Working Group identified a framework of continuous improvement that is being implemented by our customer services team leading to more enquiries being resolved at first point of contact, reducing the need to hand off to the back office for resolution. • Case studies have been and will continue to be undertaken to identify where continuing improvements can be identified. Where opportunities have been lost further training has been delivered to front line staff. • Enhanced skills training for Customer Service advisors • Location of experienced benefit assessor in One Stop Shops to support advisors with complex enquiries and influence the way forward by identifying ways that we can continue to improve the customer journey.
4.	<p>To simplify access to services by streamlining the whole process from first contact to resolution - thereby reducing the need for multiple return contacts</p> <p>Working Group comment –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Level Agreements and Protocols in place with Council service areas and its partners to ensure streamlined approach to work processes. • Council Staff located in partner organisations (OVH). • Appointment based welfare/money advice services available at One Stops Shops. • Tell Us Once project in place. • Cross training in place with CAB and OVH. • Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme – root cause analysis to be undertaken where patterns emerge in order to reduce



	<p>future requests and direct customers to CAB for money advice, particularly where there is evidence of severe financial deprivation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies have been and will be undertaken to identify where continuing improvements may be identified. • Co-location of services with the DWP is under consideration.
5.	<p>To reduce failure demand by ensuring robust processes and accountability between front-line hubs and service areas, and clear ownership of complex cross-service enquiries</p> <p>Working Group comment –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More generic, holistic approach to working with our customers • Appointment based services are provided • ‘One Council’ approach. • Joined up processes in place to handle complex cross service enquiries. • Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme – root cause analysis to be undertaken where patterns emerge in order to reduce future demand by better supporting customers which will include directing customers to CAB for money advice. • Improvements to content of letters to ensure customers better understand what is being asked of them, particularly with regard to the evidence required to support their claim.
6.	<p>To increase access to "self-service" information and automatic transactions where appropriate</p> <p>Working Group comment –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Service PC’s in One Stop Shops and libraries in order to facilitate and improve customer journeys, helping towards a reduction in customer waiting times. • As part of the Council Digital Inclusion Programme, OVH customers can be directed to the availability of self-service PC’s at the OVH Offices in Bootle Village. OVH also have PC’s available to residents at some of their sheltered housing schemes. • Dedicated Self Service champions at One Stop Shops to help people access our services on line. • Self Service to be more widely promoted and used across the Borough • Free Wi-Fi availability at Council buildings.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Self Service channels continue to be developed. • Twitter and Website updates to head off frequently asked questions. • Reductions in e-mail traffic by increasing availability of web forms, self- service links to website, phoning back customers. • Three month pilot for web chat underway. • E-billing for Council Tax bills launched April 2016.
7.	<p>To reduce costs through eliminating duplication</p> <p>Working Group comment –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to avoid delays or chain of visits or phone calls in order to resolve problems or obtain financial assistance when claiming. • More enquiries being dealt with at first point of contact reducing the need for hand off/escalation to back office. • Integration of service areas to be considered which will reduce the need for the customer having to provide the same information to different service areas • Single point of access to service areas • Use of social media (in 2016 the Council was able to post FAQ's about Council Tax bills on Twitter which reduced the number of telephone enquiries).

4.0 METHODS OF ENQUIRY

- Background reading – case studies
- Presentations
- Briefings
- Interviewing key witnesses
- Reports
- Site visits – Bootle and Southport One Stop Shop's and Contact/Call Centre at St. Peter's House; Wigan MBC Life Centre

5.0 DETAILS OF WORKING GROUP ACTIVITY

Date	Activity
14.08.15	Scoping document approved
14.09.15	Sefton Customer Care Satisfaction Survey and case studies considered (Minutes of meeting)
28.09.15	Visit to Customer Contact/Call Centre at St. Peter's House (Minutes of meeting)
12.11.15	Visit to Bootle One Stop Shop Stanley Road Bootle



17.12.15	Interview Key Witnesses - Jayne Vincent, Sefton Council, Public Engagement and Consultation; Wayne Leatherbarrow, Sefton Council, Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme; Debbie Shelley, St. Leonards' Foodbank; Karen Gray, Sefton Council, Care Leavers, Corporate Parenting Service; Diane Turner, Benefits Manager, arvato; Grant Bernard, Sefton CAB; Mark Quillan, One Stop Shops Manager, arvato (Minutes of meeting)
04.02.16	Visit to Southport One Stop Shop Town Hall Southport
29.02.16	Visit to Wigan Life Centre, The Wiend, Wigan
01.03.16	Interview Key Witnesses – Alan Murphy, Senior Operations Manager, Job Centre Plus along with his colleagues Margaret Denton and Linda Usher. Bootle One Stop Shop Customer Satisfaction Survey considered (Minutes of meeting)
22.03.16	Interview Key Witness - Neil Kenwright, Income Manager, One Vision Housing (Minutes of meeting)
17.5.16	Meeting to “sign-off” Final Report and recommendations

6.0 KEY WITNESS INTERVIEWS

Members had the opportunity to interview a number of key witnesses, various Officers and Partners.

Paragraphs 6.1 to 6.3 provide details of the actions arising from the interviews with key witnesses.

6.1 Minutes of the Working Group meeting held on 17 December 2015 can be viewed [here](#)

6.1.1 SEFTON COUNCIL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Action	Response/Outcome
Jayne Vincent (Sefton Council Public Engagement and Consultation) to put Diane Turner (Benefits Manager arvato) in touch with colleagues to discuss letter style/content to improve accessibility information standards for customers.	Simple concise messages should be got out to customers. Benefit decision notices being reviewed by the Councils “Easy Read” accredited assessor. Whilst software limitations prevent the calculation of benefit entitlement being shown differently, changes can be made to the accompanying information to better support claimants, particularly those with impairments. All letters to have similar logos (One Council approach) and consideration to some having photos or pictures to better support claimants with impairments A service user forum is being



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	established with representatives who have a learning or sensory impairment to help the Council quality check the information that is being sent to service users.
Jayne Vincent (Sefton Council, Public Engagement and Consultation) to provide Diane Turner (Benefits Manager, arvato) with information about accessibility issues/One Council approach.	<p>The accessible information standard comes into force in July 2016 and as requested by the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel. Initially Health and Social Care service areas will be reviewing systems, policies and processes to meet the new guidelines; however the guidelines offer best practice for all Council service areas to consider. Accessible Information Training is being refreshed to meet the new guidelines. A briefing note for the Strategic Leadership Board is being devised to inform of the standard and the work to implement it.</p> <p>The “Easy Read” training is being refreshed – consideration to be given to rolling out training across the organisation.</p> <p>Important that customers receive information in their preferred way (e.g. hearing impaired people prefer electronically, some people prefer face to face interviews)</p> <p>After a two month trial “Browse Aloud” has been purchased for two years.</p> <p>Web chat facility being piloted and People First will be taking part in a trial in the coming weeks.</p>

6.1.2 SEFTON COUNCIL EMERGENCY LIMITED ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Action	Response/Outcome
Wayne Leatherbarrow (Sefton Council, Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme) to consider locating a member of ELAS team in One Stop Shops to speak to customers face to face and speed up the application process.	It has been found that arvato customer contact/customer service advisors in the One Stop Shops are providing clear information, advice and guidance in relation the local welfare support. Locating a member of the team in the One Stop Shop



	<p>will severely restrict the capacity to consider and respond to applications in a timely manner as we only have two staff who actually consider the applications, decide on an appropriate support plan, authorise awards, notify applicant of the award and refer to partner agencies across the private, voluntary and independent sector for additional support.</p>
<p>Wayne Leatherbarrow (Sefton Council, Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme) to give consideration to issuing Emergency Food bank vouchers by Trussell Trust.</p>	<p>The Local Authority actively promotes and markets Sefton CAB for debt/budgeting and to assist with budgeting skills.</p>
<p>Wayne Leatherbarrow (Sefton Council, Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme) to give consideration to issuing emergency food bank vouchers by Trussell Trust which is open 9am – 5pm daily.</p>	<p>Head of Communities was requested to liaise with the Trussell Trust on this issue.</p> <p>The Head of Communities has advised that the Foodbank currently issues emergency vouchers if a client presents at St Leonard’s, Bootle or Lakeside Christian Centre, Southport.</p> <p>The distribution centres across south Sefton do not hold vouchers to issue, only the main Foodbank centres at St Leonard’s and Lakeside Christian Centre.</p> <p>Currently ELAS vouchers account for approximately 52% of the foodbank network clients.</p> <p>More than 120 other agencies across the private, voluntary and independent sectors also refer.</p> <p>The foodbanks can and often do issue Emergency Foodbank Vouchers if a member of the public presents at one of the foodbank distribution centres and is evidently in crisis or experiencing severe hardship.</p>

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	The Local Authority continues to support the Foodbank Network financially with operational support costs and replenishing goods at times when donations and stock are low.
Wayne Leatherbarrow (Sefton Council, Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme) to give consideration to putting emergency funding into Citizens Advice Sefton.	Significant funding has been provided from the Local Authority over the last two years to the CAB in support of information, advice and guidance about welfare and debt issues. This year the Local Authority has directed support to the community using the Welfare Advice service, which has received a positive response from partner agencies such as the foodbank network, where Council Welfare Advisors have provided 'drop-in' surgeries to assist those vulnerable members of the local community experiencing severe hardship.

6.1.3 ST. LEONARD'S FOODBANK

Action	Response/Outcome
<p>Council to consider seeking more investment from Government to support the Council and its partners to provide Welfare Advice at Food banks.</p> <p>Trussell Trust to issue emergency foodbank vouchers as they are open 9am – 5pm</p>	<p>This issue was referred by Head of Communities to the Welfare Reform Reference Group for consideration. At the next Anti-Poverty/ Welfare Reform, Cabinet and partner reference groups the issue will be raised with group members and discussed.</p> <p>Foodbank currently issues emergency vouchers if a client presents at St Leonard's or Lakeside Christian Centre at short notice. The Distribution centres across south Sefton do not hold vouchers to issue, only the main Foodbank centres at St Leonard's and the Lakeside Christian Centre.</p> <p>Currently ELAS vouchers account for</p>



	<p>approximately 52% of the foodbank network clients.</p> <p>More than 120 other agencies across the private, voluntary and independent sectors also refer.</p> <p>The foodbanks can and often do issue Emergency Foodbank Vouchers if a member of the public presents at one of the foodbank distribution centres and is evidently in crisis or experiencing severe hardship.</p> <p>The Local Authority continues to support the Foodbank Network financially with operational support costs and replenishing goods at times when donations and stock are low.</p>
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6.1.4 SEFTON COUNCIL CARE LEAVERS' CORPORATE PARENTING SERVICE

Action	Response/Outcome
Wayne Leatherbarrow (Sefton Council, Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme) arrange for personal advisors in Care Leavers team to have direct access to ELAS staff	This has been actioned and the Care Leavers' team has direct access to the ELAS Administrators.
Diane Turner (Benefits Manager, arvato) to arrange for the Revenues/Benefits service to look into the feasibility of having a system flag to alert if a claimant was a care leaver – also DWP to be asked if feasible on their systems.	Diane Turner indicated that this is feasible. arvato work closely with Karen Gray from the Care Leavers' team to try to ensure that appropriate support is provided to care leavers. This includes providing support with Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and liaising with Karen Gray when a care leaver starts to claim Universal Credit. Mark Barry (Revenues Manager) to put in place a process to identify care leavers and alert their respective leaving care personal advisors allowing the opportunity for them to intervene at an earlier stage and, hopefully, avoid formal recovery

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	processes for Council Tax.
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6.1.5 SEFTON CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU

Action	Response/Outcome
Wayne Leatherbarrow (Sefton Council, Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme) to direct customers to Sefton Citizens Advice Bureau for debt/budgeting advice in order to reduce multiple claims and assist customers with budgeting skills etc.	The Local Authority actively promotes and markets Sefton CAB for debt/budgeting and to assist with budgeting skills.

6.1.6 SEFTON COUNCIL BENEFITS SERVICE

Action	Response/Outcome
Diane Turner (Benefits Manager, arvato) to liaise with Jayne Vincent (Sefton Council, Public Engagement and Consultation) to seek improvements in ensuring the correct evidence was obtained from claimants as quickly as possible to avoid processing delays.	Diane Turner has liaised with Jayne Vincent and her colleague June McGill re: Easy Read. However, the Benefits Service is continually looking at ways in which it can obtain information from claimants as quickly as possible. Some examples include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct access into DWP Customer Information System to check claimant records without the need for further evidence from the claimant, • introduction of Risk Based Verification to remove the need for unnecessary evidence, • direct liaison with Registered Social Landlords to obtain rent details, • use of "real-time" information from DWP and HMRC to update claim details without the need for further evidence from the claimant.
Diane Turner (Benefits Manager, arvato) to have forms/communications run past Adult Social Care 'Easy Read' consultant	arvato and the Sefton Council Partnership and Local Taxation Manager are currently looking into available options re: Easy Read, associated costs and how this could potentially be used by Sefton Council
Diane Turner (Benefits Manager,	This is standard practice. arvato work



arvato) to work with Sefton Council to improve claimant communications (i.e. letters, website, forms etc.)	with the Council when drafting any new claimant communications and will always try to incorporate any feedback and suggestions
Diane Turner (Benefits Manager, arvato) to consider use of summary letter to accompany Benefit Decision/Entitlement notices.	arvato will look into this further. There will very likely be costs associated for the development of summary letters and the ongoing production/postage of such letters. This will be discussed further with the Council.
Diane Turner (Benefits Manager, arvato) to liaise with DWP regarding delay issues and evidence required.	arvato continue to monitor any delays and liaise with DWP.

6.1.7 SEFTON COUNCIL ONE STOP SHOPS

Action	Response/Outcome
Mark Quillan (One Stop Shops Manager, arvato) to consider widening the scope of the Customer Survey to include customer feedback on all customer contact streams (e.g. telephone, email, website, self-serve, contact forms etc.)	Proposals for a customer experience/satisfaction survey, to include all contact streams, on the customer experience of claiming council administered benefits and financial support, to be submitted to the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel before 13th May 2016 with a view to bringing back to the panel in July 2016
Mark Quillan (One Stop Shops Manager, arvato) to arrange Contact Centre and One Stop Shop staff to signpost OVH tenants to availability of self-serve PC's at OVH offices, Bootle Village.	Implemented
Sefton Council - to feed information via the Working Group to make another approach to DWP to discuss issues/co-location feasibility etc.	CAB surgeries have been re-instated in One Stop Shops one day per week. Will follow the lead of Council re co-location initiatives

6.2 DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS JOB CENTRE PLUS

Minutes of the Working Group meeting held on 1 March 2016 can be viewed [here](#)

Action	Response/Outcome
DWP to provide the Council, subject to data protection issues, with information regarding:-	
the imposition of sanctions	It is the claimant's responsibility to meet



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	the requirement of job search and this will be assessed on an individual basis
high level numbers of imposed sanctions	With regard to sharing information with the Council regarding the imposition of sanctions, after investigation we are unable to share data down to an individual level, even with the claimants' consent. High level data is available via the DWP Statistical tab on Gov.UK which allows the Local Authority to see data down to category level. Sefton Council have a very active Welfare Rights team who support individual cases and therefore may be able to provide some anecdotal information
the appeal process regarding Mandatory reconsiderations	For Jobseekers Allowance the claimant is informed of the process and when a doubt is raised to the decision maker, they are informed of the process at this point and also issued with a hardship leaflet/application to be completed if they are sanctioned. Once the claimant has been notified of the outcome and contacts the Jobcentre they will be provided with a verbal explanation, if not sufficient an email is sent to the Benefit Centre for a mandatory reconsideration, who will then contact the claimant direct. The following link provides details https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/appeal-decision Verbal explanation, mandatory reconsideration, and then appeal. Claimants are not given a leaflet regarding Hardship, they are told verbally.
how claimants receive support and advocacy	If a claimant needs additional support due to ill health/disability or vulnerability they will be supported at the Jobcentre. The staff at the Jobcentre will also signpost customers to other third party organisations to gain support.
clarification on the advisory process of referring claimants to CAB	The Work Coach will signpost to CAB
an update on progress with the co-location of services	Tentative talks have taken place but no formal actions have been progressed or are planned to do so at this time.
actions required by the DWP of the	Regular communication with regards to



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Council	supporting our claimants, including debt/budgeting support
how they look to provide claimants with alternative payment arrangements (i.e. making Housing Benefit payments direct to the landlord rather than the tenant)	Universal Credit Work Coaches had a one day training course on Alternative Payment Arrangements and Personal budgeting Support. At all new claims they ask the claimant if they need any support with budgeting advice, if they are able to cope with monthly payments and if they are able to support themselves until their first payment is due. Following the answers they decide on the options available. If the offer is refused the claimant is informed that they can change their mind at any time
which money advice agencies they are working with given that Government recently announced closure of money advice centres	Venus provide debt advice via multi organisation funding in Sefton (Jo Hughes)
a copy of the Universal Credit notification/award letter and other information detailing the processes adopted by the JCP	A copy of the letter has been provided and can be viewed here
DWP to arrange:-	
up-skilling of One Stop Shop staff on Universal Credit and sanctions	DWP happy to support Job shadowing activities. DWP extremely keen to build on and strengthen existing relationships, and in order to do this would like to invite Sefton to meet with DWP to discuss how this can be taken forward. DWP would welcome the opportunity to provide some up-skilling sessions for the LA staff to support them to both understand DWP business and in turn help them support Sefton residents and DWP feel that their staff would benefit from understanding the business from the LA delivery side
One Stop Shop and Jobcentre Plus staff becoming more familiar with each other's work	
Both Sefton and DWP working on a joint agenda to support Sefton residents and DWP feel that by working more closely we can do this.	
Dates/ availability to be coordinated and a convenient date and time to get together to be arranged by DWP	
Council to provide assistance with:-	
Personal Budgeting Support	The Council has this in place and is



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	ongoing
Signposting to debt management support	The Council has this in place and is ongoing

6.3 ONE VISION HOUSING

Minutes of the Working Group meeting held on 22 March 2016 can be viewed [here](#)

Action	Response/Outcome
Neil Kenwright (One Vision Housing Income Manager) to provide the Council with the OVH protocol for dealing with rent arrears.	This has been provided to the Council. The court process can be viewed:- https://www.justice.gov.uk/courts/procedure-rules/civil/protocol/pre-action-protocol-for-possession-claims-by-social-landlords
Neil Kenwright (One Vision Housing Income Manager) - OVH be requested to consider the introduction of free Wi-Fi in their high rise and sheltered accommodation; to remove the cost of such services from tenant's budgets and in so doing improve their digital inclusion prospects.	The OVH Digital working group has been asked to consider the free high-rise wi-fi provision and will report back to the Working Group with the findings.
Sefton Council to put in place arrangements at Bootle One Stop Shop and at Bootle Library, to signpost OVH tenants to the ICT facilities at the OVH Customer Access office, Coral Drive, Bootle Village which is under-utilised at present.	This work has been undertaken as part of the Council's digital inclusion initiatives.
Sefton Council is currently undertaking work on digital inclusion across the Borough and consideration to be given to working with OVH sheltered housing schemes that had P.C.s to support tenants to improve their ICT skills.	This action is being considered as part of the Council's digital inclusion initiatives.

7. VISIT TO CUSTOMER CONTACT/CALL CENTRE ST PETER'S HOUSE BOOTLE

Contact Centre visit 29th September 2015

8. VISITS TO BOOTLE AND SOUTHPORT ONE STOP SHOPS

Bootle OSS visit 12 November 2015
Southport OSS visit 4 February 2016



9. VISIT TO WIGAN LIFE CENTRE

The Working Group, on 29 February 2016, undertook a visit to the Wigan Life Centre, the purpose of which was to look at the nature and extent of the following being delivered at the front line at the Centre:-

- Benefits advice and Support (Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support)
- Other Local Welfare Support (e.g. discretionary funding such as Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments, Council Tax support/hardship etc.).
- Welfare Rights/Benefit maximisation/Debt advice etc.
- Self-Serve initiatives
- Blue badge process;
- Digital Strategy.

And to also understand how/when the following was being delivered by partner organisations from the Centre:-

- Co-location with partners (Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Job Centre Plus, Credit Union, Department of Work and Pensions etc. also other agencies such as Age UK, Healthwatch, Carers UK)
- Customer Portal (“My Account”)
- Job search
- Foodbanks
- Housing/homelessness advice

The Working Group received a presentation from officers from Wigan MBC; and following the presentation the Working Group was given a tour of the Wigan Life Centre.

Action	Response/Outcome
Processes for dealing with claims at first point of contact	Not yet provided despite follow up
Any training notes	Not yet provided despite follow up
Digital strategy for 2015 – 2020	http://wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Digital-strategy.aspx
Copy of digital champions programme	Not yet provided despite follow up
Registrars – process to deal at front line	Not yet provided despite follow up
Parking registration – process to share	Not yet provided despite follow up
Key stakeholders – undertaken a review for contact centres. Would	Not yet provided despite follow up

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review documents be possible to share	
Customer satisfaction survey – questionnaire.	Not yet provided despite follow up
Crisis Team – (previous social fund with DWP). Officer mentioned she would share process and questionnaire that front line staff ask customer to find out cause of problem.	Not yet provided despite follow up
Schools admissions / free school meals – process for front line service	Not yet provided despite follow up
Blue Badge process	Not yet provided despite follow up

10. BACKGROUND READING

The Working Group also considered, as background information, reports regarding the co-location of services at Charnwood Borough Council, Breckland District Council and Shropshire Council together with an article, providing examples of the co-location of services. A copy of the articles can be found [here](#)

11. CASE STUDIES

The main findings from the case studies are as follows:-

- One Stop Shop and Call Centre advisors were able to deal with a wide range of issues and offered flexibility of approach, especially where customers were facing multiple debt problems. The advisors were seen to deal very well with customers who appeared anxious when initially contacting the Council with problems. The advisors were able to put customers at ease and bring out information that would support solutions.
- The Council's Welfare Rights Team, the arvato Benefits Take Up officer and the OVH Welfare Rights team demonstrated a high level of professionalism, expertise and knowledge when advocating for their clients.
- There is anecdotal evidence that the termination or suspension of benefits by the DWP is leading to hardship for our customers. In turn, this is creating additional work for the Council and its elected representatives in responding to enquiries from both customers and their landlords about rent/Council Tax arrears and placing additional pressures for the Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme and other local discretionary hardship schemes, increased footfall at Foodbanks and CAB and other voluntary and community organisations
- Vulnerability issues are not always evident until a Councillor's intervention.



