

# Public Document Pack

Sefton Council 

MEETING: CABINET  
DATE: Thursday 9th January, 2020  
TIME: 10.00 am  
VENUE: Birkdale Room, Town Hall, Southport

DECISION MAKER: **CABINET**

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

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Ruth Harrison  
Democratic Services Manager  
Telephone: 0151 934 2046  
E-mail: [ruth.harrison@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.harrison@sefton.gov.uk)

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	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>		
2	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  Members are requested at a meeting where a disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest arises, which is not already included in their Register of Members' Interests, to declare any interests that relate to an item on the agenda.  Where a Member discloses a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, he/she must withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest, except where he/she is permitted to remain as a result of a grant of a dispensation.  Where a Member discloses a personal interest he/she must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or staff member representing the Monitoring Officer to determine whether the Member should withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest or whether the Member can remain in the meeting or remain in the meeting and vote on the relevant decision.		
3	<b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>  Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2019		(Pages 7 - 14)
* 4	<b>The Sefton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2025</b>  Report of the Director of Public Health	All Wards	(Pages 15 - 36)
* 5	<b>Children and Young Peoples Plan 2020 - 2025</b>  Report of the Interim Director of Children's Social Care and Education	All Wards	(Pages 37 - 94)

*	6	<b>Early Help Strategy</b>  Report of the Head of Communities	All Wards	(Pages 95 - 126)
*	7	<b>Purchase of Winter Service Facility</b>  Report of the Head of Highways and Public Protection	All Wards	(Pages 127 - 134)
*	8	<b>Procurement of Payroll System</b>  Report of the Head of Corporate Resources	All Wards	(Pages 135 - 140)
*	9	<b>Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme 2020/21, Council Tax Base 2020/21 and Changes to Council Tax Discounts for Empty Homes</b>  Report of the Head of Corporate Resources	All Wards	(Pages 141 - 220)
	10	<b>Revenue and Capital Budget Update - Additional Capital Estimates</b>  Joint Report of the Executive Director and Head of Corporate Resources.		(Pages 221 - 232)
*	11	<b>Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2019/20 - January</b>  Report of the Head of Corporate Resources	All Wards	(Pages 233 - 250)
	12	<p><b>Exclusion of Press and Public</b></p> <p>To comply with Regulation 5(2) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, notice has been published regarding the intention to consider the following matter(s) in private for the reasons set out below.</p> <p>No representations have been received on this matter and this agenda satisfies the requirements of Regulation 5(4).</p> <p>The Cabinet is recommended to pass the following resolution:</p> <p>That, under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it</p>		

involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours exclusion of the information from the Press and Public.

- 13 **Revenue and Capital Budget Update : Asset Maximisation -Disposals Strategy - Phase 1** (Pages 251 - 252)  
Joint Report of the Executive Director and the Head of Corporate Resources
- 14 **Re-Admit Press and Public**  
To invite the press and public back into the meeting to consider the following reports:-
- 15 **Revenue and Capital Budget Update : Asset Maximisation -Disposals Strategy - Phase 1** (Pages 253 - 262)  
Joint Report of the Executive Director and the Head of Corporate Resources

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**THE "CALL IN" PERIOD FOR THIS SET OF MINUTES ENDS AT 12 NOON ON TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER, 2019**

## **CABINET**

### **MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON THURSDAY 5TH DECEMBER, 2019**

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

#### **75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Fairclough.

#### **76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

#### **77. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

##### **Decision Made:**

That the minutes of the Meeting held on 7 November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

#### **78. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – 2020/21 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer in relation to the proposed Programme of Meetings for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

##### **Decision Made:**

That the Programme of Meetings for the Cabinet, Public Engagement and Consultation Panel, Sefton Safer Communities Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board for 2020/21 as set out in Annexes A and D of the report be approved.

##### **Reasons for the Decision:**

To enable the business of the Council and its various Committees/bodies to be conducted during the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

##### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None. The Council is required to produce a programme of meetings.