- Prior to MP's intervention it had been difficult to establish the full facts about the claimant's circumstances
- Processing delays were causing hardship
- Progress chasing necessary as customers not being informed about progress of claim
- Letters not containing enough information leading to failure demand
- Some letters are hard to understand and contain complex information not in an easy read, plain English format
- Benefit overpayment recovery letters are complex and confusing to customers
- Letters do not provide debt recovery options/advice and process which can be undertaken (e.g. appointment service)
- Numerous letters are often sent at once or issued over several days following adjustments to benefit entitlement which lead to confusion for the customer
- Customers being asked to supply unnecessary information when already held or obtainable from other sources/services area or simply not required
- Customer's individual circumstances not always taken into account. For example, where debt involved customers resorting to use of loan sharks
- Customers presenting at Foodbanks for emergency vouchers
- Information about customer's circumstances not always shared across service areas.
- Straightforward enquires not always dealt with at first point of contact
- Enquiries not always dealt with generically.

12. SUMMARY OF WORKING GROUP FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

	Objective	Findings	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Due Date
1.	To improve access to consistent and high quality information	Some letters are hard to understand.	Make changes to the back of the benefit entitlement letters to capture recommendations.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Various benefit overpayment recovery letters are complex and confusing to customers.	Review letters to meet the needs of more service users, particularly those with learning difficulties or other impairments.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Letters do not provide debt recovery options/advice and process which can be undertaken (e.g. appointment service)	Use bespoke summary letters to accompany decision notices where there are complex or numerous calculations created, particularly overpayment letters.	Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Numerous letters are often sent at once or issued over several days following adjustments to benefit entitlement which lead to confusion for customer.	Improve the content of all letters with Easy Read.	Consultation, Engagement and Performance Officer Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
			Easy Read needs to become embedded as a way of routine working in the Council, and training to be rolled out across	Consultation, Engagement and Performance Officer	December 2016

		the Council		
		Accessible Information Standard awareness, training etc. to be communicated across the Council	Consultation, Engagement and Performance Officer Head of Strategic Support	December 2016
		Service user forum to be established to include representative(s) with learning or sensory impairment to help Council quality check information being sent to service users.	Consultation, Engagement and Performance Officer	December 2016
	Website not always user friendly to those with impairments.	Review website to address the wider needs of some of our service users to include 'Browse Aloud'.	Head of Strategic Support Consultation, Engagement and Performance Officer Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
	Some customers are unable to access One Stop Shops or use a telephone.	Promote self –serve/web chat etc. at all contact opportunities. Current web chat pilot to be extended.	Head of Strategic Support Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Utilise libraries and other Council and partner	Head of Customer Services & Benefits	December 2016



		facilities for self-serve and raise awareness of same.	(arvato)	
	Communication not always in customer's preferred format	Identify customer's preferred method and format of communication.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Analysis and awareness across Council	Head of Strategic Support	December 2016
	Customers failing to provide sufficient information, resulting in repeated visits and delays.	<p>Identify where failures are occurring across all service areas and why.</p> <p>Input measures to address.</p> <p>Provide clear instructions/information to customers.</p> <p>Offer an appointment service and inform all information required for decision making.</p> <p>Make telephone call to customer to clarify what the issues are and to explain what is required</p>	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016



			to complete the claim and follow up with appointment.		
		Customers being asked to supply unnecessary information when already held or obtainable from other sources/services area or simply not required.	<p>Improve knowledge of staff</p> <p>Identify where failures are occurring and why.</p> <p>Provide clear instructions/information to customers.</p> <p>Make appointments and inform all information required for decision making.</p> <p>Education services/Blue Badges – require joining up of information gathering – can be addressed at One Stop Shop. Will require review of process.</p>	<p>Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)</p> <p>Head of Strategic Support</p>	<p>December 2016</p> <p>December 2016</p>
	Objective	Findings	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Due Date
2.	To improve customer satisfaction with access to our services.	Customer survey only captures feedback from customers attending the One Stop Shops in	To consider widening the customer survey to all contact streams.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	September 2016



	Southport and Bootle.		Consultation, Engagement and Performance Officer	
		Attach survey to web chat, letters, receipts, e-forms and other communication methods to encourage customers to identify where there have been any gaps in service provision, for example why they could not find out the information they were looking for, or whether our response fully met requirements etc.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Use feedback from survey to enhance existing and develop new digital capabilities.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Assemble a customer panel to assist with shaping the service.	Consultation, Engagement and Performance Officer	December 2016
	Customers escalating matters to elected representatives or other advocacy services.	Identify where failures are occurring and why.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
	Delays in processing	Refund requests; interim	Head of Customer	December 2016



		causing hardship	<p>payments; payment on account; ELAS to be considered whilst claimant awaiting a decision.</p> <p>Council Tax Reduction Scheme to be put in payment if only the rent information is outstanding.</p> <p>Require a process for officers to obtain underlying cause e.g. benefit delays, work coach support required.</p> <p>Customer should receive advice or escalation.</p>	Services & Benefits (arvato)	
		Full facts about claimant's circumstances are not always identified until intervention by Councillor or MP.	Flags to be put on systems for customers with additional needs, where known, such as visual impairment or vulnerability so that our communication methods can be adapted to meet their specific needs.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Customer's individual	A more flexible, holistic	Head of Customer	December 2016



		circumstances not always taken into account. For example, where debt involved customers resorting to use of loan sharks.	approach to be taken where customer's circumstances are considered exceptional and fall outside the scope of normal procedures.	Services & Benefits (arvato) Head of Revenues (arvato)	
	Objective	Findings	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Due Date
3.	To increase the resolution of customers' needs with one visit or call	Number of visits and other communications required to resolve.	Offer to visit, appointments, more use of telephone calls to customers rather than writing to them. Require holistic, generic view of customer and services to be more joined up with flexibility depending upon issues. Need escalation processes in place. Key experienced staff to be located in front office.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato) Head of Revenues (arvato)	December 2016
		Customers presenting at Foodbanks for emergency vouchers	To liaise with Trussell Trust to issue emergency foodbank vouchers	Head of Communities	
		Information about	Require holistic, generic	Head of Customer	



		customer's circumstances not always shared across service areas.	view of customer and services to be more joined up with flexibility depending upon issues. Need escalation processes in place.	Services & Benefits (arvato)	
		Straightforward enquires not always dealt with at first point of contact	Measure the % of enquiries dealt with at first point of contact. Knowledge of front line staff to be improved. Key experienced staff to be located in front office.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Enquiries not always dealt with generically.	Knowledge of staff to be improved in order to resolve more complex issues.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Customer advisors spending time scanning and preparing receipts and query letters rather than processing information.	Review process to enable administration work to be undertaken by less experienced staff and lead to reduced waiting times and enable decision making.	Head of Customer Services & Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
	Objective	Findings	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Due Date
4.	To simplify access to services by	Enquiries not always dealt with at first point of contact	Co-location opportunities (e.g. DWP, CAB, ELAS,	Head of Strategic Support Head of Customer	December 2016



streamlining the whole process from first contact to resolution thereby reducing the need for multiple contacts.		Education support, Blue Badge) to be identified at One Stop Shops.	Services and Benefits (arvato) (CAB surgeries have been re-instated at OSS)	
	Education, Blue Badge, ELAS process handed off to back office. Education services enquiries are being dealt with at other site (Bootle Town Hall) resulting in customers attending at a different location.	Review processes to streamline services, remove duplication and to avoid repeat visits. Enable more decision making and processing to be done at the front office. Experienced assessors to be located at front line to support/mentor advisors.	Head of Strategic Support Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
	Recovery of overpayment for housing benefit and council tax arrears not joined up and different approaches from service areas. Customers with multiple debts are anxious and may resort to loan sharks to pay off Council debts.	Joined up approach to dealing with corporate debt, taking the customers overall financial means into account and making affordable and sustainable repayments.	Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato) Head of Revenues (arvato)	December 2016
	DWP delays leading to	Liaise with DWP over	Head of Customer	December 2016



		hardship for customers.	delays and evidence required	Services and Benefits (arvato)	
	Objective	Findings	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Due Date
5.	To reduce failure demand by ensuring robust processes and accountability between front line hubs and service areas, and clear ownership of cross service enquiries	Customers being given insufficient or incorrect advice and information by advisors.	Front line process to be reviewed in order to resolve at first point of contact. Monitoring and evaluation required.	Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		One Council approach not always adopted.	One Council awareness training to be put in place for front line staff.	Head of Strategic Support Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Customer advisors not always picking up other information that may affect claimant's entitlement or liability.	Knowledge of front line staff to be improved.	Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Customers not always being signposted to other partners, such as welfare advice when more assistance is clearly required	Awareness training.	CAB/Welfare Rights Managers	December 2016
		Vulnerability, impairment, language difficulties not identified/recorded and full	Front line staff to identify and record information, where known, which will	Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016



		<p>facts about claimant's circumstances not always known until intervention by Councillor, Member of Parliament, Social Worker, CAB or Welfare Rights advisor/other advocate.</p>	<p>assist in providing any additional support with communications. Including debt recovery enforcement/ DWP support.</p> <p>Care Leavers – process to be put in place to identify care leavers and alert their respective leaving care personal advisors to allow for earlier intervention and support with ELAS, benefits or revenues matters to avoid matters being escalated.</p> <p>Care Leavers – consider locating member of staff is One Stop Shops to speak to customers face to face.</p> <p>Care leavers – personal advisors in Care Leavers' team to have direct access to ELAS staff.</p>	<p>Head of Revenues (arvato)</p>	
		Working relationship	Any issues identified to	Income Manager OVH	December 2016



		<p>between OVH and Sefton Council.</p>	<p>be resolved through service level agreement and protocol that is in place between Council and OVH and reviewed annually, or as required.</p> <p>Key staff in OVH to maintain link to Benefits Service systems and act quickly on any delays.</p> <p>Member of staff from Sefton Council's Benefits Service to continue to be located in OVH offices.</p> <p>OVH to ensure that links/referrals to Sefton CAB debt advice and other partner services such as foodbanks, ELAS are fully utilised.</p>	<p>Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)</p>	
		<p>Foodbanks – welfare advice and support requirements</p>	<p>Council to consider seeking more investment from Government to support Council and its partners to provide welfare advice at Food Banks.</p>	<p>Executive Director -Sefton Council (Charlotte Bailey)</p>	<p>December 2016</p>



		Some households are increasingly reliant on financial assistance and support from the Council and its partners to meet their everyday needs.	Service areas and partners to undertake and share root cause analysis to determine what is causing demand and how mitigating action can be put in place. Promote/build up resilience on both a personal and community level and empower people to take ownership and help themselves more. Work more strategically with partners, using a multi-agency, intelligence led approach, to better understand how financial support and benefits are being delivered to households across the Borough.	Partner Organisations (OVH, DWP, CAB, Foodbanks, Sefton@work Head of Strategic Support Head of Communities Other Service Heads	December 2016 December 2016
	Objective	Findings	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Due Date
6.	To increase access to self- service information and automatic	Digital is not always the customer's first choice when accessing our services.	To form part of the Councils digital inclusion initiatives.	Executive Director - Sefton Council (Charlotte Bailey) Head of Strategic Support	December 2016



transactions where appropriate.		'Digital by default' to be promoted at every opportunity.	All Service Heads	December 2016
		Self-service mentors and champions to be sited at all self-serve locations.	Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		OVH to identify opportunities for digital inclusion for its tenants.	OVH	December 2016
		OVH to allow access to its tenants for self-serve at the OVH office in Bootle Village, Coral Drive Bootle.	OVH	December 2016
		Bootle OSS/Bootle library to promote access to additional self-service facilities for OVH tenants at the OVH office in Bootle Village Coral Drive Bootle.	Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato) Head of Communities	December 2016
		Free Wi- fi locations across Sefton to be identified and promoted.	OVH Head of Strategic Support	December 2016
	Some services are not yet available on-line.	Service areas to review back office work to identify what can be done on-line, to include	All Service Heads	December 2016



		Adult and Children's Financial Assessments, Blue Badges and Education services.		
	Customers not routinely being advised about on line forms or where they can go to find out more information on the website.	All services to promote/signpost to self-serve.	All Service Heads	December 2016
	Website is not always user friendly to some service users, particularly those with impairments.	Website and links to be reviewed to ensure that they are active and fit for purpose and to meet the needs of more service users, particularly those with learning difficulties or other impairments.	Head of Strategic Support	December 2016
	Barriers to digital inclusion identified.	Testing on Web chat/website with People First to identify Improvements, for those with impairments. Scale up efforts to engage with a broad customer base to identify needs of users and where digital initiatives, training and further	Consultation, Engagement and Performance Officer Other Service heads OVH	December 2016



			opportunities can be realised.		
		Range of web based activities is limited.	Web chat to be rolled out across all transactional service areas. Customer Portal opportunities to be identified and assessed.	Head of Strategic Support Executive Director – Sefton Council (Charlotte Bailey)	December 2016
		Customers are sending emails rather than submitting a self-serve form which is creating double handling.	Reduce the number of emails being received.	All Service Heads Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
			Increase number of self-serve forms which go directly into back office processing systems.	All Service Heads Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
			Measure success rate and speed of processing of customers making requests through self-serve as opposed to email.	All Service Heads Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016



	Objective	Findings	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Due Date
7.	To reduce costs through eliminating duplication.	Customer transactions/applications being double handled or handed off to back office service areas for processing (e.g. blue badges/free school meals/ education financial support services/ adult social care/ELAS/warmer homes grants etc.)	Identify processes that can be integrated in order to streamline processes and reduce administration costs for the Council. In turn this will lead to achieving efficiencies/reducing costs for the Council.	All Service Heads Head of Schools and Families Head of Strategic Support Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016
		Customers facing administrative burdens in being asked to supply evidence and other information which can be obtained from other sources	Education services/Blue Badges – require joining up of information gathering – can be addressed at One Stop Shop. Will require review of process.	Head of Schools and Families Head of Regulation and Compliance	December 2016
		Service areas and partners are not sharing information about customers sufficiently.	Service areas and partners to undertake and share root cause analysis to determine what is causing demand and how mitigating action can be put in place.	All Service Heads	December 2016
		Information not being challenged at front line. For example, not picking	Front line staff to take more ownership of enquiries.	Head of Customer Services and Benefits (arvato)	December 2016

	up changes in income levels when the customer is in front of them e.g. pay shown on bank statements not being queried but just handed off to back office without asking the customer for more details.			
	Universal Credit customers having to attend at both DWP and Council offices for support with the UC claim and Council administered benefits.	Co-location with DWP opportunities need to be further explored and developed in Sefton.	Executive Director - Sefton Council (Charlotte Bailey)	December 2016
	DWP unable to provide more information to the Council about the reasons for claims being suspended, sanctioned and stopped, even with the claimants consent. For example, if someone is moving from ESA to JSA their income may well remain the same and they will still need to maintain support to continue to meet	Regular communication between the Council and DWP to continue and to include monitoring and reporting of debt and budgeting support being offered to claimants. DWP to provide claimants with signposting to debt advice via multi organisations funding in	DWP Partnership & Local Taxation Manager	December 2016



		<p>their housing and living costs whilst their claim is being reviewed.</p> <p>DWP only able to provide Council with high level data.</p>	Sefton.		
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13. VISION

The Customer Experience of Claiming Council Administered Benefits and Financial Support Working Group identified that customers would ideally like to see Sefton Council's administered benefits and financial support services delivered in a way that ensures it:-

- Continues to engage with customers who contact the Council to identify where improvements can be made, if there are any barriers and how technology can be used to better support them in terms of accessibility and availability
- Learns from feedback, surveys, comments and complaints
- Achieves better outcomes for the customer
- Provides clear, accurate and timely explanations (whether written, delivered electronically or spoken)
- Minimises the administrative burden on customers, in particular when completing forms for financial assistance
- Removes the need to supply further evidence from the customer by using information readily obtainable from local and central government information systems, registered social landlords, real time information from HMRC etc.
- Reduces the need for double handling of enquiries
- Meets the needs of our most vulnerable customers, in particular care leavers, low income working families, the elderly, those with mental health issues and the homeless and destitute
- Aims to resolve the majority of straightforward benefits service transactions and enquiries at the first point of contact
- Recognises that every contact counts, at any point of contact
- Identifies where additional support, including emergency support, may be made available or facilitated by the Council without the need for multiple visits/claims (for example Council Tax support, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, Education Transport Funding; Free School Meals, Emergency Limited Assistance (foodbank vouchers, essential goods for infants/children, emergency travel and utility top ups), Discretionary Housing Payments, Discretionary Council Tax Support, Council Tax payment plans, Benefit overpayment repayment plans, Electoral Registration, Blue Badges, Warmer Homes grants, Disabled Facilities grants etc.)
- Identifies customers who may need additional support and signposting to our other voluntary and community organisations that are able to offer support, including welfare and debt advisory services such as Sefton CAB (Money Advice); Foodbanks (Food provision and Welfare Advice), OVH (Housing) etc.
- Supports and encourages more of our customers to self-serve in order to continue to provide a responsive and effective service given the public sector budgetary constraints

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- Recognises that many of our customers are increasingly accessing our services on line, but some will prefer to contact us face to face or by telephone
- Ensures that debt advice and other welfare support skills of front line staff continue to be developed and be updated in partnership with Sefton CAB and other voluntary and community organisations
- Adapts and copes with the changes in benefits (e.g. Universal Credit) and the extra responsibilities that it places on both the Council and its partners to meet genuine need and maintain basic safety nets
- Continues to undertake root cause analysis where patterns emerge in order to reduce repeated requests and direct customers to CAB for money advice, budgeting skills, further support etc.

14. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

In producing this report on Customer Experience of Claiming Council Administered Benefits and Financial Support, acknowledgements and thanks are attributed to the following individuals for their time and input:-

- Key Witnesses - arvato – Mark Quillan and Diane Turner; Department for Work and Pensions – Margaret Denton, Alan Murphy and Linda Usher; One Vision Housing – Neil Kenwright; Sefton Citizens' Advice Bureau – Grant Bernard; Sefton Council – Karen Gray, Wayne Leatherbarrow and Jayne Vincent; and St. Leonard's Foodbank – Debbie Shelley
- Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council – Georgina Bentley, Tina Docherty, Jo Makin, Alison McKenzie-Folan, Lesley O'Halloran and Sam Tierney
- Bootle and Southport One Stop Shops and St. Peter's House Contact/Call Centre – Kurt Goldman, Mark Quillan and their staff for facilitating the visits.
- Lead Officers to the Review - Angela Ellis (Sefton Council) and Christine Finnigan (Sefton Council)

Thanks must also go to the Members of the Working Group who have worked hard and dedicated a great deal of time to this review, namely:-



Councillor Dave Robinson (Lead Member)



Councillor Kevin Cluskey

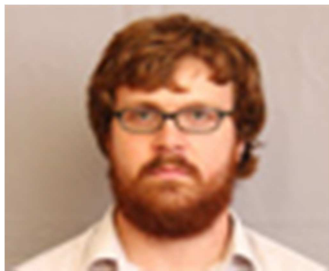




**Councillor Tony
Dawson**



**Councillor Sue
McGuire**



Councillor Rob Owens

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Sefton Council 

**Overview
& Scrutiny**



Agenda Item 5

Report to: Cabinet **Date of Meeting:** 23 June 2016

Subject: The Future of the Area Committees

Report of: Head of Regulation & Compliance **Wards Affected:** All

Is this a Key Decision? Yes **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes

Exempt/Confidential No

Purpose/Summary

To update members on the recent consideration of the operation of Area Committees following the reports to the three Area Committees in December 2015 and January 2016 and the comprehensive public engagement exercise that was completed during February/ March 2016.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is recommended to :

- 1) Consider and take account of the results of the consultation and engagement process set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- 2) Consider possible next steps as outlined in Paragraph 4 of the report

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		x	
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy		x	

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Reasons for the Recommendation:

To facilitate further development of options regarding the future of the Area Committees

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

A) Revenue Costs

There are no direct costs arising from the content of this report. However depending upon the outcome of this report a financial evaluation of the proposed methods of engagement will need to be reported at a future date.

(B) Capital Costs

Nil

Implications:

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

Legal – These are included in the report.
Human Resources - Nil
Equality
1. No Equality Implication <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains <input type="checkbox"/>

Impact on Service Delivery:

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The details are contained in the report and Annex 1

The Chief Finance Officer (FD4204/16) has been consulted and notes there are no direct financial implications arising from this report. It is also identified that depending upon the decisions made in respect of the report, a financial evaluation of the proposed methods of engagement will need to be reported at a future date.

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The Head of Regulation and Compliance is the author of the report (LD3487/16)

Are there any other options available for consideration?

To not continue with any further consideration of the future of Area Committees

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer: Jill Coule, Head of Regulation & Compliance

Tel: 0151 938 2031

Email: jill.coule@sefton.gov.uk

Background Papers:

There are no background papers.

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1. Background

- 1.1. Members will be aware that a report was considered by each of the three Area Committees during the December 2015 and January 2016 meeting cycles to consider the future of the Area Committees. The report can be accessed through the following link:

<http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s64283/Future%20of%20Area%20Committees%20Report%20JC%20RA%20v2.pdf>

- 1.2. Following consideration of this item by the Area Committees, the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel determined a consultation approach at its meeting on 29 January 2016, the report for which can be found through the following link:

<http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s65169/Agenda%20Item%204gArea%20Committees%20Proposal.pdf>

- 1.3. That engagement process has now concluded and the results of that process have been analysed. Attached at Appendix 1 is the consultation report dated May 2016. The consultation and engagement process took place over an 8 week period from 1 February to 31 March 2016. A wide range of methods were utilised including:

- On-line surveys
- Community events
- Street Surveys/vox pox
- Promotion through the Council's website and wider communications
- Articles in the local newspapers

- 1.4. A number of key themes, issues and questions arose during the pre-consultation dialogue and the consultation and engagement process itself. These have been captured below. Before considering the detail of the consultation, it is important to note the context of the consideration of Area Committees.

1.5. Context of consideration of Area Committees

- 1.6. Area Committees were set up in 2000 as a response by Sefton Council to the introduction of the Local Government Act 2000. Councils were obliged under the Act to replace the traditional committee structure established under the Local Government Act 1972 and have a clear split between the Executive and Regulatory functions of the Council where decisions can be made and the Overview and Scrutiny function was introduced. Councils could introduce Area Committees, and not all Councils have Area Committees.

- 1.7. The purpose of establishing Area committees is well rehearsed in the previous report considered by the Area Committees in December 2015 and January 2016.

- 1.8. When Area Committees were set up the world of communication was very different to today.