# Agenda Item 3

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## **79. HIRED PASSENGER TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT 2020/21**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Communities seeking authority to grant the two one-year extensions (2020 & 2021) to the existing Framework Agreement for Hired Passenger Transport service, which had previously been tendered in accordance with OJEU regulations and the Council's procurement regulations as described in the Cabinet report of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017, Minute No 111 refers.

### **Decision Made:**

That the Cabinet delegate authority to the Head of Communities to extend the existing 2018/20 Framework Agreement for two further one-year extensions.

### **Reasons for the Decision:**

The current framework agreement is made up of 15 hired passenger transport companies, in 4 lots, divided up into vehicle seating capacity. The core period will expire on 31st December 2019.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None. Based upon the level of requests from commissioning departments there is currently an ongoing need for the Council to provide transport to some service users. As such, this procurement exercise and the subsequent establishment of a Framework Agreement provides the Council with the opportunity to procure services at the most economically advantageous rates, whilst also meeting the stringent Health and Safety and Safeguarding issues associated with transporting vulnerable adults and children.

## **80. EXTENSION OF HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT CONTRACTS**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Economic Growth and Housing that sought approval from Cabinet to utilise the option to extend the commissioned Housing Related Support (homelessness) Services contracts by two years.

The Cabinet Member for Communities paid tribute to the excellent partnership working in relation to the Housing related Support (homelessness) Services contracts and referred to the reduction in homelessness throughout the Borough in recent months which reflected the excellent work being undertaken.

**Decision Made:** That the Cabinet:



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- (1) delegated authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Housing to extend the commissioned Housing Related Support (homelessness) Services contracts by two years.
- (2) approved the contract price variation for 2-years, following the core period ending, to be funded from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant

## **Reasons for the Decision:**

Sefton's current commissioned Housing Related Support Services commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 for a period of 5 years, with the option to extend for two x one year periods.

## **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

The Council could decide not to extend, which would mean that the contracts would end on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

## **81. SENIOR MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Cabinet considered the Joint report of the Chief Executive and the Chief Personnel Officer in relation to a proposal to facilitate a new Senior Management Structure at a key strategic level given the recent recruitment of the Chief Executive and the continuing need for the Authority to meet existing and future challenges. The report highlighted that changes were deemed necessary to facilitate the increased demands facing the council, increasing challenges in key services, most notably Children's Services and Adult Social Care, creating stronger reporting lines, with an appropriate number of direct reports, and to allow the Chief Executive to adopt an appropriate concentration on strategic issues.

**Decision Made:** That the Cabinet approved:

- (1) that the post of Director of Social Care and Health which was formerly held by the Chief Executive prior to his recruitment be deleted;
- (2) that the posts of Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health and Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education be formed at salary level at HAY 1 (such salary level subject to the Pay Policy), which both have recommended level of remuneration over £100,000 (the salary over £100,000 to be approved by Full Council in accordance with the constitution). Recruitment of these posts will be a matter of open recruitment by the Employment Procedure Committee;
- (3) the amendment of two permanent Executive Director posts, one to form the post of Executive Director Place and the other Executive Director People. Such salary levels will remain unchanged at HAY 1.

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Amendment of these posts is subject to consultation with the individuals involved in accordance with normal Council HR processes. These are not new posts but reflect a refocus of responsibilities. Cross and without portfolio working will still be required as necessary.

- (4) the formation of a new post of Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services at HAY 1 and the deletion of the post of Head of Corporate Resources (such remuneration level over £100,000 and subject to approval by Full Council in accordance with the constitution). This post will be subject to an assimilation.
- (5) the current temporary arrangement of the Executive Director (Without Portfolio) will continue on a temporary basis to February 2021 as the Council has secured additional funding from the Combined Authority to support additional projects which require capacity. The post will be re-titled Executive Director (Without Portfolio).
- (6) the alignment of services and posts below Executive Director level to be in accordance with Annex 1, to the report. The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to make any necessary changes in alignment of services and posts below Executive Director level, however, it is not anticipated that immediate changes in established posts below will be necessary to existing Head of Service posts.

## **Reasons for the Decision:**

To provide for a Strategic Management Structure which will enable the delivery of the Core Purpose and Council objectives at both an operational and strategic level.

## **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

As would be expected the demands and challenges faced by local government and Sefton MBC continue to increase and evolve, therefore it is essential that the senior management structure reflects this. These proposals coincide with the recruitment of the new Chief Executive.

## **82. ANTI-FRAUD, CORRUPTION AND BRIBERY POLICY**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Corporate Resources in relation to the revised Sefton Council Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy for adoption by the Council.

The report highlighted that the existing Policy had been reviewed and revised in order to strengthen and improve the Council's overall arrangements for the prevention, detection and investigation of fraud, bribery and corruption. The revised Policy provides guidance on how any

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individual can report, in confidence, any suspected fraudulent or corrupt activity.

**Decision Made:** That the Cabinet:

- (1) noted the contents of the report; and
- (2) approved the revised Sefton Council Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy for adoption by the Council.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

Sefton Council is required by law to protect the public funds it administers and to raise awareness in relation to any potential threats that may affect the financial and/or reputational position of the Council. The revised Sefton Council Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy will support the Council's commitment to creating an environment in which fraud, bribery and corruption is minimised and complements a number of other Council policies which support internal controls and expected standards of behaviour.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

If the Council fails to put in place proper policies regarding fraud, bribery and corruption, it will be unable to demonstrate adherence to proper practices in relation to the prevention and detection of fraud and its actions or decisions could be challenged.

The Council also faces financial and reputational risk in that: -

- standards of public service that the Council is attempting to achieve are undermined.
- financial resources available to pay for vital services are reduced.
- public confidence in the Council is affected.

## **83. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE - TREASURY MANAGEMENT POSITION TO OCTOBER 2019**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Corporate Resources that detailed a review of the Treasury Management activities undertaken to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019. It was highlighted that the report was the second report of the ongoing quarterly monitoring provided to Audit & Governance Committee and the mid-year report to Cabinet and Council, whose role it is to carry out scrutiny of treasury management policies and practices.

**Decision Made:**

That the Cabinet noted the Treasury Management update to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019, reviewed the effects of decisions taken in pursuit of the Treasury

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Management Strategy and considered the implications of changes resulting from regulatory, economic and market factors affecting the Council's treasury management activities.

## **Reasons for the Decision:**

To ensure that Members are fully appraised of the treasury activity undertaken to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 and to meet the reporting requirements set out in Sefton's Treasury Management Practices and those recommended by the CIPFA code.

## **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

## **84. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2019/20**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Corporate Resources in relation to:

1. the current forecast revenue outturn position for the Council for 2019/20;
2. the current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2019/20; and,
3. the monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of October 2019, the forecast expenditure to year end, variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members. Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects are also presented for approval.

## **Decision Made:** That the Cabinet:

- (1) note and approve the following in relation to the Revenue Budget;
  - (a) note the current forecast revenue outturn position for 2019/20 and the current position relating to delivery of savings included in the 2019/20 revenue budget;
  - (b) note the mitigating measures being used to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position, as detailed in paragraph 2.2 to the report, excluding a forecast for deficit on Housing Benefits which will be considered at the end of the financial year should it materialise;
  - (c) approve the implementation of the mitigating actions identified in paragraph 2.10 to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position;

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- (d) note the outcome of the review of earmarked reserves and the transfers to new reserves to fund the schemes outlined in section 6.5 to the report
- (2) note, review and approve the following in relation to the Capital Programme;
  - (a) review updates to spending profiles across financial years as detailed in paragraph 5.1.1 to the report;
  - (b) review the new scheme added to the Capital Programme under delegated authority for 2019/20 as detailed in paragraph 5.1.3 to the report;
  - (c) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 October 2019 to date of £8.702m (paragraph 5.2.2) with the latest full year forecast being £25.214m (paragraph 5.3.1);
  - (d) the explanations of variances to project budgets as detailed in paragraph 5.3.2 to the report; and
  - (e) note that capital resources will be managed by the Head of Corporate Resources to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council, as detailed in paragraph 5.5 to the report.