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- In 2000, emails were only just beginning to be used at both work and at home,
 - There were no universal social media services such as Facebook and Twitter
 - The increasing use and reliance upon mobile technology which has changed rapidly from simply being a telephone to internet access through which people can email, Facebook, tweet, snapchat etc.
 - Traditionally members of the public expected to access councillors through attendance at meetings, phone calls, surgeries and/or letter. Now expectations have altered and councillors are expected to engage electronically with their communities as well as the more traditional methods of engagement.
- 1.9. Analysis of the attendance of members of the public at the area committees tells us that this has declined in recent years. Many would attribute that to the relatively recent reconfiguration of the Area Committees themselves. Anecdotally staff who attend Area Committees would confirm that there are generally 2 types of attendee at Area Committees, namely the very small number of members of the public who attend Area Committees regularly (circa 6-8 members of the public for all of the Area Committees) and those that attend for a particular issue/question. The numbers can vary on this second type of attendee. There is an odd exception to this pattern of attendance when there is a significant issue of importance which will generate local interest. A recent example was the extra-ordinary meeting of the Southport Area Committee to consider the Nextdom report.
- 1.10. Work, life balance can mean for many members of the public that it is difficult to attend a Council meeting. Child care commitments, work shift patterns and lack of familiarity with the environment of a formal committee meeting can be off putting to people wishing to attend. Area Committee can assume a level of mobility to attend the committee meeting, which for the Sefton Central Area Committee needs to be a high level of mobility to accommodate the number of venues used.
- 1.11. The communication channels such as Facebook, Twitter and websites etc. offer much more extended communication reach for citizens to know what is going on within a council, how to communicate with it and to raise queries, concerns. A programme of training for councillors to optimise these channels is planned for the new municipal year. Further optimisation of the thousands of email addresses held by the council for residents is being considered as a way of contacting residents. Consideration is also being given to reactivating the citizens' E panel as a formal tool for consultation in future.
- 1.12. Vital statistics to support these areas of work include the fact that the Council has 36,000 followers on Facebook, over 12,000 followers on Twitter and over 21,000 email addresses of our residents in our library service alone.
- 1.13. Face to face contact with the Council and councillor's still exists and remains a useful way to do business. For the Council, the primary face is through its One Stop Shops which offers a wide range of service information and transactions through a well-regarded service. Co-location of services in our libraries and leisure centres has increased contact opportunities. A number of forums exist where members of the public can attend such as the Dementia Forum and Adults Forum.

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- 1.14. The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel use a well-established consultation framework set out in **Appendix 2**. The Panel, recognising the limited attendance at the Area Committee meetings has infrequently used the Area Committees to effect that important engagement and consultation work.
- 1.15. Consideration of the Area Committee has resulted in consideration of wider issues affecting both the Council and councillors. The issues are:
 - Communication between the Council and its citizens
 - Communication between the Councillors and their communities
 - Consultation and engagement between the Council and its citizens

2. Findings arising from the Consultation carried out in February/March 2016

- 2.1. Over 230 people and/or organisations involved themselves with the consultation and engagement process through the various channels. In combination, over 50% of participants wanted to retain the Area Committee forum, but not necessarily in the way that it currently operated or on the same geographical footprint. Anecdotally of those that responded, many were previously unaware of the existence of those Area Committees. No direct question was asked in that regard and hence it cannot be statistically verified, but it was a common observation to staff carrying out the public consultation and engagement work.
- 2.2. The details of the consultation exercise are set out in **Appendix 1** and the key findings arising from the exercise are as follows:
 - a) Southport Area Committee attracts the best attendance and the public raises issues at the Area Committee.
 - b) Attendances at South Sefton and Central Sefton Area Committees have declined since the last review of the frequency and geographical base for Area Committees was conducted 3 years ago.
 - c) Police attendance at the Area Committees was beneficial but it was thought that this could be achieved through alternative means.
 - d) The highest response to keep the Area Committees came from the respondents in Southport and the highest response not to keep them was from South Sefton area.
 - e) Generally members of the public are not aware of the existence of Area Committees but there was an expressed desire to see their retention. The Committees were seen as a way for members of the public to raise issues and to engage with the Council and Councillors
 - f) If Area Committees did not exist then the preferred methods of engagement were to contact the Council directly, contact with their ward Councillors directly or MP either by telephone, email or a visit to the One Stop Shop. The answer to this question was influenced by age group of respondent, with older generations seeking more telephone and face to face contact.

The key issues mentioned in the comments of the responses can be categorised as follows:

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- The character of and attendance at the three area committees
- Southport's Area Committee was created following a local referendum to have a town council.
- The ability for members of the public to ask questions of and have contact with of elected members
- What might happen to the budgets associated with the area committees
- The role of Town and Parish Councils
- Local issues to be considered by local councillors
- Police attendance and information

2.3. Attendance at the Three Area Committees

It is fair to reflect that the character and attendance of each of the three Area Committees is very different across the borough.

The Southport Area Committee has been established on its larger geographical footprint for far longer than both the Central and South Sefton Area Committees. This amongst other factors means that the forum of the Southport Area Committee operating in the way it does, is better understood and awareness of this Area Committee was higher in the local populace and overall attendance was higher.

Both Central Sefton and South Sefton Area Committees have only been established on their current geographical footprint for three years. Particularly for the Central Sefton Area Committee, it was considered that the areas that had been joined together were too geographically disparate, involved too many councillors with the combination of borough and local parish/town councillors and attracted very low attendances from members of the public.

South Sefton survey results demonstrate a willingness to relinquish the Area Committee forum, commenting at times that they were unnecessary or other opportunities could be utilised to achieve the same outcome.

Given these factual differences, a number of those responding felt that the Southport Area Committee should be given special consideration. It was considered that a one size fits all response to the future of Area Committees would not suit Southport.

2.4. Southport's Area Committee was Created Following a Local Referendum to have a Town Council.

Much has been made of the previous referendum held in the Southport area which offered three options. Those three options were to retain the existing model of 3 Area Committees in the Southport area, to merge the three Area Committees or to opt for a Town Council. Given the options available of no change or a change that will levy extra tax on individuals, it is unsurprising that the public opted for change but with no direct cost implications i.e. merge the three area committees. It is unusual for the geographical footprint of an area committee to be established through these means.

From the historical reports reviewed which established the referendum process, it can be seen that this referendum for Southport was not done in isolation and that the

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referendum was conducted for a number of reasons, including whether to establish or not as the case may be, town or parish councils.

To establish and to disestablish an area committee need not be legally done by way of referendum in accordance with the local government review procedures that were in place in 2003 or indeed that exist to date.

Members of Cabinet will note that a subsequent report was asked for and supplied to the Southport Area Committee to detail the current legal process to establish a town or parish Council. Details of this report can be found at:

<http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s66282/0014-Report%20Area%20Committee%20re%20parish.pdf>

This report outlines the main ways in which a review can be held to form, merge or disestablish a town or parish council. Since this is not what is in question re the future of Area Committees, it is not considered that the same route need be utilised to change, merge or disestablish an Area Committee.

2.5. The ability for members of the public to ask questions of and have contact with of elected members

Accessibility to members and the ability to ask questions either through formal or informal channels has been prominent in the responses that have been submitted and has been expressed in a variety of ways. For example some have expressed frustration with the rules of the Area Committee and feel that they cannot participate at key parts of the meeting/debate. Others have felt that this is their only chance to have contact with local councillors and to see them in action within their locality.

Some respondents have asked for arrangements about councillors' availability to be more widely available such as surgery times etc. Others have said that the Area Committees are the only chance for local councillors to have any say over local issues. There is a perception by some respondents that there is a lack of interest/engagement in other/northerly parts of the borough by Sefton's leadership who are based in the South of the borough.

What is clear and obvious going forward is how the Council interacts with its citizens, how often, what channel(s) it uses and what good/modern practice of council to citizen communication looks like needs to be appraised, understood and adopted where possible.

The process of consultation and engagement on the subject of Area Committees seems to have become the focal point for this conversation and it is the wider issue that needs to perhaps be determined. This would cover the less formal channels of communication between a Council and its citizens.

In hand with that, a review of citizen interactions through the formal business of the Council should also be considered. This would be a constitutional review of methods of interaction such as, petitions, opportunity for members of the public to attend meetings and ask questions etc. Consideration could be given to other Council's means and modes in this regard.

In both of these instances, optimum advantage should be taken of electronic means but not exclusively and not so as to 'disenfranchise' sectors of the borough's communities.

2.6. What might happen to the budgets associated with the area committees?

Some concern was expressed by respondents about the management of the budgets if Area Committees were to cease.

As previously stated, it is not a legal requirement for Councils to have Area Committees. Therefore there are tried and tested methods available through other Council's as to how local ward councillors are allocated money and how expenditure is agreed between in those local ward councillors.

Examples from elsewhere are web pages linked to the Councillors details to say how much money is available in the locality that they represent, what it has been spent on in the past, how applications for the money can be made, how they are approved and what the criteria might be.

Some Councils have it that each councillor has a set amount of money and it is a matter for the Councillors as to whether they combine their money to spend it on an issue within their locality.

Any such expenditure is normally approved by Head of Communities (or some such similar post holder) in conjunction with Finance officers. Such approval is given so as to ensure that the criteria are being adhered to and that no long term commitment is being entered into which at a future date the Council would be expected to honour.

In other words Area Committees do not and have not existed so as to approve local expenditure by ward councillors. No reductions would be made to the allocation of funding as a result of this report.

2.7. The role of Town and Parish Councils

About 30% of the population of Sefton enjoys an additional level of representation and bureaucracy through a Parish or Town Council. These bodies were quite rightly vocal throughout the consultation and engagement process. There was a degree of similarity in some of the responses in that many felt that a closer connection should be had between the Borough Council and their Parish Council. Many referred to the Parish Charter in this regard and did not feel that it was given due regard or sufficient publicity amongst both borough councillors and officers of the council.

The Charter can be found at

https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/519242/parish_and_town_council_charter.pdf

Some of the respondents offered to co-ordinate meetings with Borough councillors in their locality and some thought that the previous structure of more geographically centred meetings was a better approach that should be reviewed and offered again.

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It would seem in these areas particularly that there is a strong framework for meetings to take place outside of the Area Committee structure that could largely achieve the same aims. Such an approach could have the added benefit of achieving more of the aims and ways of working as set out in the Parish Charter.

2.8. Local issues to be considered by local councillors

The question of geography was a common issue across many of the respondents. The geography of the Central and South Sefton Area Committees seemed particularly troublesome; did not seem to have settled down over the three year period and had left members of the Committees feeling that the Committee was too large, unwieldy and in some instances undemocratic.

In the Central Sefton Area Committee area, responses on this issue seemed, perhaps due to the passage of time since the establishment of the Committee, to have been either overcome or it was never an issue at all.

In the Central Area Committee area, it was felt that the larger footprint of the committee had led to a significant reduction in attendance of members of the public at the meetings as the agenda's reflecting the geography were too cumbersome or that the committee had become too intimidating to attend. Due to the parish councils in this location, the number of Borough and Parish Councillors attending this meeting if all attended is 38.

2.9. Police attendance and information

The police interact with the Council through a number of forums including Area Partnership and Operational Groups. In addition the police regularly attend parish council meetings.

Like any other organisation the police also offers communication for residents, councillors and council officers alike, through:

1. Meetings
2. Telephone calls
3. Emails and letters
4. The police website
5. Police and public contact
6. MerseyNow
7. Twitter
8. Newsletters
9. Have Your Say quarterly meetings
10. Homewatch and Residents groups.
11. Drop in Surgeries

Attendance at all of these forums inevitably means that there is some duplication for the police. It is also fair to say that by the making the Area Committees larger, it has meant that police colleagues can have several Inspectors at an Area Committee meeting at any one time, which can be a drain on their resources.

Much of the information conveyed by the Inspectors at the meeting can be found on the

<https://www.police.uk/merseyside/> website which allows all to access to crime data about a particular locality. This data is not as up to date as the data presented at the Area Committee but is nonetheless useful.

3. Outstanding Issues

Looking at the issues identified in the paragraphs above it seems important to consider these issues in turn:

- Communication between the Council and its citizens
- Communication between the Councillors and their communities
- Consultation and engagement between the Council and its citizens
- Communication between Councillors, partners and citizens

Communication between the Council and its citizens

The opportunities are as follows:

1. Face to face through appointments, meetings, transactional and information points such as libraries and leisure centres
2. Emails and letters
3. Facebook and Twitter
4. Website
5. Numerous informal opportunities as many of the Council's officers are in fact its citizens.

Communication between the Councillors and their communities

The opportunities are as follows:

1. Face to face through appointments, meetings and surgeries
2. Emails and letters
3. A number of councillors actively use either or both Facebook, and Twitter.
4. Numerous informal opportunities where councillors are involved in ward work, charity work, governor or other trust positions etc.

Consultation and engagement between the Council and its citizens

The Council adopted a Public Engagement and Consultation Framework in 2009, which has been used to consult on major and minor issues since. The Panel ensures that the identified standards are adhered to. The Framework also has been extended to a number of partner organisations and they are detailed in paragraph 1 of the document contained in Appendix 2.

Notably the Area Committees have not regularly formed part of the toolbox used for public engagement and consultation.

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The Council needs to be flexible in the way that it consults with its communities in the future. This is needed more and more given the journey of reductions that is going to be required in the public sector in the future.

Sometimes this public consultation and engagement will need to be very subject based such as the Carers strategy was recently, or it might need to be very locality based such as the closure of a school. An Area Committee footprint might be the very footprint that is needed to deliver a face to face consultation opportunity – or it might not be.

Communication between Councillors, partners and citizens

The main forum other than Area Committees are the Operational Groups and the Area Partnership Boards. These fora are not universally available across the Borough. This network is supplemented by the existence of the parish and town councils.

Notably a number of the Borough councillors are now twin hatted councillors in that they are also parish/town councillors. This can serve to strengthen the connection between borough and those entities.

At the area partnership boards and the operational groups the relevant partners are present to consider issues of concern in a particular locality, with a view to allocating resources appropriately and to avoid duplication/overlap where necessary.

Operational groups currently operate in Southport and Litherland and Ford. Other areas have stopped/ did not start operational groups. The Operational groups were set up when Community Safety Partnerships were disbanded. The groups work on agreed actions, usually agreed in the meeting, and in line with Area partnership priorities and Area committee requests. The Chair of the Operational group is usually the Chair of the Area Committee.

The role of the Neighbourhoods department within Area Committees has changed since their introduction in 2000. Initially Neighbourhoods officers would attend the Area Committee meeting, where discussions around ward issues and Ward funds were held, and these discussions were then acted upon by the officer. Over time the Neighbourhoods team has evolved, there is a close relationship with ward councillors and issues are discussed daily, and Ward funds are allocated without having to be presented at the Area Committee first. The Area Coordinator compiles a Budget Monitoring and Area Committee update report for the Committee Meeting and also supports the Clerk of the committee in obtaining responses to questions posed in the public forum section of the meeting.

In other words the Area Co-ordinator does not wait for work to be generated by the Area Committee but actively ensures matters are progressed within the relevant locality.

As a result, the Area Committee receives an Area Management update and a budget report.

Observations about the Area Committees

What is clear from the work done to date is that:

- a. Residents can ask questions at an Area Committee meeting provided they do so in advance but cannot participate in any debates.
- b. Police reports can be heard at the meetings
- c. Local Councillors are visible to those attending the meetings and seen to be in action discussing operational matters of local importance
- d. Ward related issues are considered at the meetings but it is not focussed on one or 2 wards.
- e. The decisions that the Area Committees make can be considered and determined in other forums as detailed in the report referred to in paragraph 1.1 above.
- f. An analysis of agenda items shows that beyond the items that constitutionally need to be referred to the Area committee that agenda are quite varied. They are varied to the extent that reports are commissioned from officers to advise and inform on various matters of local interest, some of which could be resolved without the need for a report through proactive ward work with local councillors and officers.
- g. The original purpose of area committees was to provide a forum of consultation to take place. An objective analysis on any level can only say that this is partially effective at this time due to the level of public engagement with the committees per se.
- h. A further purpose of the Area Committees was to provide the opportunity for members to make decisions on environmental, transport and planning matters. On paper this sounds like a valid and important forum. A review of the terms of reference for and the work of the Area Committee does not fully support this statement. With respect to environmental matters, these can and are considered in other forums such as Overview and Scrutiny and the Licensing and Regulatory Committee. Environmental concerns such as grot spots, litter etc. could be dealt with outside the committee through councillor/officer interaction or through public/officer or business/officer interaction and are often considered on the Operational Groups or through the work of the Area Co-ordinators.

Planning matters re applications and enforcement are already considered through the formal channel of the planning committee and planning policy is referred to Council for consideration. These are not and cannot legally be determined by the Area Committee and by history they have not.

The three Area Committees have historically been a channel through which consultation has taken place, but due to attendance numbers are not currently used in this way. Finally the mention of transport issues seems to have centrally become a matter for considering passing comments on the making of traffic regulation orders. Whilst the Area Committee is again an important consultation step, this is not one that could not be achieved through other means.

A number of other ways of working were cited in the original report referred to in paragraph 1.1 above. Any one of those ways working could be adapted to suit the needs of Sefton's communities, councillors and the Council itself so as to achieve the important aspect of democratic participation in Council business both by members of council and by members of the public. How that democratic principle manifests itself in Sefton will need to be considered as part of the next steps identified below.

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Whilst the ambition of the review of the Area Committee has never been about saving money, even in these difficult times, consideration has been given to the possibility of reducing the amount of officer time spent attending the meetings and/or writing preparing reports given the plethora of other ways of working and communicating.

What is clear is that the way that the Area Co-ordinators work, in daily contact with councillors, partners etc. would not change. Area Co-ordinators currently prepare budget reports for the Area Committees to consider. This could be reported in other ways to councillors, communities and generally.

4. Possible Next Steps

- i. Review modern methods of engagement between councils and their communities and councillors and their communities
- ii. Review the Council constitution with a view to ensuring that methods for citizens to formally engage with its Council are made as simple and effective as possible through petitions, questions attendance at meetings etc.
- iii. Review ways of communicating information about councillors' expenditure in their wards and associated decision making processes.
- iv. Consider whether a system of escalation for the public where a councillor cannot be contacted, does not respond to contact or does not make themselves available for surgeries etc. can be developed.
- v. Develop a programme of communication training for members emphasising the social media aspects of modern communication.
- vi. Develop an e-panel for consultation
- vii. Review links between council websites and partner's websites, tweets Facebook etc. to make sure links are optimised and up to date.
- viii. Consider whether further examination of Area Committees could be undertaken by way of a Scrutiny Review.

Consultation Report:

The future of Area Committees in Sefton



Summary

This report provides a summary of the findings from the consultation and engagement process undertaken to consider whether Area Committees are the most effective way of engaging members of the public in Council business. The consultation dialogue commenced with a report to each of the three Area Committees in December 2015 and January 2016.

Feedback from the Area Committees

A report on the consultation process for the future of Area Committees in Sefton was prepared by the Head of Regulation and Compliance and submitted to the Area Committees for consideration in December 2015 and January 2016. The following comments were made and recorded in the minutes of the meetings:-

Southport Area Committee – 2nd December 2015

Members of the Committee, the Local Advisory Group Member and members of the public raised the following points and asked that they be submitted as part of the consultation process:-

- Where had the report come from? Was it officer or Cabinet Member led? Jill Coule, Head of Regulation and Compliance, indicated that it was a combination of both; that upon inheriting the Democratic Services Team following the Senior Management Review, she was looking at all aspects of her service area including the most effective way of engaging members of the public in Council business; and that the Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services also wanted a review of the matter
- The report is the death knell for Area Committees
- The Area Committee, via the Police Issues item and as acknowledged by the Southport Police Inspectors, was a very effective and active way for the public to engage with the Police
- Meetings of the Cabinet are over very quickly. Could Cabinet meetings be held in the evening at Southport to enable members of the public to attend and ask questions if Area Committees are wound up
- Cabinet decisions are decided before the meeting and no debate takes place; and yet Cabinet meetings have to be attended by a host of senior officers that was a great expense to the Council. However, at Southport Area Committee, issues of local concern are frequently debated and Southport residents are in attendance to hear such debates
- Paragraph 1.1 of the report was incorrect because initially 9 Area Committees were established with three in Southport. The establishment of the current Southport Area Committee was the result of a referendum held in 2004 and this was not referred to in the report
- Southport Area Committee serves a “real” community as opposed to Central Sefton Area Committee which is large and unwieldy comprising of three separate and unconnected communities
- The loss of Southport Area Committee would lead to a centralisation of power at the expense of Southport’s local communities
- The proposals would be another nail in

- This is a devolution issue. Southport is being drawn south towards Liverpool resulting in a loss of local accountability for local residents
- Southport Area Committee was well attended by local residents in comparison to the other two Area Committees
- The proposal to cease Southport Area Committee should be resisted as it is an excellent Area Committee
- The reality was that the political decision had already been taken elsewhere
- The cessation of Southport Area Committee would lead to marginal savings that would have a disproportionate negative effect on the public
- There was a case for devolution in Sefton with more delegation of powers to a local level rather than less
- Area Committees may not work well in other areas of Sefton but they had alternative democratic structures in place such as Town/Parish Councils
- If Southport Area Committee was lost so too would be the ability for local people to inform local decisions and spend local money

South Sefton Area Committee – 18th January 2016

Members of the Committee and Local Advisory Group Member raised the following points:-

- Public attendance at South Sefton Area Committee had declined;
- There were a number of methods of communicating with the public such as internet and twitter which were not so well developed when the Area Committees were established;
- Having a larger South Sefton Committee compared to Area Committees covering just two wards did not encourage attendance as the meetings were not as easy to access and covered wider areas of interest;
- Many Members of the Public seemed to be unaware of the meetings;
- The reports in section C of the Agenda may not be of interest to many of the public who might attend;
- Members indicated that the proposed review of Area Committees was timely, and there was a need for consultation with a view to providing a communication and engagement process with the public which reflected current needs and demands.

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Central Sefton Area Committee – 7th January 2016

Members of the Committee and Parish Councillors raised the following points:-

- There were more efficient ways for residents and the community to engage with the Council than the Area Committee;
- The merger of Formby, Crosby and Sefton East Parishes Area Committees into Central Sefton Area Committee (CSAC) created a Committee that was too large and cumbersome and did not serve the community well;
- The public attendance at the Area Committee meetings had steadily fallen;
- Councillors holding public meetings or engaging with residents through their surgery would be more effective and efficient than CSAC;
- Residents could arrange to meet with officers direct – which should be communicated to the public;
- The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel was currently underused;
- The social networking site streetlife.com was an effective method of public engagement, but should not be used for political views;
- The size of Central Sefton Area Committee has led to a lack of engagement;
- Queries were raised about the functions of CSAC and if they were assimilated into other Council Committees, how would residents raise questions and queries – i.e. would they have to raise a petition for every query they had;
- The majority of discussions held this evening were really Ward or surgery issues and this was typical;
- The cessation of Area Committees was the removal of public contact and engagement;
- Area Committees were still a useful way of engaging with the public;
- Any re-structure of Area Committees would necessarily have to be at a more local level;
- The previous Area Committee structure was more effective and based at a local level;
- Area Committees had somewhat lost their way, they were created as a tool to counter-balance the Cabinet's power, however, with so few decisions being "called in" they were struggling to find a role to fulfil;
- Individual Wards could call meetings at Ward/Town level;
- There was currently a gap between CSAC's aspirations and abilities;
- Few questions were asked in the Public Forum which suggested that residents were not aware of the Committee's existence;

- Any future structure would necessarily have to be a diminution of the existing structure into manageable groups of people;
- The Police attendance at CSAC and their reports and presentations were beneficial, but this could be achieved through alternative means/structures; and
- There were large issues surrounding Sefton's public engagement. A sophisticated strategy should be developed.