## **Reasons for the Decision:**

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the forecast outturn position for the 2019/2020 Revenue Budget as at the end of October 2019, including delivery of agreed savings, and to provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2019/20 and agreed allocations for future years.

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

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

In March 2017 Council approved a three-year budget plan to March 2020. The final year of this plan was revised in February 2019 as part of the process of setting the 2019/20 budget. The Council is in the final year of

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the budget plan and remains confident its strategic approach to budget planning alongside good financial management and extensive community engagement means that the plan continues to develop on solid foundations; it remains flexible and will secure the future sustainability to 2020 and beyond. However, in year demand for social care services is currently resulting in the costs for these services significantly exceeding the budget. If further budget pressures are identified between now and the end of the year additional remedial action will be required to bring the overall budget into balance.

## **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

# Agenda Item 4

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	The Sefton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2025		
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Public Health	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Health and Wellbeing		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

## Summary:

The paper seeks to present to Cabinet the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025 for Sefton, entitled; Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025. It will set out how it has been developed, the governance steps prior to cabinet and how we will measure its impact throughout the life of the Strategy.

## Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet be requested to commend the report to Council for approval.

## Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

- The Strategy and the ambition for the wider system have been developed through a full consultation process and with oversight of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Steering Group. The Strategy uses the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and both local and national evidence to identify key ambition for the system that will improve the health and wellbeing of people in Sefton, and will help to reduce health inequalities.
- It is a statutory obligation for the Health and Wellbeing Board to produce a Health Well Being Strategy based on the most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

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

Not applicable.

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

### (A) Revenue Costs

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All implications for the council and partners will be contained within existing resources

## **(B) Capital Costs**

None identified at this time.

### **Implications of the Proposals:**

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b>
<b>Legal Implications:</b> To fulfil the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
<b>Equality Implications:</b> There are no equality implications.

### **Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable: The Strategy will seek to focus improvement on outcomes for the most vulnerable residents.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The Strategy will seek to improve the Health and Wellbeing of all our communities.
Commission, broker and provide core services: The Strategy will set strategic direction and vision for how we commission, broker and provide core services.
Place – leadership and influencer: The Strategy will set strategic direction and vision to improve Health and Wellbeing.
Drivers of change and reform: The Strategy will set strategic direction and vision to improve Health and Wellbeing.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The Strategy will set strategic direction and vision to improve Health and Wellbeing.
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable.
Cleaner Greener: The Strategy will set strategic direction and vision to improve Health and Wellbeing

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

#### **(A) Internal Consultations**



The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5881/19) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4065/19.) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

## **(B) External Consultations**

The development of the strategy has been subject to a public consultation which ran from August to September 2019 as an online consultation. With additional confirmatory focus groups held in November 2019

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

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

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Matthew Ashton, Director of Public Health.
Telephone Number:	0151 934 3373
Email Address:	Matthew.Ashton@sefton.gov.uk

### **Appendices:**

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025

### **Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## **1. Introduction/Background**

The previous Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Sefton ran from 2014 – 2020. A new Sefton Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2020-2025 has been developed; Living Well in Sefton 2020 – 2025.

- 1.2 Development of a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a legal duty under the Health and Social Care Act (2012), which is shared by the Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning groups and is overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 1.3 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy is the overarching plan which identifies the key ambition which the wider system should focus on in order to improve the health and wellbeing and to reduce health inequalities in Sefton. It is based on needs and assets identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and through public and stakeholder engagement, taking account of the latest policy, guidance and evidence.

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1.4 The high-level aims of the Strategy are to:

- To set out a framework of needs and ambition in which all local health, social care and related services are commissioned
- To provide the strategic vehicle to address local needs and inequalities in health and wellbeing
- To improve outcomes for local communities, especially for the most vulnerable and excluded citizens

The aims must then seek to;

- Align commissioning intentions for health, care and wellbeing services,
- Promote more collaborative, person and place-centred ways of working,
- Connect and strengthen activity taking place elsewhere in the Community, Voluntary and Faith sector, within health and care providers, and in organisations and partners whose work focuses on the wider determinants of health.