The Consultation & Engagement Plan

A consultation and engagement plan was considered by the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel in January 2016, with the aim to consider whether Area Committees are the most effective way of engaging with members of the public for Council business.

The consultation considered:-

- What is the current awareness of Area Committees
- Functions of the Area Committees
- How people currently engage with the Council and Councillors
- How people can engage with the Council and Councillors in the future (if Area Committees no longer exist)
- What are the barriers that people experience in engaging with the Council
- Any suggestions for improvement

The consultation and engagement process took place over an eight week period from 1st February to 31st March and included a wide range of methods including an on-line survey, community events and street surveys. In total, in excess of 230 people engaged with the process. There were some common themes that repeatedly emerged during the pre-consultation dialogue and the consultation and engagement process:

- Southport Area Committee is well attended by local residents and local people raise issues
- South Sefton and Central Area Committees' public attendance has declined following the merger of Area Committees; creating committees that are too large
- Having devolved structures was important, including ward based structures
- The police attendance at meetings and their reports are beneficial but some thought that they could be achieved through alternative means and structures
- Generally, members of the public are not aware of Area Committee meetings and the Ward Councillors and their surgeries. Dates of meetings and surgeries should be widely advertised
- Whilst respondents are generally not aware of Area Committees, an expressed interest to retain them was given as a way of members of the public being able to raise issues and to engage with the council and councillors
- The highest response to keep the Area Committees came from respondents in the Southport area and the highest response to not keep them was from the South Sefton area.

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- If the Area Committees didn't exist, the preferred methods respondents indicated that they would use to contact the Council would be direct contact with their ward councillor or MP, telephone, email or a visit to the One Stop Shop. The methods differed according to age group
- Some common barriers to raising issues and talking to the Council and Councillors include not getting a response and responses taking a long time and information on the website not being up to date.

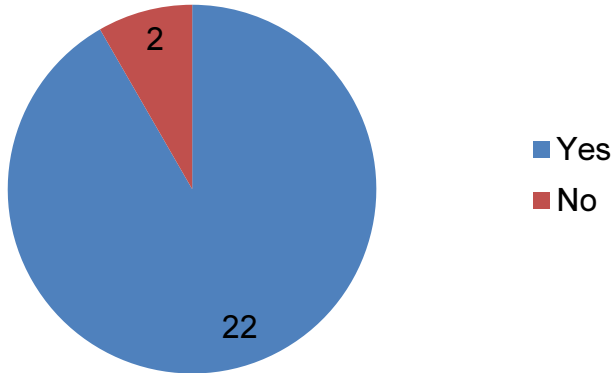
Key findings from the on-line survey

The survey on e-consult was completed by 24 people. The survey included 7 questions:-

1. Are you aware of Area Committees?

22 (92%) of those who completed the survey were aware of Area Committees whilst 2 (8%) were not

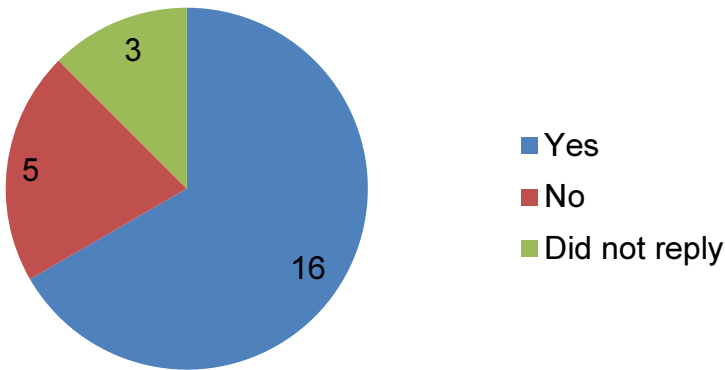
Are you aware of Area Committees?



2. Have you ever attended one or raised an issue at one?

16 people (67%) had attended an Area Committee or raised an issue, 5 people hadn't and 3 people didn't post a reply to this question.

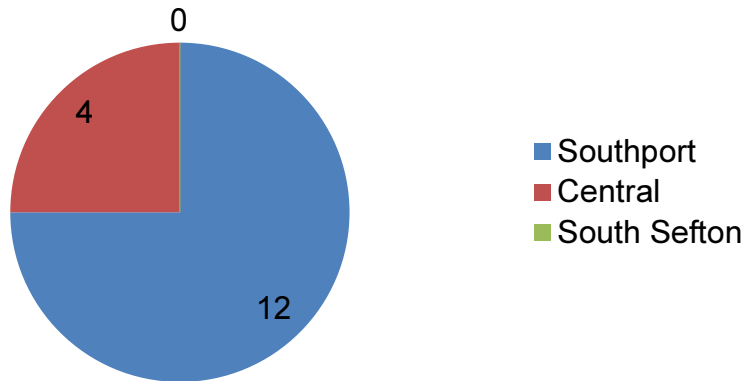
Have you ever attended one or raised an issue at one?



3. Which Area Committee have you attended? (consultees could tick more than one answer if they had attended more than one Area Committee)

12 people indicated that they had attended **Southport Area Committee**, 4 said they had been to **Central Sefton Area Committee** and **nobody** indicated that they had attended the **South Sefton Area Committee**.

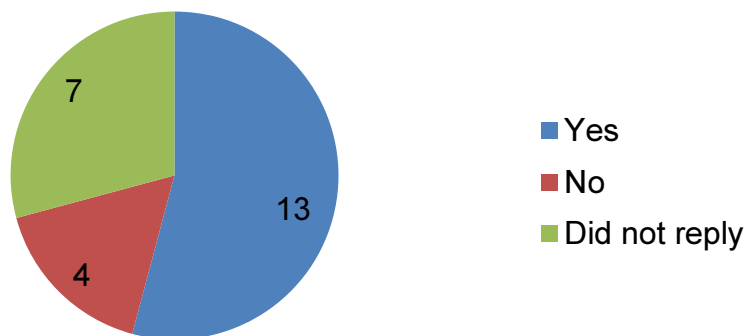
Which Area Committee have you attended?



4. Should the Council keep Area Committees as a way for members of the public to raise issues with and talk to the Council and Councillors?

13 people (54%) said that yes the Council should keep Area Committees, 4 (17%) said no that they shouldn't be kept and 7 (29%) people did not answer the question

Should the Council keep Area Committees as a way for members of the public to raise issues with and talk to the Council and Councillors?



5. What would be your preferred way of raising issues with and talking to the Council and Councillors if Area Committees did not exist?

Respondents were given the opportunity to enter free text in response to this question. These are their comments:-

- At the moment the area committees are too big, the issues in say Formby are totally different from Crosby as are Aintree and Maghull, so having the committee widespread is a waste of time as the elected members can wrongly influence decisions that are not in their remitted area. The area committee in the present format is a waste of time, as the elected members do not take the public opinions seriously and make decisions under the whip usually with the Labour controlled Council influence; hence the reason the Sefton area is slowly but surely creeping into the abyss.
- By telephoning/emailing/or writing to the Chief Executive of Sefton as none of the councillors take any notice or reply very often passing them onto an officer of the Council to reply.
- Email to local councillor
- It would depend on the issue but this could range from simple email to public protest at Council Or Cabinet meetings
- As I had not known about this sort of Committee I would not have attended and did not know I had a way of putting my views across. I have my local Councillors phone number and make contact if I come across a problem but I would prefer to know what goes on rather than read about it too late in the press.
- Another venue to be found and councillors leading on this.
- A group of Councillors who are members of the Cabinet regularly holding Question Time style meetings for the public to raise issues at regular, well-advertised Southport Town Hall sessions. As the Cabinet takes the final decisions they should hold some of their meetings in Southport at which local residents could hear the discussion and how the Cabinet reaches its decisions.
- Writing or e mail
- I want the area committees to continue.
- The Council already has appropriate committees and Council, to which members of the public are entitled to attend. Public question time could and can feature more prominently in existing meetings with no need for added localised meetings.
- Telephone, e-mail, direct approach with Cllrs (if they are ever available)
- Direct contact (letter or e-mail) with a Ward Councillor or Council Department.
- Talking directly to our councillors, however it's a waste of time as Southport councillors are always outvoted
- Email consultation group to collect views and give opinions. Maybe have AGM?

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6. What do you see as the key barriers to raising issues and talking to the Council and Councillors?

These are the comments received from respondents:-

- The main barrier to change is that even if your elected member raises an issue on your behalf it can easily be overruled by the Labour controlled Council, Overview & Scrutiny has no teeth and a waste of time again, as decisions are also made under the whip.
- Queries from residents on the work of the Council are not appreciated and answers are glib and do not answer the concerns raised.
- None.
- Remoteness of Southport from the seat of power plus disinterest by Sefton Councillors to hear the alternative voice of the people of Southport and a political unwillingness to listen to Southport Councillors who strive to represent the people of Southport.
- Not knowing when and where they meet and what local issues are being discussed and how they will affect me or my area.
- None.
- Time and expense involved in travelling from Southport to Bootle where nearly all key council offices are located. No substitute for residents being able to sometimes talk to council officers face to face, particularly planning issues.
- Some people don't have access to computers or do not know how to use them, people do not want to visit other venues, like myself I like to speak directly to a councillor or meeting at my local location, we have already lost enough of our valuable local control.
- A barrier would be if the area committee did not exist.
- Continuing government cuts mean public expectations can't be met.
- Lack of action taken and lack of accountability by members of the council. No one seems to be able to make a decision. Lack of transparency of obtained information on issues. Incoherent information being given.
- A reluctance of Sefton Officers and Cllrs to make themselves available via Q2 above.
- Some Councillors do not respond to e-mail contacts. Council Departments can take exceptionally long periods to respond and then may not deal with the issue raised.
- As previously stated why should councillors from other areas vote down what we want for our area.
- Time and effort to get to the Committee meetings.

7. Do you have any other views or comments?

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Respondents were given the opportunity to make any additional comments about Area Committees or engaging with the Council and Councillors. These are their comments:

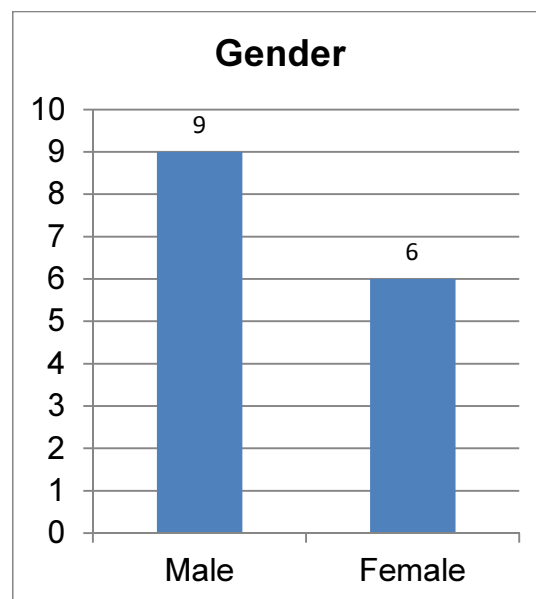
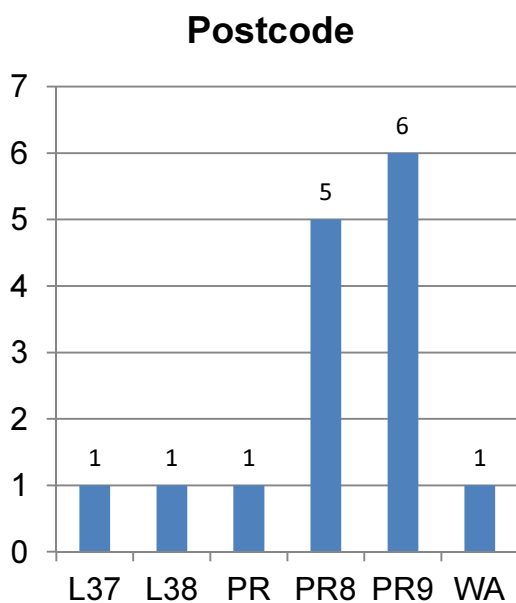
- The state of Crosby Village is atrocious, there is little to no investment going to Crosby and Formby, even Maghull and Aintree for that matter, it is all centred in Bootle and Southport Why not get rid of the Area committees, and 50% of Councillors and just railroad plans through against public wishes as you do at the moment.
- When questions are raised at the Area Committees they should be answered by the Councillors not the passed onto the officers.
- Dates of area committee meetings should be posted on the notice board outside Southport Town Hall.
- Southport is different in culture to the bulk of Sefton, we are a tourist town and as such have some very specific needs to satisfy the needs of our visitors. Sefton Council has struggled to understand those needs and continues to take actions which hinder or interfere with tourism. Action taken on the Southport Development Plan is a good first step, but unless rapid change occurs more and more Southport residents will hear the Southport out of Sefton call.
- I do hope that the Area Committees can be kept going and we are made more aware of when they take place and when we can attend and a preview of their discussions made available
- Yes, I feel from the perspective of being a councillor in Sefton, in Southport that we really need to keep these committees going. They are vital for the community of Southport as residents can attend to ask questions, hear reports from the Police and other organisations and also hear what their local councillors have to say and what they are doing on issues that are being raised. Also various partners i.e. the Bid Team in Southport and Emma Atkinson the Director come along frequently to give information out first hand and to answer questions. Margaret Carney the Chief Executive of Sefton Council has also been along to speak to residents and answer questions on the Development plan. At the last Area Committee meeting in Southport nearly 100 members of the public attended. So I firmly believe these area committee meetings, well in Southport at any rate need to be kept.
- Southport Area Committee is the only convenient forum for members of the public to directly address and question members of the council and, when there are specific important issues affecting the town to have issues explained directly by senior council officers. A special Southport Area Committee meeting about the Nexus report attended by the Chief Executive attracted around 100 residents with many constructive comments put forward by locals.
- local issues are for local people to comment on, they need to be circulated better so local people know when and where a meeting is, do not rely on just the visitor paper in Southport, it is losing readers all the time
- I would like the area committee to have more say on how OUR town was run rather than councillors from Bootle who show little regard or knowledge of OUR town of Southport.
- The Liverpool City Model based on Wards with Cllrs supported by teams is, in my opinion, the way to go.

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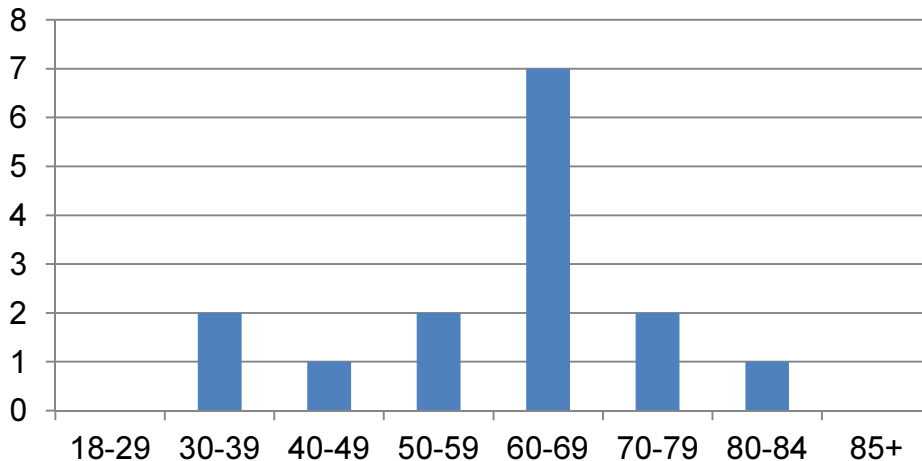
APPENDIX 1

- Area Committees provide an important means of finding out about actions being taken by the Council or proposed to be taken. There is the ability for the Area Committee to invite partner agencies or others to make presentations to the Committee explaining local developments and how the public can assist. The local media attend the Committee and are able to then publish information put into the public domain at Committee. The ability to raise questions by members of the public and obtain the views not only of the relevant officers, but importantly that of elected Councillors; Some Areas do not want to have another formal area of local government and the Area Committee to some extent provides the necessary local contact. Area Committees, where there are no Parish Councils, could be strengthened by allowing the Committee to exercise a primary decision making function over those functions that can be exercised by a Parish Council.
- Yes, the majority of people are sick to death of being in Sefton, we pay higher insurance because we are linked with Liverpool, and nothing is done that is our decision.

Demography and Equalities Data



Age Group



Key findings from community events

The following are the key findings from the 14 community events that were held in the five townships across the Borough. These events were advertised and members of the public had an opportunity to book on prior to the event or to turn up at the event of their choice. The events were run as small focus group style consultation in a relaxed informal atmosphere. At the start of each event, a short presentation was given which provided details of the background to the proposals. This was followed by a facilitated discussion session based around the following questions:-

1. Are you aware of Area Committees?
2. If yes, have you ever attended one or raised an issue at one?
3. Should the Council keep Area Committees as a way for members of the public to raise issues with and talk to the Council and Councillors?
4. What would be your preferred way of raising issues and talking to the Council and Councillors if Area Committees did not exist?
5. Do people have any other views or comments?

The table below shows the attendance at each of the events and the main points of discussion.

Event	Attendance	Main points of discussion
Monday 7 March 2016 – Southport (10.00 – 11.00am)	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people had attended an AC meeting; a couple hadn't • Those that had attended had raised an issue • Keep the AC – opportunity to raise issues, for people to have a voice and to engage with officers direct • If AC's didn't exist – there could be a disconnect between the officers and the public • Preferred ways of contacting the council include Ward Cllr, MP and emailing Officer • The barriers people face include lack of awareness and publicity about meetings, services and ward surgeries, frequency and accessibility of meetings and the website not being up to date
Monday 7 March – Southport (11.00 – 12.00 noon)	4	
Monday 7 March – Southport (5.00pm – 6.00pm)	2	
Monday 7 March – Southport (6.00pm – 7.00pm)	4	

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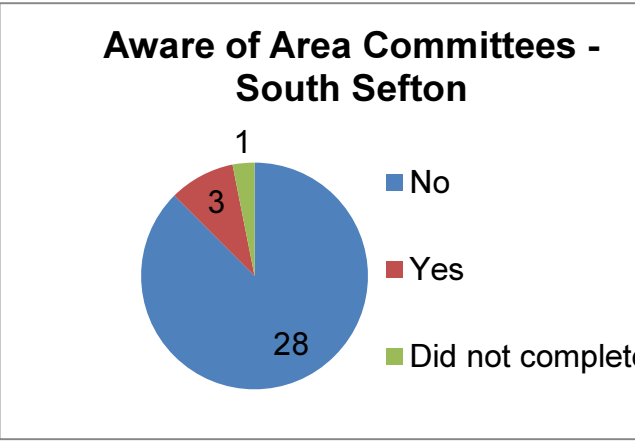
		<p>how the budget will be spent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at each area individually, not as a collective
Tuesday 15 March 2016 – Bootle (2.00pm – 3.00pm)	0	N/A
Tuesday 15 March 2016 – Bootle (3.00pm – 4.00pm)	0	N/A
Tuesday 15 March 2016 – Bootle (5.00pm – 6.00pm)	0	N/A
Tuesday 15 March 2016 – Bootle (6.00pm – 7.00pm)	0	N/A
Wednesday 16 March 2016 – Maghull (10.00am – 11.00am)	0	N/A
Wednesday 16 March 2016 – Maghull (11.00am – 12.00 noon)	0	N/A
Wednesday 16 March 2016 – Formby (2.00pm – 3.00pm)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who attended had previously been a Parish Councillor and was aware of and had attended/taken part in Area Committee meetings • The current set up is too big – it operated much better when Formby had its own Area Committee. • Current Area Committee is undemocratic – issue of introduction of 20mph zones in Formby which the Formby Councillors and residents didn't want but which was voted through by Councillors from the rest of the Wards in South Sefton and this could happen again where Formby Councillors vote against something in the interests of Formby but it could still be voted through. • Old Formby Area Committee was well attended, particularly where items of interest to the whole of Formby were considered • Would like to see Area Committees kept as a way for local people to engage with the Council and Councillors.
Wednesday 16 March – Formby (3.00pm – 4.00pm)	0	N/A
Wednesday 16 March 2016 – Crosby (5.00pm – 6.00pm)	0	N/A
Wednesday 16 March 2016 – Crosby (6.00pm – 7.00pm)	0	N/A

Key findings from Vox Pop (Street Surveys)

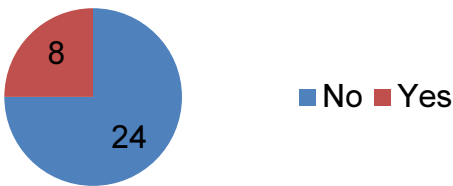
The Street Surveys took place in each of the five townships of the Borough. They took place during the day in locations with high footfall. The aim was to randomly poll the same number of people from the areas represented at an Area Committee composition. In total 96 surveys were completed: 32 from each Area Committee area.

Awareness of Area Committees

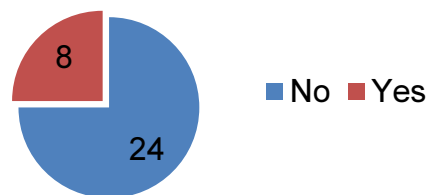
In total, of the 96 people randomly asked to complete the street survey, 76 (79%) people were not aware of the Area Committees, 19 (19%) people were aware of them and 1 person choose not to respond to this question. Of those people who were aware of the Area Committees, 3 had attended a meeting; all at the Central Sefton meeting.



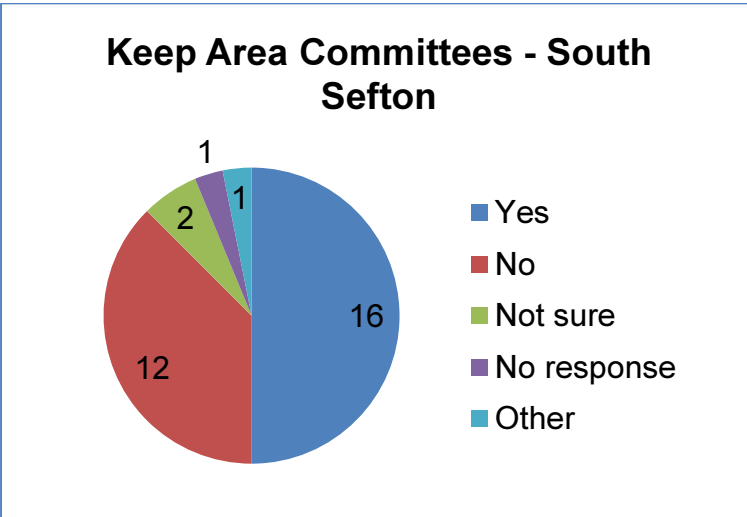
Aware of Area Committees - Southport



Aware of Area Committees - Central Sefton

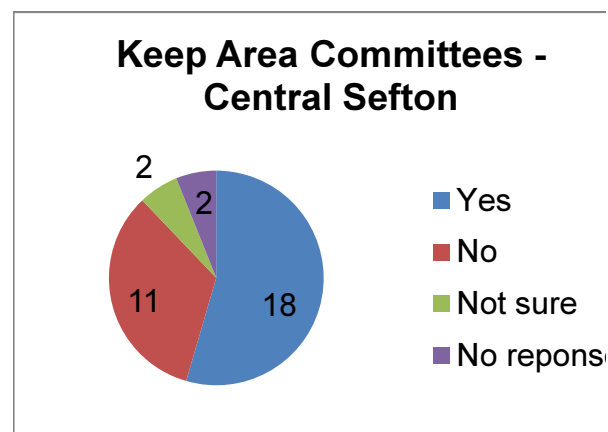
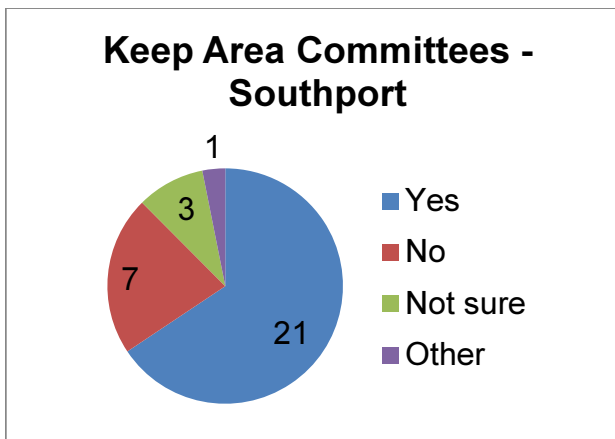


Keep the Area Committees?



Of the 96 respondents, 55 (57%) people said they would like to keep the Area Committees and 29 (30%) people said they shouldn't be kept. The highest response to keep the Area Committees came from respondents in the Southport Area and the highest response to not keep them was from the South Sefton area.

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Preferred way of contacting the Council and Councillors

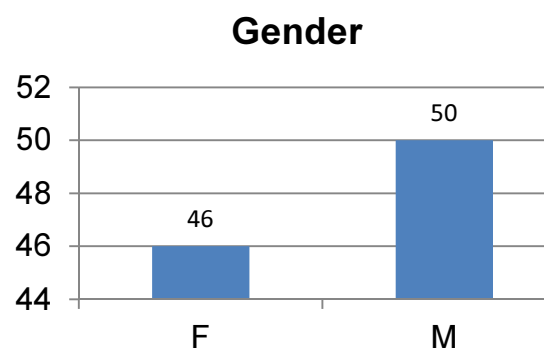
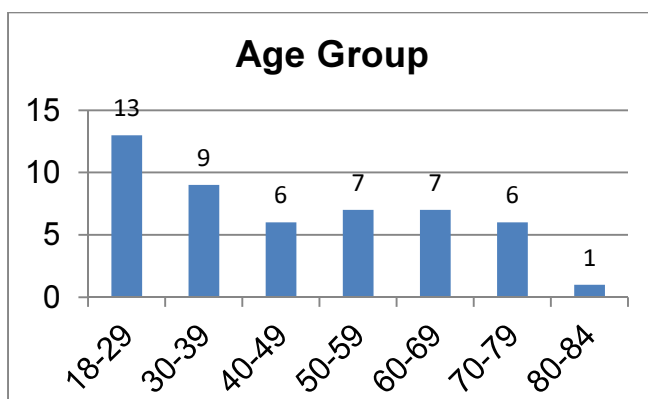
Participants who took part in the street surveys were asked for their preferred way of contacting the Council and Councillors if the Area Committees were not to exist. A wide range of responses were given but some of the common methods include:

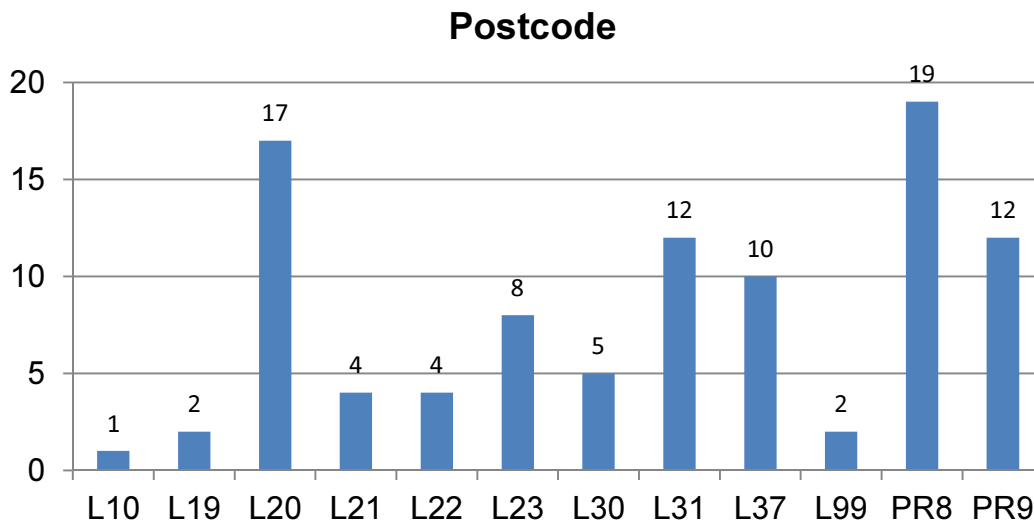
- Ward Councillors (and through surgeries) and local MP's
- Email
- Visit to the One Stop Shop
- Phone

From analysis of the preferred methods, it would seem that across the borough different methods are more appropriate for different age groups. For example, the 18-29 year olds favoured using the phone, visiting the One Stop Shop and emailing. The people who responded from the 30-59 age groups also prefer email and visiting the One Stop Shop and contacting the local Councillor and MP. The 60+ age group would also contact their Councillor and MP, but would also phone the Council.

Although contacting the local Councillor and the MP was a common response, some respondents did also mention that they didn't know who their local Councillor was.

Demographic and equality data





Letters and emails of representation

As part of the consultation plan members of the public, political groups of the Council, Parish and Town Councils and partner organisations were given the opportunity to submit their comments in writing. They were asked to base their responses around the questions used in the Vox Pop Street Surveys. These are their responses:-

Responses from Political Group in Sefton Council

The Labour Group

The vast majority of Area Committee issues are ward related issues as opposed to area issues.

Those attending in terms of residents are often the same individuals and whilst commendable this does not necessarily reflect the views of the majority of residents and as such is a poor vehicle for consultation and engagement.

Area Committees are in some cases too large and unwieldy and as such expensive to run in terms of members and officer time etc.

Members of the public who do attend expect it to be a public forum for debate, so perhaps this is what we should be looking to explore in any alternative models going forward?

There should be some sort of escalation policy that holds Councillors to account in terms of addressing and dealing with resident issues (no response by xx days gets escalated to etc...).

The Liberal Democrat Group

I am submitting this email as the response of the Sefton MBC Liberal Democrat Group to the Council's review of Area Committees.

The Lib Dem response recognises that the development, history and function of the three Area Committees within the Borough have been completely different even though their powers and constitutional situation are identical. So, whereas the Bootle Area Committee and the Sefton Central Area Committee were both amalgamated by the council from smaller units as cost-saving measures determined by the Council, the single Southport Area Committee was created following a referendum of the electors of Southport which preferred the single Southport

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Committee both to the status quo ante and to the alternative prospect of a Town Council for Southport.

In other words, the single Southport Area Committee was created by the democratic expression of the people of Southport as to how they wished to have their preferred expression of a limited form of devolved government and had nothing to do with the largely-functional issues which have been put out by the Council for discussion on to date. In particular, the referendum demonstrated the single entity of 'Southport' as being the preferred unit of communal identification and expression i.e. wherever they live within Southport, the majority of the electors have an interest which is not defined at ward or sub-ward level but in the community of Southport. Southport residents recognise the legitimate interest of people from other wards within Southport in decisions taking place in their own immediate locality and they expect the people living in other areas to likewise recognise their own interest in decisions taking place elsewhere within the town.

The above is precisely the opposite of what has happened within the Sefton Central Area Committee. Here, the amalgamation of a number of area committees which previously dealt with genuine communities: Formby, Maghull, Aintree & Lydiate; Crosby has created a situation whereby a totally artificial Committee has been established where residents living within one part of the area have little or no interest in the other areas covered by the committee and resent the prospect of 'outsiders' having a say in their own very local affairs. We would hope that such a change might be made involving discussion with and co-ordination with the various Parish/Town councils within the Sefton Central area. We would not, however, wish to be prescriptive about how this might be achieved.

The importance to the people of Southport of the Southport Area Committee is not so much their own participation in the committee as individuals, (although this is and has been substantially higher than has been the case in both other parts of the Borough) but in the knowledge that issues of particular relevance to the town of Southport are discussed by Southport's own elected representatives in Southport and watched by the people of Southport and their various Southport-specific media. Questions are often put to the Committee designed for answers by the councillors present rather than for officers: i.e. they constitute a means of holding the elected members of the council from the seven Southport wards to account.

Besides discussing matters which are a particular responsibility of the Local Authority, the Area Committee's Police Forum covering the entire town is always a vibrant part of the proceedings taking some time during the meeting and allows the senior police representatives who regularly attend to have a substantial interaction with the Southport public where their own attempts to generate a similar interaction have not been so successful.

We note from the statistics provided to members that public attendance at and involvement in the Southport Area Committee is considerably higher generally than that at the other two bodies.

It is 19 years since the Local Government Boundary Commission for England completed a major review of the relationship between the town of Southport and its people and the Borough of Sefton. One of the significant declarations of the Commission in concluding its review was that an assertion that there was a need for the Borough to take steps to make its decision-making and activities more receptive to the individual and collective needs of the people of Southport than was then the case.

There can be no doubt that the creation of a single Area Committee for Southport was a useful method of the Council demonstrating a receptiveness to the collective views of the residents of Southport which would be lost were this Committee to be dismantled or its activities curtailed. We therefore support the retention of the Southport Area Committee irrespective of whether the other two Committees are retained or modified in their present formats. We would suggest,

furthermore, that the governance of the Borough might be improved by restoring the community-based focus of discussion

I hope that the above contribution is useful.

Conservative Group

No response received

Responses from Individual Councillors

Councillors Dutton and Jamieson

Formby, Crosby, Maghull and Southport

I understand you have already received a submission relating to Southport so I will confine my observations to the other areas affected.

Prior to the merging of Central Sefton as one committee, in the individual committees we regularly had good attendance.

With the input from Police and Public Forum local residents fed back to us they felt involved in their community.

Since the enlargement there has been a dis-connect particularly in Formby where issues are very localised within the confines of Formby town.

Despite Surgeries, Facebook, Twitter, other social media and the phone, the localised Area Committee was seen as a contact point to find out 'what's going on'.

Also feedback suggests the perception is that decisions are being taken by Councillors that are not privy to the localised issues that affect residents directly because they do not represent, electorally, the 'local area'.

An example of this was 20mph roll out; four of six Formby councillors voted against this but it was carried by weight of committee. This is not local representation.

We would not wish to see Area Committees broken up and their workings devolved out to the Area Partnerships as they are not inclusive across the political spectrum nor do they have any public awareness.

In our opinion Area Partnerships do little to add to the local benefit.

We would like to see Formby and Crosby Area Committees re-instated to their former situation with locally elected members making local decisions.

We feel this will re-connect with residents and encourage their involvement with Council.

Councillor Jo Barton

Please be aware that I am very concerned to hear any rumours or talk about cancelling this committee which is of vital use to both residents and Councillors alike and provides a forum where views on issues concerning only Southport can be aired in a safe environment. I for one would be very unhappy if this committee ~~was to cease~~ to function!

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Councillor Mike Booth

The following are my views on the future of Southport Area Committee:

According to Sefton's own website, the function of Area Committees is "The Committee is a focus for consultation and discussion about issues in its area and for making decisions on local transport, planning and environmental matters".

Residents often claim that decisions are made without listening to their views and their needs. Area Committees provide this in the form of an open forum where the public can raise questions and hold their elected members and officers to account.

I've looked at the attendance records for the years 2103/14 and 2014/15 and I've noted the following:

Over the 2 years Southport Area Committee was attended by 121 members of the public.

South Sefton Area Committee was attended by 49 members of the public

Central Sefton Area Committee was attended by 226 members of the public

Central Sefton is an amalgamation of previous area committees and this may explain the large attendances.

Looking at lowest attendees for individual meetings, on 3 occasions South Sefton was only attended by 3 members of the public and by 2 members of the public on one occasion.

In comparison Southport Area Committee's lowest attendance has been 8 on one occasion!

The figures prove the worth of Southport Area Committee.

There has been a lot of time and effort given to devolving powers and decentralisation. If area committees are removed it will only serve to hand all decision making to a small group of councillors. Politics then takes over and decisions may be based on political gains rather than being based on the needs of the residents. Local decisions should be made by elected members who represent the wards concerned.

An additional benefit of area committees is the time given for the police to make regular reports and to answer questions raised by elected members and members of the public. The importance and value of this, in the eyes of the police, was shared with those present at the last Southport Area Committee. We were told that many of the meetings organised by the police themselves were very poorly attended when compared with area committees.

If it transpires that either, or both, of the other 2 area committees decide that their purpose is no longer required by their residents; could I ask that the legality of maintaining Southport Area Committee on its own be examined in full?

Could I also ask for a comparison of the number of questions raised by the public at the 3 area committees? This may give an indication of how important the meetings are to the public in each of the 3 areas.

In conclusion, my view is that Southport wants and needs its area committee. The various options suggested to replace area committees are impractical and they will not work.

Area committees aim to bring about faster decision-making, greater openness, better quality services and greater public participation in local government.

Councillor Fred Weavers

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Southport did have a referendum and decided they wished to have a single Area Committee. To get rid of the Area Committee would probably need another referendum and will result in a neighbourhood forum and or Southport Town Council. If the Cabinet decided to change its timing of its meetings to 6:30 and also ran an agenda for the Area Committee that would save money and get more accountability for the residents of the borough.

Councillor Marianne Welsh

I feel that this committee is vital for Southport and its residents. We only have a few of these committees now each year, and have to get through a lot at each one but we do. Many of our partners come along on a regular basis updating us all and answering questions which I feel is needed. There are also questions from the public and I feel that the Area Committee is a vital platform for us the councillors and partners and residents. I do not want us to lose the Area Committees.

Responses from Advisory Group Members

Submission 1 (Southport)

I wish to register my concern as I mentioned at the last Area Committee about the prospect of the Area Committee being closed. It is exceedingly important to Southport that the Area Committee continues and that the residents have a democratic voice to bring matters to the meeting for discussion. Why should Southport be penalised because the other Area Committees do not have many attendees? We have by far the most attendees to our meetings that are interested in Southport. The residents also have the opportunity to request funding and it also makes the rest of the people, Councillors as well, aware of what is needed and going on in Southport.

Submission 2 (Southport)

- Southport is the most well attended Area Committee within Sefton. Many local residents still attend the meetings.
- The Area Committees are crucial for residents to be able to raise concerns and work with the Area Coordinators in resolving issues.
- The face to face Cabinet Member updates have now stopped and if the Area Committees also stop the Council will become faceless and residents who do not have access to the internet / twitter / Facebook will struggle to make contact with Committee Members and the Area Coordinators.
- Face to face is much more personal and is fundamental to residents who want to raise concerns which matter to them.

Responses from Parish Councils

Lydiate Parish Council

At the meeting of Lydiate Parish Council held on 23rd February 2016, there was a discussion about the consultation into the future of the Area Committee structure in Sefton.

As members of the Sefton Central Area Committee, concerns had already been made that the move to larger areas in 2013 had made meetings far less effective. The needs of too many communities need to be considered, which means that time is not available to discuss local issues in detail and meeting venues are often too far away from local residents. In order to achieve meaningful community engagement, Lydiate Parish Council would recommend retaining an Area Committee structure but returning to small geographical area coverage. For this area, a Committee covering the Maghull and Lydiate areas would be most effective.

Hightown Parish Council

As I said at the last Sefton South Area Committee we as parish Councillors are elected by the same Act of Parliament and in the same way as the ward councillors.

In Sefton about 30% of the electorate have parish or town councils. All of these have open seasons for the public to present petitions or can ask questions? Many of these also have ward councillors attending or are Parish councillors. One solution may be to encourage the formation of new groups to increase the more localised element of consultation.

I would recommend that you come and discuss this not only with the PC meetings but better with the 10 Parishes group.

Aintree parish Council

We write in response to your letter dated 11 February 2016 advising the Parish Council of the consultation exercise into the future of the three Area Committees. The responses have followed your preferred structure as set out in your letter.

1. Are you aware of the Area Committees?

The Parish Council is fully aware of the existence of the Area Committees.

The Parish Council understands that members of the general public do not have clear visibility, or an understanding, of the purpose of the Area Committees. When was the last time that the work of the Area Committees was published in the public domain or a 'call' for attendance made within the local communities which each Committee serves?

2. If you have ever attended one or raised an issue?

The Parish Council has a representative on the Sefton Central Area Committee.

3. Which Area Committee have you attended?

The Parish Council is represented on the Central Sefton Area Committee and was represented on the former Area Committee (Sefton East Parishes) before this was combined.

4. Should the Council keep Area Committee as a way for members of the public to raised issues with and talk to the Council and Councillors?

Area Committees should be retained in order to provide members of the public with a 'local' forum in which to raise issues and concerns, however as the public are not permitted to enter into the debate they are limited in their effectiveness. In this age of localism the Area Committee should play an important, if not a vital, role in the democratic process.

Whilst the Sefton East Parish Councils have a right of attendance and have an opportunity to provide the Committee with an 'update' they are otherwise constrained by the fact that they do not possess voting rights (so their hands are tied) and that any questions they want to raise are required days in advance (so they are effectively gagged).

Consideration should be given as to how to raise the visibility and understanding of Area Committees within our communities, engagement is key to a healthy democracy.

5. What would be your preferred way of raising issues with and talking to the Council and Councillors if Area Committees did not exist?

The Parish Council would not want to see the replacement of the Area Committees with purely electronic forums; whilst e-petitions and e-forms do have a role to play in public engagement they do not replace the value of face-to-face meetings.

The Parish Council considers that any re-structure of Area Committees would necessarily have to be at a more local level, the previous Area Committee structure was more effective and based at a local level.

6. What do you see as the key barriers to raising issues and talking to the Council and Councillors?

The Parish Council understands that a key barrier to members of the public raising issues is a perception that the Council and Councillors do not listen to what the public have to say, that consultation exercises with the strap line 'your Sefton your say' are just a "tick in the box" and that decisions have perceived to have already been made, the consultation is to make it 'look' democratic.

7. Do you have any other views or comments?

The Parish Council is of the opinion that the merger of the Formby, Crosby and Sefton East Parishes Area Committees into the Central Sefton Area Committee created a Committee that was too large and cumbersome and that the new Committee has not served to be as effective.

There is a real concern amongst the public that the majority, if not all, decisions are made before an Area Committee actually meets due to the size of the majority of the ruling party as Councillors have been directed (whipped) as to which way to vote. If this perception is correct then democracy is seriously threatened. A healthy democracy actively encourages debate and respects opposing views; decision-making can be greatly improved should politicians actively listen to one another and to the public they represent, ensuring that the 'bigger picture' is reflected upon.

The public must have a mechanism to challenge decisions and to provide local knowledge and perspective. This point was made at the Central Sefton Committee on 7 January 2016:

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"Area Committees had somewhat lost their way, they were created as a tool to counter-balance the Cabinet's power, however, with so few decisions being "called in" they were struggling to find a roll to fulfil;"

We trust that the Council will take full consideration of the above in its deliberations over the future of the Area Committees which if run effectively are key to ensuring true democracy across the Borough.

Formby Area Committee

Just thought I'd let you know my thoughts on the subject of the area committee following Thursdays meeting.

I cannot see the need for such a large gathering, and I think the majority feel the same. No real business is achieved, and Information from the police is only appropriate to the local areas concerned.

In terms of expense, my suggestion would be that the role of the area committee becomes part of the responsibility of the Parish Council. The local PC would hold the area meeting and the responsible officer would take the minutes. I would see this working very well for Formby; it would assist in building the relationship between ward and Parish Councillors (currently poor in Formby) and would focus much more on the local area. Public engagement could well be increased as local residents would become aware of the regular local meetings, rather than jumping around the borough. Additionally local councillors would make decisions on local matters, rather than have a Formby councillor voting on something in Bootle and vice versa.

Responses from Members of the Public

Submission 1

The following is my response to your request for comments in relation to the current Area Committees operating in the Sefton Council area.

My experience of attending Area Committees is limited to that in Southport (which is quite well attended) where I regularly raise issues.

Prior to the existence of this committee, I regularly attended the previous Southport South, North and East Area Committees which were also well attended.

Geographically, Southport is situated well away from the centre of local governance within the area and some Southport people no doubt look upon the local area committee as their only opportunity to have their concerns addressed by council officers who are seen as being inaccessible at any other time.

Having said that, there are obviously a lot of Southport people who never attend and probably do not know that the Area Committee exists.

In an area where local people feel that they have lost local governance to Bootle, it is seen by some as the sole link with those who make the decisions and is, currently, the only community link for Southport people.

These days it is quite difficult to even speak to council decision makers by telephone as the only point of telephone contact is through a member of a call team who often appear reluctant to transfer calls to council departments.

I fully understand that the cost of running the area committees is money that could, perhaps, be better spent elsewhere and that other ways of allowing the people of Southport to feel more inclusive to the democratic process should be investigated.

One possible alternative would be the setting up of a Parish (Town) Council for Southport.

This would obviously have limited (parish council) powers but could help Southport people to feel that they had some local representation.

The current national government is keen to establish more parish councils, particularly in urban areas, throughout the country as part of their national devolution plan. The Government Department for Communities and Local Government are supporting the National Association of Local Councils in setting up new parish councils in order to give people a voice, delivering local services and influencing how public money is spent in their area.

The Parish Councillors could provide a link between local people, Borough Councillors and Council Officers.

It is my understanding that if 7.5% of the Southport electorate were to sign a petition requesting that consideration be given to setting up a Southport Town (Parish) Council that this would trigger a review into that possibility.

I am mindful that a Parish Council would involve a council tax precept and that this could be a “stumbling block” for some people.

However, I would be grateful if you could provide me with the overall cost of running the current Southport Area Committee, and whether a reduced percentage of this amount could be diverted into a Southport Parish Council scheme in order to keep the precept to a minimum.

It has to be said that some areas of Sefton have had both a parish council and an Area Committee for many years. In Southport we have only ever had the Area Committee.

I would be interested to be given the opportunity to discuss this matter with yourself, or an appropriate member of the council.

Submission 2

I refer to your letter of the 11th February 2016, and the public statements concerning the future of the Area Committees. I have been a Parish Councillor for Formby for twelve years, its Chairman for four of those and past Chairman of the Sefton Area Partnership of Local Councils.

To answer your specific questions first, I do have a working knowledge of the Area Committees and their purpose, I have raised a number of issues for Formby and for other parishes from time to time and presented at the earlier meetings on specific projects. I have attended to the Central Sefton AC and its predecessors the Formby Area Committee, and the Sefton East Area Committee.

My additional comments include:

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1. It is accepted that the current committee structure and remit with 27 ward councillors and the additional parish councillors does not work. It was far too cumbersome despite the work put in by the then Chairman, Cllr xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
2. The previous arrangements where the committees were too many and impossible to coordinate did not work either, and in Formby's case achieved only minor success. The Chairs of that committee were sometimes out of their depth and did little or no preparation, and stifled discussion.
3. The Sefton Council is led by the majority Labour Party, but the ward councillors have failed to bring forward matters of concern for discussion. Examples of these are the impact upon the Borough, as part of the Liverpool City Region, and the consequences of the Peel Development, which are real big issues.
4. The officers who attend do not prepare well and prefer to 'escape' from the meeting as soon as they can! As a consequence they are contributing to the problem of communication for of the Borough Council.
5. The Sefton Neighbourhood Team has a huge agenda, but the constant changes in management structure have made it almost ineffective, and therefore it has become selective in its approach. There have been changes in priority and have achieved little. I can advise you from personal experience, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx and I spent a good deal of time trying to find ways to improve engagement with the parished areas in particular. The outcome was the Sefton Charter, which to many officers is unknown and yet has full approval and support of the Cabinet. In order to offer an option to improve, it is suggested that there is a dedicated officer, who has the power to see things through, and for them to be proactive not defensive.
6. The Area Committee agendas were too large and not focused. More importantly the meetings were never used to communicate down when they could have been used to better advantage. This must be corrected.
7. The local communities in the CSAC are far more diverse than Sefton imagine, and so to have a meaningful meeting, it must be acknowledged that the parish councils are far better aware of what goes on their community than Sefton officers will ever do in future. The parishes will be better placed, informed, and committed to dealing with issues affecting residents, and the SMBC should subscribe fully to that aim. The new chair of the CSAC is out of touch with the villages and communities. Formby, for example, has a good many issues that are inter-linked, one depending on the other. The economic issues cannot be resolved without an agreed strategy on the environment, infrastructure, communication and traffic as an example. The Parish Council has set this out in the past, but there has been little understanding by the Planners, failing to believe that these can all be resolved without party political meddling.
8. The SAPLC and SMBC have set out the process by which local issues can be managed, receiving approval by Cabinet. But officers of Sefton have shown once again that they do not understand how by working together, all can benefit.
9. Last of all to underline the concern local residents have made it clear what they think that when serious questions were asked the formal answers were perfunctory, flippant or evasive!

So in summary the structure cannot remain as it is or the opportunity to change and adapt to the new financial disciplines will be missed. The individual parish councils should build on what they have done, revise what they should do and set out the procedures to do so.

Legal and Finance issues

There are specific legal and financial issues that have to be addressed whatever action you recommend, and in setting them out it will help to refine the role of the Parish Councils.

The pressure on expenditure will increase whatever Government in is power, especially social, education and welfare

Next Steps

I would like to offer some ideas for consideration:

1. Assess the findings of this consultation fairly and objectively.
2. Establish a small team of no more than 4 key players to set out the recommendations for change.
3. Establish the two Area Committees - Sefton East and Sefton West.
4. Review the role of Ward councillors, aiming to reduce them to one per ward, and taking into account boundary changes, train those remaining fully. Make the meetings informative and the Parish Councils accountable.
5. Give the two new committees the task of putting forward programme of work, and actively support their work to inform public on such matters as:

Economy — Liverpool City Region, Peel Developments, etc.
Health and Well-being
Security and Safety
Traffic and parking
Social welfare
Licensing and betting.

I very much hope that full consideration be given to the public's comments and concerns, and I look forward to attending the public meetings and listening to the arguments put forward.

Submission 3

It is not a forum that encourages participation or interest from residents and is generally poorly attended. Aside from regular questioners and participants there appears to be little interest in the work of the committee. In my view most people in Southport are unaware of the existence of the committee, its purpose and function

I note that amongst the Area Committees, Southport Area Committee generates by far the most work for officers in terms of reports that are requested by councillors. I see little if any value to residents from the production of these reports.

Many councillors appear to see the committee as a vehicle for their own political agenda rather than as a means of assisting residents.

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APPENDIX 1

Regarding consultation between residents and councillors, I think that well publicised surgeries where councillors can be approached on an individual basis by residents is a far more effective means of engagement. Furthermore, I feel that it should be compulsory for councillors to hold consultation and advice surgeries. I note that two wards in Southport have no opportunity for residents to engage with councillors via an advice surgery. My view is that the current Area Committee arrangement fails to deliver effective consultation with residents. It is therefore poor value for money.

I think that the council should communicate more effectively with residents to ensure there is a full understanding of the decisions made that affect council service provision and to give residents a true picture of the financial challenges facing the authority. This would help prevent misinformation and misunderstanding about the budget cuts that the council is being compelled to undertake. This communication could consist of a simple and cheap newsletter to all residents.

There should be more opportunity to submit questions to councillors and the council in a simple format, for instance an easy to use and well publicised form on the council website.

In my view Area Committee funds should be allocated to wards on a basis that takes into account levels of deprivation rather than the current approach of an equal allocation to each ward. Area Committee funds should be better publicised so that residents have the opportunity to put forward their views on how they could be spent. There is a significant underspend in the Area Committee ward budget that I feel should be addressed. There are other methods of spending funds allocated to wards such as St Helens Council Councillor Improvement Fund and Liverpool City Council Neighbourhood Teams, and I think these should be examined further.

Submission 4

I have been a Sefton resident for most of my life. I am now 63. I have never heard of the Area Committee and therefore feel that it cannot be fulfilling any useful purpose.

I would like to be able to take any of my problems direct to my local councillors, who should be encouraged and indeed funded to have surgeries for this very purpose.

Any funds left over from this should be allocated to individual wards on the basis of any deprivation index usually used, and spent by the councillors as their constituents require.

Thank you

Submission 5

I feel the area committee meetings are one of the bastions of local democracy. A person's voice can be heard and can contribute to decision making on a personal level. I have attended a number over the years where subjects close to my heart have been agendered. If a person is to feel they matter in this society in my opinion these meetings are as important as seeing your M.P.

Submission 6

If I buy a product from a shop I can take it back. The problem can be solved there and then. Imagine if the shopkeeper said he would have to contact his Head Office or the manufacturer before he was authorised to take action and he did not know when he would get a reply.

At the moment I can contact my ward councillor. Depending on the problem this can be raised at Southport Area Committee because other ' be having the same problem. Without the

area committees then all problems will have to be raised at full council meetings instead of a quick local solution.

Submission 7

I am disappointed with proposal to axe the area committees. It is a retrograde step for local democracy as well as total disregard for the views of local people.

Southport Area Committee is an opportunity to discuss local issues with local councillors - the aim being to give residents a greater say in what happens in their area as well as raise pertinent issues. If the area committee is axed local people will feel even further remote from the decisions being made at Bootle.

The Council should be promoting and encouraging more participation by the residents of Sefton not less. Perhaps the Council should undertake surveys to find ways to engage the public as it is public money they are spending!

I would urge the Council not to axe the local committees.

Submission 8

1. Yes I am aware of Area Committees and the pivotal role they play in localised democracy.
2. Yes.
3. South Sefton.
4. Yes – Area Committees were introduced with the aim of encouraging greater participation by local people in decision-making and improving service delivery. Area Committees recognise that local representatives are better able to reflect the views of local residents and bring extra knowledge and experience to meetings to support local Councillors in their decision making.
5. If area committees did not exist and the council had an over reliance on technology you may get a disproportionate view of local issues as many older people would self-exclude themselves from the digital democratic process. There is no justification other than budget cuts to remove area committees from the democratic process.
6. The only time you get to see your local representatives and council officers are when they want you to participate in their consultation. The Area Committees are the only way local people have a real opportunity to raise “Their Own” issues and get a full and frank response from council representative. Local petitions are time consuming and whilst they have a role to play in a democratic process, have only limited opportunities to get heard at Council meetings. VCF forums are largely represented by working officers, many of whom do not live in Sefton and their views are over represented already, with many people attending multiple forums already.
7. This is the only opportunity many Sefton residents have to talk, discuss and raise issues with their local councillors face to face. Many of us feel totally frustrated by making representation via email and the facelessness of it. Also many councillors will not be held to account with the removal of a committee structure. It can be extremely frustrating trying to get in touch with our local representatives and the faceless wonder of technology, which gives them an opportunity to respond with prudence and a lack of debating lustre, creating a very sterile democratic process.

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If the Area Committees are decommissioned this will be contrary to the whole localism bill, and a massive blow to local democracy. Local people will be further excluded from the decision making process. New methods of consultation are and can be seen as exclusive or prejudicial due to the way local people would need to be able to engage with them and Area Committees are open to everyone to attend.

An alternative solution may be to total cessation would be to reduce the number of paid officers and councillors who attend and allow the meetings to be run with more lay representatives and on a quarterly basis only. That would help with reducing financial burden and allow ever more local participation in the democratic process. This is a rational compromise and I truly believe that this would be a far better solution than withdrawing the Area Committee process altogether.

Submission 9

1. Are you aware of Area Committees? - No
2. If you have you ever attended one or raised an issue? - No
4. Should the Council keep Area Committees as a way for members of the public to raise issues with and talk to the Council and Councillors?
Only if residents are made aware of them and can access them.
5. What would be your preferred way of raising issues with and talking to the Council and Councillors if Area Committees did not exist?
Newsletter, drop in point , email, telephone contact
6. What do you see as the key barriers to raising issues and talking to the Council and Councillors?
Not being aware of who they are or how I can access them
7. Do you have any other views or comments?

How successful have the council and councillors been at resolving issues?

Are the same residents always attending if so I think this would highlight lots of other residents are unaware of these services

Submission 10

Area committees should be retained as a link between the local residents and Sefton Council, which represents the whole of Sefton by definition. The Area committees are also by definition much more local. Members know the area more intimately and can address issues which may seem more trivial to the Borough Council. These types of issues, however, are appreciated and do make a difference to local areas.

One example is the landscaping outside the shops on Harington Road Formby. The bleak paving now looks softer and greener. Next we need some seats and a coffee shop!

The planters on our Main Street looked lovely in the summer.

Email is a great way to communicate with the committee. The small price we pay is worth the cost.

Submission 11

When the Area Committees' were first established they appeared to perform a useful purpose and were well attended and much of the content of the meetings' was relevant to those attending. I regularly attended both the Crosby and Formby Area Committees and found them useful forums for an exchange of views between the elected members and their constituents. The establishment of the Sefton Central Area Committee comprising some 26 Sefton Councillors representing 9 Wards together with 18 representatives of nine Parish Councils is, in my opinion, too large and unwieldy to properly address issues of local concern.

On the evening of Thursday 7th January 2016 I was the only member of the public attending the Sefton Central Area Committee. I counted 32 Sefton Councillors' and Parish Councillors' together with three or four Officers in attendance. And during the proceeding only one question was raised and addressed. Moreover, the subsequent debate on Item 7 showed that there was a complete lack of enthusiasm amongst Members for continuance of the present format of the Area Committees'.

So, if on cost grounds there is not going to be return to the original format of the Area Committees' then other options must be explored if Councillors are not to disappear into the equivalent of the "Westminster Bubble" and become even more remote from the people they represent in Sefton than at present!.

Indeed, it is evident to me that what concerns people most and on which action actually takes place tends to occur at the level below the Sefton Central Area Committee. For example, the concerns about SSP's delivery on doctors' surgeries was actually initiated and spearheaded by Hightown residents and Hightown Parish Council. The concern about the Wind Farm development in West Lancashire is being spearheaded by residents of Ince Blundell and the Ince Blundell Parish Council. The initiative regarding the garden at the back of Formby Library by Formby Parish Council with match funding provided by Sefton Council. The current hearings into Sefton's Local Plan involves Fragoff, Formby Parish Council, Maghull Parish Council and Hightown Parish Council, Thornton Parish Council and Melling Parish Council who are voicing concerns on behalf of local residents regarding the Local Plan. Together with concerned residents they appear to be the only agents apart from the CPRE, Wildlife agencies and Bill Esterson MP, who are voicing the concerns of local people regarding Sefton's Local Plan. Moreover, you will know there are numerous examples in Sefton where Ward Councillors have become involved in community initiatives away from their own party politics on the grounds of local need.

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In consequence I would do away with the Area Committees' in Sefton as at present structured and revert to the Ward Structure Scheme as developed in Liverpool City. Ward Councillors could then concentrate on their Neighbourhoods and Parishes to give support and guidance. If there are differing politicians in each Ward so be it! In the past I have known Labour and Conservative Ward Councillors, irrespective of their political differences, work very well together on Ward issues. Again, irrespective of party differences, Members will have to learn to act as a team for the benefit of all their Ward constituents! Each Ward should have a relevant budget through which Members could support minor schemes. Neighbourhood Teams would assist Ward Councillors in their endeavours. If there is an issue in a Parish or Neighbourhood then the Ward Councillors should take a lead in assisting or advising on the issue. I would do away with the concept of surgeries and instead have a number of sites in the Ward where constituents might meet with their Ward Councillors', e.g. Formby Swimming Pool or Lady Green Garden Centre in the case of Ravenmeols Ward Councillors.

Finally, if the Area Committees' are to be scrapped can I ask that any savings in Officers or Members time be put into getting rid of the 0845 telephone numbers charges that are imposed on residents when making enquiries or raising queries on Sefton Council issues. If the Borough is to be open and transparent in its dealing with its residents it should not be imposing such charges.

Conclusion. Sefton should seek to adopt a scheme similar to that adopted by Liverpool City Council as an alternative to Sefton's present Area Committee Structure.



YOUR SEFTON YOUR SAY

A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

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1 What this Framework will do

This Public Engagement and Consultation Framework explains how we work with our communities as part of our Sustainable Communities Strategy. This Framework gives us clear information on how to speak with and listen to our communities and get them involved in the work we do.

We, and the following organisations, will follow this framework.

- Sefton Council
- NHS Sefton
- Sefton Council for Voluntary Service
- Sefton Equalities Partnership
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- Merseyside Police
- Any other partner organisation that uses this framework

By using this framework, we and the organisations above agree to:

- follow a set of principles and standards that influence the way we speak with and listen to our communities; and
- support and develop ways of working that will give us detailed information on people living in Sefton.

The aim of these principles, standards and ways of working is to make sure that we can improve the way we speak with and listen to our communities. This framework will give us better information which we can share with our partners. It will also stop us from doing the same jobs twice, which will then save us money.

This Framework gives us clear information on how to speak with and listen to our communities and get them involved in the work we do.

2 Our Main Aims

We want to make sure that we support our communities to get involved in the public services they receive.

Our main aims are to:

- know and work with our communities and understand their needs, in particular those who may experience discrimination or who are vulnerable (people who have an illness, a disability or who are elderly);
- make sure that we involve our communities in identifying issues that are important to them;
- ask our communities whether or not we have achieved the things that are important to them; and

- work with other partners (people using this framework) when we want to speak with or listen to our communities, and we will tell our communities about what we find.

The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel will check that we are achieving these aims.

3 The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel

Our Public Engagement and Consultation Panel makes sure that the way we speak with and listen to our communities is of a high standard.

The Panel is made up of:

- the Cabinet Member for Performance and Governance;
- the Cabinet Member for Communities;

Our Public Engagement and Consultation Panel makes sure that the way we speak with and listen to our communities is of a high standard

- a representative from the Labour Group;
- a non-executive member from NHS Sefton;
- representatives from the Community Empowerment Network;
- a representative from Merseyside Police;
- a representative from the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service;
- a representative from Sefton Young Advisors (paid professional young people aged 15 to 21 who advise adults on how to work with young people).
- the number of people who took part and the costs of the different methods of getting them involved; and
- how successful different methods were at getting the views of people who are not normally heard, for example children, young people and people with disabilities.

For an activity to be successful, there must be proof that our work has made changes to how we provide a service.

The Panel will also receive feedback, assessment reports and presentations from our partners. This feedback will be about:

The Partnership Public Engagement and Consultation Panel will report to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Governance and the NHS Sefton Board.

- how we carried out our work;
- the opinions of the people taking part on how they found the process;



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4 Important principles

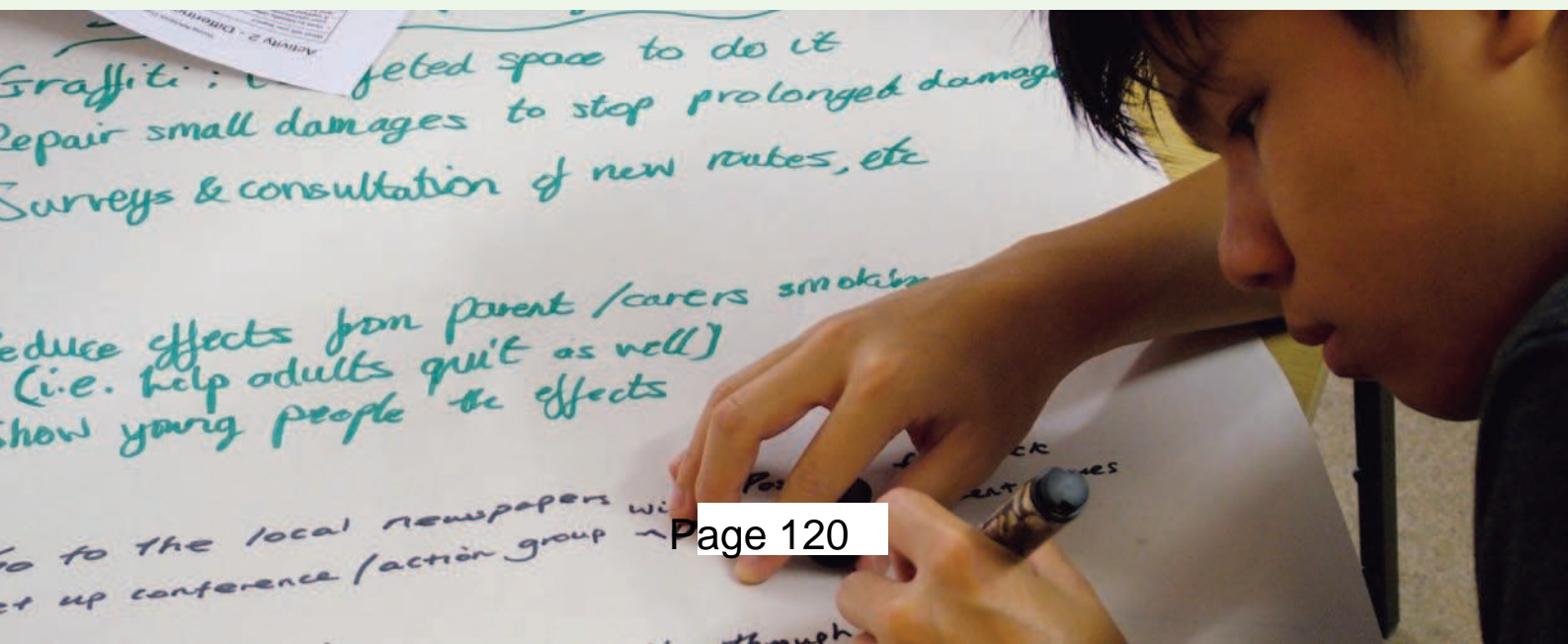
To maintain high standards in the way we work with our communities, we will use the following important principles in everything we do.

We will:

- put people at the heart of how we develop a service;
- treat the involvement of our communities as a developing process, which grows and improves over time;
- monitor, assess and improve the way we speak with and listen to our communities by sharing information with our partners;
- give our stakeholders (people who have an interest in our organisation) feedback on the results of the work we do;

- work in a fair and clear way;
- recognise difference and make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be involved;
- make sure that anyone we speak with and listen to has all the information they need to get involved;
- make sure people know how they can influence the decisions we make; and;
- set standards for how we work with our communities, and keep to them.

The Partnership Public Engagement and Consultation Panel will make sure we keep to these standards.



5 The standards

We will use these standards to make sure that the work we do with our communities is of a high quality and fair.

These standards will help us get a better understanding of our communities and stop us from doing the same work twice.

Standard 1:

The way we want to speak with and listen to our communities is clear

We will make sure that our work:

- has clear aims that explain what we are asking people's views on, what we are not asking people's views on and any limits we have to work within;
- includes a review of the other work we are currently doing, so we know this work is needed;

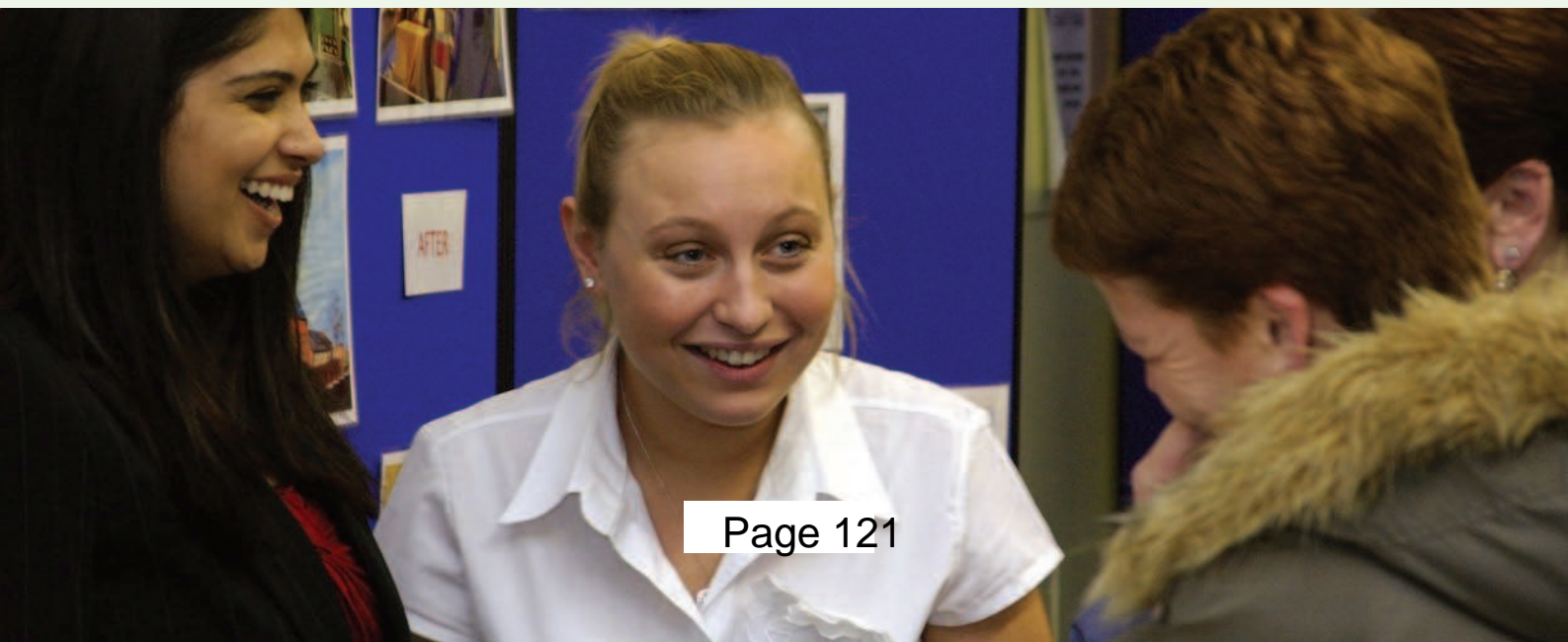
- is linked with other similar work, so we don't do the same work twice;
- includes information on the influence people are likely to have, and the expected costs and benefits; and
- follows all relevant legal requirements - for example, the Freedom of Information Act, the Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve and the Equalities Duties.

Standard 2:

We identify all local people who are likely to be affected or interested

We will make sure that:

- we make a list of all local people - for example, members of the public (including young people and those that may experience discrimination or who may be vulnerable), elected members, the community empowerment network, staff and other stakeholders; and



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- we make the work we are doing easy to get involved in, and that we clearly target the people we want to speak with and listen to.

Standard 3:

We have a public engagement and consultation plan that is value for money

We will make sure that:

- we upload onto eConsult (an online calendar) the plan details, aims and realistic timescales;
- the plan includes actions, methods and approaches which are appropriate for the target audience;
- the plan allows everyone interested to give us their feedback;
- we choose an officer who has the relevant skills and knowledge to lead the work we are doing; and

- the plan includes an equality impact assessment (an analysis to help us decide how our decisions will affect different groups).

Standard 4:

All relevant information is available in appropriate formats and written in plain English for people who want to see it

We will make sure that we:

- make all background documents, supporting documents and information available at the time we carry out the work, including our reasons for carrying out the work;
- clearly discuss the decisions we make; and
- use all appropriate public resources.

All relevant information is available in appropriate formats and written in plain English for people who want to see it

Standard 5:

We record all responses accurately and fairly

We will make sure that we:

- accurately record all the information we find from the work we do; and
- upload information onto eConsult.

Standard 6:

We have a clear plan for giving feedback on the results from our work with the community

We will make sure that we:

- have a list of the people who took part and their views and comments;
- give everyone who took part in our work the chance to see the results we found;

- have a clear process to give feedback to people who did not take part, but who are still affected; and
- tell people about the suggestions we cannot use and explain why.

Standard 7:

The results of our work with the public and how it has influenced our policies and plans

We will make sure that we:

- use the information we have found to develop our policies and service plans; and
- tell people about any changes we make.



Standard 8:

Assessing how effective our work is

We will make sure that we:

- assess how effective and efficient our work has been; and
- share what we have learnt, and use this for the next time we want to speak with and listen our communities.

6 What we mean by 'engagement and consultation'

The words 'engagement' and 'consultation' can mean different things. To us, engagement is more than simply making information available or gathering opinions and attitudes. We should use the views and opinions we receive to help us make decisions on or changes to our service plans.

We believe it is important to get our community involved in designing and assessing services. This should improve things for local people.

We must consider what we can do to communicate effectively with all local people, so that everyone can have their say. It is important that the wider community understand how they can get involved in activities before they start, and that they feel able to do so. It is also important that we keep local people informed throughout the process, and tell them: -

- what is going to happen with the information they have given us;
- what changes we will make as a result of the work we have done with them; and
- how else they can get involved.

For this partnership public engagement and consultation framework, people can get involved at five levels (see box on next page).



Informing

We will make sure that our communities are fully aware of local initiatives, issues and opportunities to get involved in our work. We should be able to give local people information before we provide any activities for them to get involved in.

Consulting (getting people's views)

We want to get the views of people in our communities, so we can put together our plans and services.

Deciding together

Making decisions using our communities' views.

Acting together

We have long-term partnerships where local people are involved in making decisions and reviewing plans or services.

Supporting local initiatives

People can get involved in leading, delivering or developing local initiatives. Adapted from 'The Framework for Participation', Wilcox, 1994

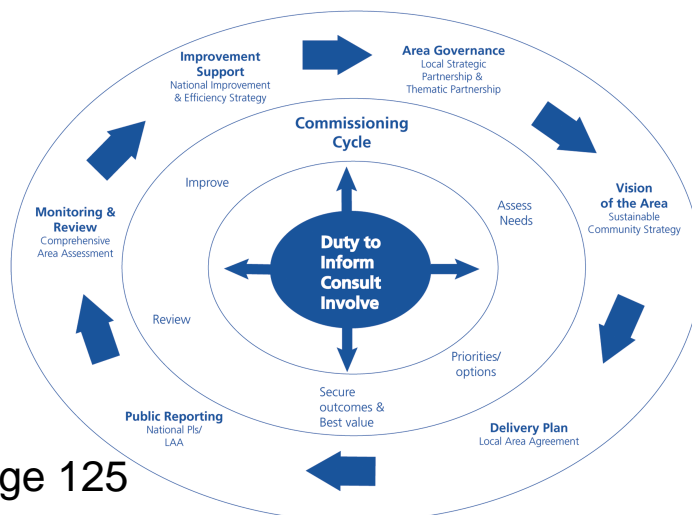
7 How will we know if it is working?

By reviewing our progress, we can make any changes or improvements we need to. We will also be able to make sure that local people are receiving the best possible services.

We understand that everyone has a part to play in creating strong, safe, successful and healthy communities that put the people at the heart of what we do. A new performance framework has been developed by the Department of Communities and Local Government

Performance Framework Model

Taken from: **Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities, Statutory Guidance 2008**



8 Measuring our performance

The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel is responsible for managing how we perform. To check whether or not the framework is having an effect, the panel will use the following scorecard to identify areas we need to develop, and also areas where we are showing good practice.

Results of the public engagement and consultation framework	How we will know we have been successful
<p>We know and work with our communities and understand their needs, in particular those who may experience discrimination or who are vulnerable.</p>	<p>National Indicator (NI) 7 There will be a successful community, faith and voluntary sector</p> <p>We have completed an equality impact assessment for an activity to get people involved in our work.</p> <p>We can show that we have spoken with and listened to local people according to the Standards for Engagement and Consultation.</p>
<p>We have made sure that we have involved our communities in identifying the issues that are important to them.</p>	<p>National Indicator (NI) 4 The number of people who feel they can influence decisions in their local area.</p> <p>National Indicator (NI) 3 Civic participation (more local people are involved in community activity in the local area).</p> <p>National Indicator (NI) 27 The number of people who agree that the police and other local public services seek the views of local people on anti-social behaviour and crime.</p> <p>We can show that we have made changes to how we deliver services, as a result of the work we carried out with the local community.</p>

Results of the public engagement and consultation framework

How we will know we have been successful

We have asked our communities whether we have achieved the things that are important to them.

National Indicator (NI) 3

Civic participation (more local people are involved in community activity) in the local area.

National Indicator (NI) 4

The number of people who feel they can influence decisions in their local area.

National Indicator (NI) 5

Overall satisfaction (More people are happy with the local area).

National Indicator (NI) 21

The number of people who agree that the police and other local public services are successfully dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime.

We have made progress on the Equality Standard for Local Government, which is a way for local authorities to make sure that nobody is discriminated against.

We have worked with other partners when we have wanted to speak with and listen to our communities, and we have told our local communities about what we have found.

National Indicator (NI) 14

Reducing avoidable contact (we are limiting the contact that has little or no value to the customer).

We can show that we are working with partners to plan, design and deliver our work with the local community, and that we are sharing the results of the activities.

We can show that we have financial control and we are making the most of the resources we have available.

9 Associated documents

A Guide to Equality Impact Assessments, EqIA Learning Resource
Website: www.idea.gov.uk/EqIA

The Sefton Compact: Working Better Together
For more information email neil.frackelton@seftoncvcs.org.uk

HM Government Code of Practice on Consultation, July 2008
Website: www.bre.berr.gov.uk

Eversheds Local Government Briefing Note, November 2008
Effective Consultations - What are the requirements?
Website: www.eversheds.com

Section 242 of the 2006 National Health (NHS) Service Act www.dh.gov.uk

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
Website: www.dh.gov.uk

Communities and Local Government White Paper: Communities in Control:
Real people, real power July, 2008
Website: www.communities.gov.uk

Developing Your Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy:
A Practical Guide for LSPs, March 2009 Website: www.idea.gov.uk

10 Contact details

The Public Engagement and Consultation Team
Sefton Equalities Partnership, 5th Floor, Merseyside 3TC Building,
16 Crosby Road North, Waterloo Merseyside L22 0NY

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Sefton Equalities Partnership is managed by Sefton Council for Voluntary Service.

Registered office: 3rd Floor, Merseyside 3TC Centre, 16 Crosby Road North,
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Registered charity number: 1024546.

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Guarantee number: 2832920.

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Agenda Item 6

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	23 June 2016
Subject:	Revocation of Existing Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Report of:	Head of Regeneration and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes	Is it included in the Forward Plan?	Yes
Exempt/Confidential	No		

Purpose/Summary

To revoke a number of obsolete Supplementary Planning Guidance notes (SPGS) currently in force in Sefton that are no longer required. This is a technical exercise, for which the Scheme of Delegation requires a Cabinet decision.

Revocation is being sought for a number of reasons including; because the development the SPG related to has been completed (for example Housing Market Renewal) or superseded by more recent strategies, or they no longer comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and the emerging Sefton Local Plan which is due to be adopted in late 2016 / early 2017.

A number of other SPGs will be retained but will need to be updated in due course.

Recommendation

That Cabinet agrees to revoke the following SPGs:

- Bedford Road / Queens Road (2004)
- Bootle Town Centre (2004)
- Coffee House Bridge (2007)
- Development in the Green Belt (2003)
- Klondyke (2004)
- Peel/Knowsley and Linacre (2008)

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		✓	
2	Jobs and Prosperity		✓	

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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:

Many of the SPGs were adopted in 2003 and relate to the soon to be superseded Sefton UDP. Whilst some have resulted in successful development being carried out, such as in the Bedford / Queens and Klondyke HMRI neighbourhoods, there is no funding to carry out the proposals for the Knowsley / Peel /Linacre Area. Others are inconsistent with the National Planning Policy Framework or the emerging Sefton Local Plan. As a result they are no longer required and should be revoked.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

One alternative would be not to revoke the SPGs. However as they are mostly out of date, they will be given little weight in the decision making process. This could lead to confusion when people are seeking policy advice in relation to planning applications.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

N/A

(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:

Financial N/A
Legal As the guidance is guidance adopted by the Council over years, it is for the Council to revoke this. No consultation is required but a formal notice will be placed on the Council's website.
Human Resources N/A

Equality

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------------------------------|
| 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 of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

Revoking these out-dated SPGs will help to make it easier for people to access relevant information when seeking planning policy advice and submitting planning applications.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD4181/16) has been consulted and notes the report indicates no direct financial implications for the Authority. The Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD.3464/16) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Implementation Date for the Decision

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

Contact Officer: Ingrid Berry

Tel: 0151 934 3556

Email: ingrid.berry@sefton.gov.uk

Background Papers:

The following papers are available for inspection on the Council website via this link:

<http://www.sefton.gov.uk/spd>

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The advanced stage of the Sefton Local Plan offers an opportunity to review the existing Supplementary Planning Guidance still in force. It is intended that relevant existing guidance will be brought up to date whilst guidance no longer required will be revoked.
- 1.2 The Council's existing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) can be viewed online at the following address: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-including-local-plan/adopted-supplementary-planning-documentsguidance.aspx>.
- 1.3 The SPGs for New Housing and House Extensions have already been replaced as part of this review process, whilst many of the others are due to be updated and consulted on later this year.

2. Reason for revocation

- 2.2 The SPGs which are proposed for revocation were all adopted between 2003 and 2008. Their content is based on the policies in the Unitary Development Plan rather than the emerging Local Plan. In addition, some of the guidance is out of date due to the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, their proposals have been fully implemented, or there is no longer any funding to carry out their proposals.
- 2.3 The table below explains why each SPG is no longer required and should be revoked.

SPG	Reason for revoking
Bedford Road/Queens Road	Adopted in 2003, the guidance relates to defunct Housing Market Renewal initiative and area is not the subject of a Local Plan policy. The guidance should therefore be revoked.
Bootle Town Centre	Adopted in 2004, the guidance is based on several UDP policies which have been replaced by a number of emerging Local Plan policies including ED2, ED4 and ED6. Although the regeneration principles remain in Bootle, defined areas have been altered significantly. The Bootle Investment Strategy is more relevant.
Coffee House Bridge	Adopted in 2004, the guidance is based on several UDP Policies aimed at regenerating parts of Bootle. The area was designated part white land and part urban green space at this stage, while the emerging Local Plan has allocated a significant portion of the site for residential development (MN2.45). The site is however not subject to site specific requirements or a policy. The guidance should therefore be revoked.
Development in Green Belt	Adopted in 2003, the guidance is based on UDP Policies and national policies that predate the NPPF. House extensions are now covered in the new House Extensions SPD and new houses in the New Housing SPD. The

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	guidance should therefore be revoked.
Klondyke	Adopted in 2004, the guidance relates to defunct Housing Market Renewal initiative which wasn't completed in this area. Although the remaining vacant land has been allocated in the emerging Local Plan as MN2.42, the site is not subject to site specific requirements or a policy. The guidance should therefore be revoked.
Peel/Knowsley and Linacre	Adopted in 2008, this guidance covers a large geographical area and several UDP Policies that have been replaced by various inconsistent emerging Local Plan policies and site allocations. This presents some difficulties in saving the guidance. The guidance should therefore be revoked.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 If the recommendation is approved it is intended to revoke these SPGs in July 2016. A revocation statement will be produced and put on our website in order to inform the public of the withdrawal of the documents.

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	23 June 2016
Subject:	Sefton Housing Strategy 2016 - 2021	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Report of:	Head of Regeneration and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes	Is it included in the Forward Plan?	Yes
Exempt/Confidential	No		

Purpose/Summary

To seek Cabinet approval to publish Sefton's Housing Strategy, which sets out the vision, key themes and strategic housing priorities for Sefton over the next five years.

Recommendation(s)

1. Approve Sefton's Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 [as set out in Appendix 1] for publication.
2. Note further work to be undertaken in Summer/Autumn 2016 on the Housing Strategy Action Plan and Monitoring Report. This action plan framework will include specific activities and actions to be undertaken by the Council to achieve the strategic priorities as identified in the Housing Strategy document.

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	X		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy		X	

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Reasons for the Recommendation:

The Government has recognised that *“housing should provide a secure foundation for individuals to live the lives they want to live. Finding the right home, in the right place, can be an essential platform for people seeking to support their families and sustain work”*. This updated Housing Strategy sets out the locally agreed, long-term vision for housing and sets out strategic housing priorities, objectives and broad target outcomes to help achieve this aim.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

There are no alternative options considered and rejected.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

At this stage of implementing Sefton’s Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 no significant revenue, or capital financial implications for the Council can be quantified. As work relating to the Strategy’s development and monitoring is progressed during 2016/17, Members will be appropriately advised of any identified significant financial costs, or benefits arising.

Implications:

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

Financial	
Legal Section 29 of the Deregulation Act 2015 removed the legal requirement for a local authority to have a housing strategy. However preparation of such a strategy is deemed to be good practice. The content of the strategy does not change the Council’s existing policy framework but merely updates its. Consequently constitutionally this means that this strategy can be approved by Cabinet.	
Human Resources	
Equality	
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 of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

The development of a new Housing Strategy for Sefton can provide a robust and comprehensive picture of housing needs and priorities. It provides a vision for the Council and its partners to provide new homes, manage existing homes and provide housing services in the Borough.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

Public Engagement and Consultation Activity – Sefton Housing Strategy (2016-2021). 8-week public consultation (February 2016 – April 2016).

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD4188/16.) has been consulted and notes the report currently identifies no significant financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations of this report. However there are measures within both:-

- a) The Housing and Planning Act 2016, and
- b) The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

which could potentially bring about both notable financial expense and income for the Council. However it is identified as work relating to the Strategy's development and monitoring progresses in future months, Members will be appropriately advised of any identified significant financial implications arising.

The Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD3471/16) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

Contact Officer: Alistair Malpas – Strategic Housing Officer

Tel: 0151 934 4842

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Background Papers:

The following papers are available for inspection on the Council website via this link:

Draft Sefton Housing Strategy 2016-2021 - approval for public consultation

<http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=9830>

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1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Approval for the development of Sefton's new Housing Strategy to replace the 2008-2013 strategy was agreed by CM Regeneration and Tourism in January 2015.
- 1.2 The Government has recognised that "housing should provide a secure foundation for individuals to live the lives they want to live. Finding the right home, in the right place, can be an essential platform for people seeking to support their families and sustain work". This updated Housing Strategy sets out the locally agreed, long-term vision for housing and sets out strategic housing priorities, objectives and broad target outcomes to help achieve this aim.
- 1.3 Furthermore the updated housing strategy provides a robust and comprehensive picture of housing needs and priorities. It will also provide a vision for partners who provide both own and manage existing or new housing, and provide housing services. At a time when the local authorities own capacity to deliver services is reducing, it is important that the Council can shape the work of partners who can provide housing related services, and those who actually provide new or existing housing.
- 1.4 A draft Housing Strategy consultation document was developed over a number of months in partnership with a range of internal and external stakeholders. Extensive and up-to-date evidential documents and current Council strategies were also consulted upon and incorporated within the draft housing strategy, to ensure consistency with the Council and wider Liverpool City Region's existing policies and plans. Finally the development of a robust housing strategy has followed good practice guidance, which indicated the importance of developing a 'shared' strategy, in collaboration with key Local Authority partners, and also through consultation with a wider group of stakeholders and the local community.
- 1.5 The stakeholder collaboration to produce the draft Housing Strategy was achieved through the setting up of a Housing Strategy advisory group. This group included representatives from different internal Council departments including; Planning, Public Health, Adult Social Care, Regeneration and Housing as well as external representatives from Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens. The group was chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing to discuss and agree upon the strategic housing priorities.
- 1.6 Further to this, external stakeholders including members of the public and Housing Association partners have been briefed on the development of the housing strategy. Importantly they had a key input in 'shaping' the draft strategy through the initial strategy drafting phases and also throughout the formal 8 week public consultation process. The results of this feedback was assessed and incorporated, where appropriate, into the 'final' draft version of the housing strategy. A summary of the consultation responses and the Council's response to each comment can

be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.sefton.gov.uk/housingstrategy>

2. Developing the new housing strategy's vision, key themes and housing priorities

- 2.1 The agreed vision for housing in Sefton by 2021 is to – ***“Continue to make Sefton a great place to live, by ensuring that people can access high quality housing appropriate for their needs”***.
- 2.2 It must be noted that the strategy does not just look at the provision of housing, but includes housing policies that can improve the local environment and quality of life for the benefit of all residents. The strategy therefore fully considers and aligns with the Council's key high level strategies – the Local Plan (2012-2030) and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018).
- 2.3 To address Sefton's future housing challenges, five strategic housing priorities and key themes have been identified through consultation and evidence gathering. Sefton's previous Housing Strategy (2009-2013) has also been reviewed and updated to ensure a measure of continuity and reflect on the past successes.
- 2.4 The draft housing strategy's priorities include:
- Driving housing quality in communities and neighbourhoods;
 - Meeting people's housing needs;
 - Enabling people to live independently;
 - Tackling barriers to obtaining suitable housing for the most vulnerable and ensuring equal access to housing services;
 - Effectively utilising Council assets to support housing delivery.
- 2.5 These housing priorities are included and addressed in the draft strategy, alongside the broad details of how the Council will achieve these priorities over the lifetime of the strategy.

3. Housing and Planning Act 2016

- 3.1 The Act received royal ascent in May, 2016. However, the full implications of the Act will remain unknown until a number of sets of regulations come into force in the future.
- 3.2 Much of the Act relates to changes affecting stock owning local authorities, which will not directly apply to Sefton Council. However, there are other provisions affecting the local authority's role in regulating the private rented sector, and provisions affecting housing associations including the provision of Affordable Housing (Starter Homes), which the Council will need to take account of in future.
- 3.3 Sefton's Housing Strategy was written specifically with some of these Housing and Planning Act changes in mind. It must be reactive to future

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change and therefore states in the introduction that;

3.4 “[Sefton] *will also need to respond to the challenges arising from the Housing and Planning Act, 2016. This Act introduces legislative changes to various housing strategy priorities set out in this document, therefore an early review of the strategy may be necessary once the full implications of the Act become apparent*”.

3.5 It will be possible to take account of many of the changes arising from the Act, as we develop the Strategy Action Plan [described in section 4 below]. At this point in time it is impossible to assess whether any of the changes will have a direct budget implication on the Council, and this will need to be considered in future strategy updates & progress reports.

4. Further work – Development of a Housing Strategy Action Plan and Monitoring report

4.1 The finer details and methods in which the housing strategy priorities will be achieved will be included in the **Housing Strategy Action Plan**. This action plan will again be developed alongside key partners in Summer/Autumn 2016 and will be a delivery framework that will include specific activities and actions that will be measurable, realistic and importantly achievable.

4.2 The Housing Strategy Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is responsive to change and appropriately addresses the identified housing priorities and targets. This **Monitoring Report** will help to reflect on progress and targets achieved over the previous 12 months, and allow for updates to Sefton’s housing priorities in the future.

Appendix 1 [Overleaf]

Sefton Housing Strategy

2016 - 2021



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INTRODUCTION



“Housing should provide a secure foundation for individuals to live the lives they want to live. Finding the right home, in the right place, can be an essential platform for people seeking to support their families and sustain work”¹.

Within Sefton access to suitable housing, which is of good quality and affordable, is a key priority for all its residents and communities and this strategy sets out ways to identify and more importantly deliver improvements.

The Borough faces significant challenges ahead with changes to statutory duties for the Authority already felt through the Localism Act, the Welfare Reform Act and the Care Act. Alongside these legislative changes, a significant reduction in Local Authority funding has been experienced within Sefton, reducing the resources available to deliver local services. This strategy will also need to respond and adapt to future changes brought about by a devolved Liverpool City Region, including the potential development of a city region housing strategy. It will also need to respond to the challenges arising from the Housing and Planning Act, 2016. This Act introduces legislative changes to various housing strategy priorities set out in this document, therefore an early review of the strategy may be necessary once the full implications of the Act become apparent.

Demographic population changes also present key housing challenges to the Borough. Evidence from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment² and Older Persons Housing Strategy Research³ identify that meeting the needs of an aging population will be one of Sefton’s principal housing issues in the coming decades. The number of people aged 65 and above is expected to increase by 36% from 2012 to 2030⁴. Other demographic issues regarding; increases in the proportion of people with a disability, the changing characteristics of BME households, changes to family household structures and young person households have been identified through evidence, and will be addressed in this strategy document.

The recent review into the Local Authority role in housing supply⁵ - has suggested that Councils should take a more central role in providing new homes by setting out a clear vision for housing development in their areas. The Council should be proactive in identifying housing needs and share ideas and experience whilst actively use their own assets and knowledge to deliver more homes and build stronger communities.

Recognising the challenges ahead, the housing strategy will be delivered in partnership with a range of key stakeholders who provide, own and manage new or existing housing as well as providing housing services. At a time when Sefton’s own capacity to deliver services is reducing, it is important that the Council can shape the work of partners who can provide housing related services, and those who actually provide new or existing housing.

Finally, housing plays a key economic and social role in improving the lives and wellbeing of residents through economic regeneration, direct job creation and improving the quality of existing homes and the neighbourhood environment. This housing strategy will identify Sefton’s vision and priorities and provide a performance framework to monitor

and success of these policies over time.

DEVELOPING THE VISION FOR SEFTON

The vision for housing in Sefton by 2020 is to – ***“Continue to make Sefton a great place to live, by ensuring that people can access high quality housing appropriate for their needs”***.

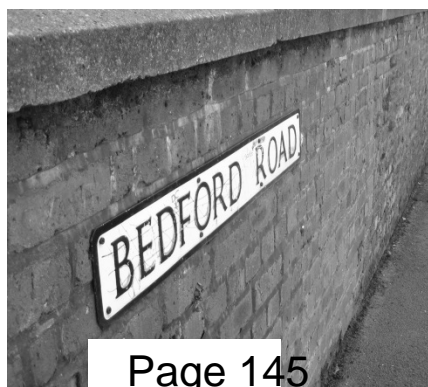
It is important that this strategy does not just look at the provision of housing, but concerns itself with how housing policies can improve the local environment and quality of life for the benefit of all residents. Within this context we recognise that housing activities need to support the Council’s key high level strategies – the Local Plan (2012-2030) and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018). These top level strategies will help ensure:

- ***“The delivery of additional market housing and affordable housing in the borough, to help meet the needs of Sefton’s changing population, including families, the elderly and other vulnerable people with special housing needs”***⁶;
- ***“To support older people and those with long term conditions and disabilities to remain independent and in their own homes”***⁷;
- ***“To seek to address the wider social, environmental and economic issues that can contribute to poor health and wellbeing”***⁸.

Key Themes and Housing Priorities

To address Sefton’s future housing challenges, five strategic housing priorities and key themes have been identified through consultation and evidence gathering. Sefton’s previous Housing Strategy (2009-2013) has also been reviewed and updated to ensure a measure of continuity and reflect on the past successes.

- ***Driving housing quality in communities and neighbourhoods;***
- ***Meeting people’s housing needs;***
- ***Enabling people to live independently;***
- ***Tackling barriers to obtaining suitable housing for the most vulnerable and ensuring equal access to housing services;***
- ***Effectively utilising Council assets to support housing delivery.***



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PRIORITY THEME: DRIVING HOUSING QUALITY IN COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

Improving the existing housing stock in Sefton is a key priority. Higher quality housing can bring direct benefits to households, neighbourhoods and communities. Although the Council does not own or manage housing stock, we will wish to work with and encourage others across all types and tenures of homes to raise housing standards, address energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and decrease the number of 'non-decent homes'. This strategic priority may also help to tackle the number of empty homes in the Borough, reducing negative impacts on neighbourhoods and help increase the number of available homes.

Our priorities include:

- **Raise housing standards across all tenures and reduce the number of non-decent homes with particular focus on the worst conditions including;**
 - **Improving the quality of privately rented sector (PRS) homes⁹ and;**
 - **Regulating and improving Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) through mandatory and Additional HMO Licensing where appropriate.**
- ***Working with Housing Associations to agree approaches to improve the assets and services of Housing Association's owned stock;***
- ***Reducing the numbers of empty homes and neighbourhood empty homes 'hot-spots'.***

We will achieve this priority over the next five years by:

- ***Working closely with private sector landlords to encourage them to provide high quality homes and management services;***
- ***Attract high quality private landlords to invest in the Borough;***
- ***Provide support and guidance to owner-occupiers to help them improve their housing standards, particularly the most vulnerable in the worst housing conditions;***
- ***Using evidence to identify concentrations of privately rented sector stock that are associated with conditions which would justify considering the introduction of a Privately Rented Sector selective licensing scheme;***
- ***Working in partnership with Sefton's Housing Associations to ensure that they provide the best quantity, type and quality of housing, together with the most appropriate services;***
- ***More effective use of the Council's Planning and Licensing statutory powers to help improve Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO) where necessary;***
- **Providing advice and support to help reduce fuel poverty by making existing and new homes more sustainable and energy efficient and encourage the use of renewable technologies to achieve this;**
- ***Helping empty property owners to bring their properties back into use through advice and assistance, including early intervention and preventative measures. Where this is not effective, a targeted approach of enforcement powers would be used to help bring longer term and problematic empty homes back into use¹⁰.***

PRIORITY THEME: MEETING PEOPLE'S HOUSING NEEDS

This priority looks at how we can increase the supply, mix and quality of new market homes, low cost homes as well as Affordable Housing. This increase in overall housing supply will encourage a greater choice of homes that meet the needs of existing and future residents. Additional housing is an important factor in allowing demand to be met across all tenures and improve flexibility, and importantly help to develop more mixed and sustainable communities. The Council wants to oversee the development of high quality new homes in areas where people want to live.

Our priorities include:

- *Securing the development of appropriate housing and attracting housing investment in the Borough;*
- *Attracting and encouraging effective working relationships with appropriate housing development partners;*
- **Working with partners who can help those people who aspire to own their own homes;**
- *Working with partners to develop affordable housing;*
- *Exploring innovative methods to boost the housing supply, across a wide range of tenures.*

We will achieve this priority over the next five years by:

- *Attracting a variety of high quality developers into Sefton to deliver high quality homes and neighbourhoods;*
- *Identifying and assessing different funding and finance opportunities to help secure development;*
- *Working in partnership with developers who can provide housing products and services that help aspiring householders to access home ownership;*
- *Working in partnership with housing associations to identify appropriate housing locations and develop a greater quantum and range of affordable housing;*
- **Ensuring Planning policies help deliver Affordable Housing either on development sites or in exceptional circumstances through financial contributions to deliver on alternative sites.**
- *Assessing the potential of alternative home building methods through custom and self-build schemes (links to the effective use of Council assets priority - page 8).*



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PRIORITY THEME: ENABLING PEOPLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY

This priority will help Sefton to provide an effective response to the longer term demographic changes that will affect the borough including; significant increases in older populations and a decrease in the working age population. This housing priority addresses how appropriate housing can be provided to support the future needs of specific groups within the local population, through the provision of specialist housing or adaptations to existing homes (such as better and further use of assistive technologies), to ensure that people can continue to live independent, self-sufficient and healthy lives.

Our priorities include:

- *Responding to long-term demographic changes - A significant increase in older populations often with more complex needs;*
- *Providing appropriate housing to support future population needs for example; independent living and striving for lifetime homes standards;*
- *Reducing health inequalities through improved housing;*
- *Meeting the housing needs of the most vulnerable groups, such as those with mental health issues, learning and physical disabilities or those leaving care.*

We will achieve this priority over the next five years by:

- *Integrated working with health and social care partners to identify the appropriate housing and housing investment required;*
- *Implementing solutions and recommendations as set out within the Older Persons Strategy Research Study Action Plan (2015) including suitable 'Extra Care' housing;*
- *Using Planning Policies to help ensure a proportion of all new development is suitable for older and the most vulnerable households;*
- *Providing suitable housing advice and support for vulnerable households to help enable them to live longer independently;*
- *Continuing to provide an effective aids and adaptations service to assist the most vulnerable;*
- **Working with partners to provide new housing for older populations and the most vulnerable groups in appropriate and accessible locations for local services and facilities;**
- *Working with landlords and support service agencies to provide a range of supported living accommodation for our most vulnerable.*



PRIORITY THEME: TACKLING BARRIERS TO OBTAINING SUITABLE HOUSING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE AND ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO HOUSING SERVICES

This priority will meet the needs of more diverse communities within Sefton, supporting the needs of populations who are more vulnerable or not represented through the conventional housing market. This priority also seeks to address the issues of homelessness building upon the Council's adopted 5 year Homelessness Strategy (2013-18)¹¹ and also analyse the impacts of welfare reform.

Our priorities include:

- *Tackling all forms of homelessness including: Statutory homelessness, street homelessness and hidden homelessness;*
- *Providing more effective housing related support and advice services;*
- *Meeting the needs of more diverse and vulnerable communities;*
- *Providing greater access to affordable housing through improvements to Choice Based Letting schemes;*
- *Understanding impacts of housing welfare reform on Sefton's households, and exploring possible responses.*

We will achieve this priority over the next five years by:

- *Implementing Sefton's Homeless Strategy Action Plan by 2018, to reduce levels of homelessness, prioritise its prevention, ensure that sufficient accommodation is available to house homeless cases and provide the support, information and funding to address these issues;*
- *Continued development of information and advice services;*
- *Reviewing the existing Choice Based Letting Scheme with partners to assess where improvements can/should be made to help customers;*
- *Assessing the impacts of housing welfare reform and developing responses alongside partners to address these.*

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PRIORITY THEME: EFFECTIVELY UTILISING COUNCIL ASSETS TO SUPPORT HOUSING

The Government's review¹² into the role Local Authorities could play as a housing delivery enabler highlights the ways in which Sefton Council can use its own assets to support housing delivery more effectively. Sefton should maximise the use of their existing asset base and help to support new homes and development through asset sales and helping to bring redundant land back into use. The Borough should also use its employee knowledge base and skills to support locally led, large and small scale housing schemes. Assets can be used to maximise social value, however, it must be recognised that the use of Council assets to achieve strategic aims must be balanced against the need to secure social and economic best value.

Our priorities include:

- *Reviewing and prioritising land and assets the Council owns/manages to help deliver housing and regeneration priorities;*
- *Developing effective land and asset delivery plans;*
- *Assessing the demand for Custom and Self-Build homes.*

We will achieve this priority over the next five years by:

- *Undertaking a review and cost benefit analysis of the developable land the Council owns. This should also include land that the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and other public sector agencies can utilise to deliver new homes in the Borough;*
- *Completing a Custom and Self-Build homes study in Sefton and development of an accessible register of demand. Making available serviced pilot plots for Custom and Self Build homes to meet the demand and also support the development processes;*
- *Developing land and asset delivery plans to i) analyse the best use of Council owned land to achieve the most appropriate housing schemes and ii) ensure these new homes are built as effectively and efficiently as possible;*
- *Establishing new ways of development using Council land to assist in the delivery of privately rented new builds, self-build and custom build homes (links to meeting people's housing needs priority - page 5).*



DOCUMENT REFERENCES

1. *Laying the foundations: a housing Strategy for England*
2. *Sefton Strategic Housing Market Assessment – 2014 JG Consulting*
3. *Sefton Older Persons Housing Strategy Research 2014 – North Star Consulting*
4. *Office for National Statistics – 2012 Sub-National Population Projections*
5. *The Elphicke-House Report – From statutory provider to Housing Delivery Enabler*
6. *Sefton Local Plan (2012-2030)*
7. *Sefton Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018)*
8. *Sefton Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018)*
9. *Sefton Private Sector Stock Condition Survey (2013)*
10. *Sefton Council Empty Homes Strategy (2014-2018)*
11. *Sefton Homelessness Strategy (2013-2018)*
12. *The Elphicke-House Report – From statutory provider to Housing Delivery Enabler*

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Report to: Cabinet
Council

Date of Meeting: 23 June 2016
14 July 2016

Subject: Capital Programme Capital Allocations 2016/17

Report of: Head of Corporate Resources

Wards Affected: All

Is this a Key Decision? Yes

Is it included in the Forward Plan? No –
Rule 27 Applied

Exempt/Confidential No

Purpose/Summary

To provide Members with details of the 2016/2017 Capital Allocations received to date and to consider their use in the development of a new starts programme for 2016/2017. The report outlines £5.245m of new investments from the Single Capital Pot which are aimed to improve the facilities and services to residents throughout Sefton.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) Note the 2016/2017 capital allocations received to date, see paragraph 3.2;
- ii) Request Council to approve for inclusion within the Capital Investment Plan the capital schemes to be funded from the 2016/2017 Single Capital Pot as outlined in Appendix A
- iii) Request Council to approve for inclusion within the Capital Investment Plan the capital scheme to be funded from Prudential Borrowing as outlined in Appendix B
- iv) Request Council to approve for inclusion within the Capital Investment Plan the self-funded capital schemes as outlined in Appendix C
- v) it be noted that the proposal was a Key Decision but had not been included in the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Consequently, the Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) had been consulted under Rule 27 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution, to the decision being made by the Cabinet as a matter of urgency on the basis that it was impracticable to defer the decision until the commencement of the next Forward Plan because it was not known at what point specific schemes would be ready to progress to approval stage.

Council is recommended to give approval for inclusion within the Capital Investment Plan the Capital schemes to be funded from the 2016/2017 Single Capital Pot as outlined in Appendix A and the Prudential Borrowing Scheme in Appendix B.

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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	√		
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:

To update Members on the 2015/2016 Capital Investment Plan, inform Members of the 2016/2017 Capital Allocations received to date and to allow Members to consider how these allocations should be utilised. Also to seek approval for a scheme to be funded from Prudential Borrowing.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The capital expenditure will not result in additional unbudgeted revenue costs.

(B) Capital Costs

All allocations included in this report are capital grants.

Implications:

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

Legal	
Human Resources	
Equality	
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:

The Capital Programme has been proposed to enhance the services provided by Sefton. This will be to the benefit of residents and businesses across Sefton, as well as providing improvements in value for money in the delivery of services as part of modernisation of service delivery.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Head of Corporate Resources is the author of the report (FD 4194/16)
The Head of Regulation and Compliance has been consulted and has no comments on the report. (LD 3477/16)

Are there any other options available for consideration?

The options available to Members for the use of non ring-fenced capital grant allocations are included in the body of the report.

Implementation Date for the Decision

After Cabinet and Council.

Contact Officer: Jeff Kenah

Tel: 0151 934 4104

Email: Jeff.kenah@sefton.gov.uk

Background Papers:

None.

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1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 This report updates the 2015/2016 Capital Investment Plan and provides details of the Government Capital Allocations that have been notified to date for 2016/2017 with a view to the Members considering the use of the non-ringfenced allocations in the development of a new starts programme for 2016/2017.

2. Capital Investment Plan 2015/2016

- 2.1 Schemes to be funded from the Single Capital Pot Allocations for 2015/2016 were approved as follows:

	2015/2016
	£m
Non ring-fenced grant allocations 2015/2016	10.254
Funding b/f from 2014/2015	0.089
Resources committed from previous approvals	(0.353)
Total Grant Funding	9.990
Capital Receipts	3.000
Total Resources Available	12.990
Schemes approved by Council - Pre-allocated Schemes	5.297
Schemes approved by Council – Emergency & Health & Safety	1.800
Schemes approved by Council – High Priority / Invest to Save or Leverage	1.100
Schemes approved by Council – High Priority	4.615
Total SCP schemes approved	12.812

3. Government Capital Allocations 2016/2017

- 3.1 It should be noted that for 2016/2017 a single capital pot will again be in operation. This means that all non-ring-fenced grants will initially be held centrally, and bids will need to be made in order to secure funds for capital projects.
- 3.2 The table below itemises those capital allocations that have been received for 2016/2017. The 2015/2016 figures, where applicable, are shown for comparison. All allocations are non-ring fenced, with the exception of Devolved Formula Capital.

Description of Allocation	2015/2016 £'000	2016/2017 £'000	Variation £'000
Children's Services – Devolved Formula Capital (ring-fenced)	446	411	-35
Children's Services – Basic Need	1,571	1,650	79
Children's Services – Capital Maintenance / School Condition Allocation	2,078	1,842	-236
Total Department for Education	4,095	3,903	-192

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Description of Allocation	2015/2016	2016/2017 £'000	Variation £'000
<i>Continued</i>			
Disabled Facilities Grant	1,959	0	-1,959
Total Housing	1,959	0	-1,959
Department of Health Capital Grant	849	0	-849
Total Department for Health	849	0	-849
Highways Maintenance	2,895	2,631	-264
Integrated Transport Block	902	1,173	271
Pothole Grant	0	155	155
Highways maintenance Incentive Fund	0	162	162
Total Transportation	3,797	4,121	324
Total Allocations	10,700	8,024	-2,676

3.3 It should be noted that both the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and the Department of Health Capital Grant are now allocated to the Better Care Fund. As such any funding allocation will be jointly developed and agreed with the relevant partners.

4. Capital Strategy – Single Capital Pot Approvals

4.1 A revised Capital Allocation Framework and Capital Strategy was approved by Cabinet and Council on 28 February 2013. This outlined the use of a single capital pot into which all non-ring-fenced funds will be placed, and for which bids must be made in order to secure funding for capital schemes. As can be noted in paragraph 3.2, grant allocations of £8.024m have been received for 2016/2017.

4.2 The Strategic Capital Investment Group (SCIG) has met in recent months in order to review and assess bids received for capital funding from the single capital pot in order to recommend to Cabinet and Council a Capital Investment Plan for 2016/2017. This work was undertaken within the framework of the Capital Allocation Framework and Capital Strategy. The capital bids have been classified into five distinct groups as follows (the approved bids by group are included within **Appendix A**):

- **Ring-Fenced (£0.411m 2016/17)** – These funds are ring-fenced by Government and therefore must be used for the purpose for which they were issued. These relate to Schools' Devolved Formula Capital.
- **Pre allocated (£4.121m 2016/2017)** – These are funds which are non-ring-fenced by Government however, in accordance with previous years' protocols, are it is proposed that they are utilised for the original suggested purpose. The reasons for this approach include contractual obligations, the potential for clawback, and reduced funding levels in future years. These schemes include the Local Transport Plan, funding which is administered by the Combined Authority. These

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funds are allocated to deliver a programme of work, the detail of which will be agreed by the Cabinet Member (see Appendix A).

- **Other Single Capital Pot bids – High Priority / Invest to Save or Leverage Schemes and High Priority Schemes (£0.713m 2016/17)** - capital bids that, if approved, will draw upon the single capital pot (see appendix A)
- **Fully funded schemes** – those that rely upon Prudential Borrowing but have an income stream that will fund the borrowing costs (see Appendix B)
- **Fully grant funded** – schemes that do not make any call upon the single capital pot (see Appendix C).

4.3 In order to allow as many schemes as possible to progress, it is proposed to augment capital allocations by utilising capital receipts already anticipated in the 2016/2017 financial year to the total value of £1.5m.

4.5 Any underspend on the above schemes will be returned to the Single Capital Pot

4.5 It should be noted that the most advantageous use of the Council's grant funding, both ring-fenced and non-ring-fenced, will be made, to ensure that the Council's priorities are achieved.

5 Prudential Borrowing Scheme

5.1 The scheme outlined in Appendix B will cost £1.3m in 2016/2017, £0.485m will be funded by reserve and £0.815m will be funded by prudential borrowing and therefore does not require any support from the Single Capital Pot, the borrowing costs being funded by a levy on services. This was considered by SCIG and is now being put forward for approval by Cabinet and Council for inclusion in the Capital Investment Plan.

6 Funded Scheme

6.1 The schemes outlined in Appendix C will cost £1.150m in 2016/2017. This will be funded by reserve or external grant and does not require any support from the Single Capital Pot. The schemes were considered by SCIG and are now being put forward for approval by Cabinet for inclusion in the Capital Investment Plan.

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APPENDIX A					
BID NUMBER	Funding required 2016/2017 £	Funding required 2017/2018 £	Scheme name	Scheme description	Applicant Service
<i>RINGFENCED CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS</i>					
1	411,000		Devolved Formula Capital – Ringfenced resource	Capital grant given directly to schools to spend	Schools and Families
	411,000	0			
<i>PRE ALLOCATED</i>					
2	1,173,000		Local Transport Plan, Integrated Transport Block Capital Programme	Various transport network improvements.	Locality Services – Commissioned (Highways & Infrastructure)
3	2,631,000		Local Transport Plan, Highway Maintenance Block Capital Programme	To undertake capital maintenance of the Highway Network	Locality Services – Commissioned (Highways & Infrastructure)
N/A	155,000		Pothole Grant	To undertake capital maintenance of the Highway Network	Locality Services – Commissioned (Highways & Infrastructure)
N/A	162,000		Highways maintenance Incentive Fund	To undertake capital maintenance of the Highway Network	Locality Services – Commissioned (Highways & Infrastructure)
	4,121,000	0			
<i>SINGLE POT BIDS –EMERGENCY / HEALTH & SAFETY RECOMMENDED</i>					
4	500,000		Highway Maintenance Street Lighting Structural Programme	Replace/repair unsafe street lighting columns	Locality Services – Commissioned (Highways & Infrastructure)
5	213,000		New sub-station at Meols Cop High School	To supply sub-station due to capacity currently 138kVA but 170kVA is required.	Schools and Families
	713,000	0			
TOTAL	5,245,000	0			

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APPENDIX B					
BID NUMBER	Funding required 2016/2017 £	Funding required 2017/2018 & Future Years £	Scheme name	Scheme description	Funding Source
<i>Self financed</i>					
33	815,000	0	Thornton Garden of Rest	To replace three cremators.	Prudential borrowing to be funded from a levy on services
TOTAL	815,000	0			

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APPENDIX C					
BID NUMBER	Funding required 2016/2017 £	Funding required 2017/2018 & Future Years £	Scheme name	Scheme description	Funding Source
<i>Fully Grant funded</i>					
20	50,000	0	Coast Protection Works to deposit Rubble between Hall Road and Alt Training Bank.	To deposit rock armour within the section eroded by storms to secure the area. 5 year programme.	Contamination Clearance Reserve.
N/A	835,000	0	Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme	The collection of data to support the Shoreline Management Plan and sustainable coastal management decisions across North West England	Environment Agency
N/A	30,000	0	Natural Flood Risk Management	Study to identify opportunities to slow the flow/sustainable drainage systems across Merseyside, to prioritise options and develop schemes for delivery.	Environment Agency
N/A	120,000	0	The Pool and Nile Watercourses	Investigation into two watercourses in Southport leading to programme of works for improvement, de-culverting and update of flood risk.	Environment Agency
N/A	60,000	0	Crosby Marine Lake to Formby Point Strategic Delivery Programme	Develop a PAR and delivery programme for this strategy. Particular focus on Crosby seafront where the hard defences are nearing the end of their life.	Environment Agency

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APPENDIX C					
N/A	25,000	0	River Alt Training Bank	Option appraisal for the repair of the bank that has breached in recent months.	Environment Agency
N/A	30,000	0	Seaforth & Litherland Strategic Flood Risk Management Project	Development of a long term strategy and delivery programme for the reduction in flood risk to Seaforth and Litherland	Environment Agency
TOTAL	1,150,000	0			