## 2. Process of development

2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy Group was established in early 2019 to lead on the development of the new strategy. The group was made up of key stakeholders from across the organisation, Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Voluntary Sector.

2.2 The ambition within the strategy are based on current and future needs as outlined in the Sefton 2018 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and shaped by our consultation and engagement events, and focuses on issues that affect large numbers of people, not just the health problems that people die from

2.3 The Strategy development and papers detailing emerging key themes have been reviewed and overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Adults Social Care and Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

2.3 A key part of the development has been the public consultation and engagement.

This was conducted in two phases;

- Phase one engagement ran from July through to August and focused on testing out the relevance of Joint Strategic Needs Assessment identified needs through an online questionnaire which was designed to be accessible, and available in an easy read format
- In September, the Health and Wellbeing Board received initial consultation findings and an outline of the draft strategy.
- Following this Phase two of the engagement process commenced, which involved a further short period of public engagement on the outlined draft strategy itself. This took place through focus groups across the borough with members of the public and key stakeholders. This has helped shape

the ambition. A full consultation report will be received by the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel in March 2020.

- 2.4 This report seeks to present to Cabinet a final draft of Living Well Sefton 2020 – 2025. This will go on to be submitted to Full council in January with view to adoption from the 1st April 2020.
- 2.5 To support the delivery of the strategy regular performance reports will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The strategy proposes as a minimum 12 month reviews; on impact over the last period and ambition to be set for the next 12 months.
- 2.6 The delivery of the strategy will be made real through key plans including the NHS 5 year plan, 'Sefton2gether', The Children and Young Peoples Plan and the work of the Integrated Commissioning Group. The Strategy is a review and refresh of the current Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which reflects the needs of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The progress and impact of the strategy will be driven through the Health and Wellbeing Board holding the system to account. There will be a performance monitoring framework which will allow the Health and Wellbeing Board to be assured of impact and progress. The activity of the Health and Wellbeing Board will be reviewed regularly, ambition reviewed, and progress will be shared with key stakeholders and residents of Sefton

### **3. Conclusion**

The Strategy is presented to Cabinet, who are requested to commend the report to Council for approval. This report provides information on the development, consultation and governance process undertaken by the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Steering Group, in order to develop the ambition and ambitions contained within the Strategy

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# Sefton

Health and Wellbeing  
Strategy  
2020-2025

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# Foreword

*“How are you? Are you well? Are you doing OK?”*

We all talk about our health and how life is treating us. When our physical or mental health takes a turn for the worse it can make it harder to do the things that we care about.

‘Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025’ is our new Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the vision we are working towards is that Sefton will be:

***‘A confident and connected borough that offers the things we all need to start, live and age well, where everyone has a fair chance of a positive and healthier future’***

‘Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025’ is more than words on a page. The messages in this new strategy are directed towards large scale, meaningful changes on the big issues which matter to people who live and work here. Our ambitions for better and more equal health and wellbeing span all the way from pregnancy and the start of life, to the close of our lives, and speak to everyone; not just health and care services. This is because we know that the most powerful changes come from creating more of the right conditions and opportunities for people’s health to thrive.

Sefton has a very active voluntary, community and faith sector, fantastic natural assets, and committed health and care services. Our challenge is to nurture each of these and to look for connections between them, so opportunities for better health and wellbeing are more than the sum of their parts, and accessible to everyone.

We will not be able to remove Sefton’s health and social inequalities altogether, however by signing up to ‘Living Well in Sefton 2020-25’ and its ambitions for health and wellbeing, we can create better opportunities for health. If we work together to deliver this strategy, we will see improved health and wellbeing for people Sefton in both the short and longer term.

Having the right strategy is only the first step. The important next step is how we deliver it and how we embed our commitment to eliminating health inequalities in everything we do. If we want to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities, every single sector, organisation and community has a role to play. Together we can really make a difference to health and wellbeing in Sefton.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ian Moncur'.

**Cllr Ian Moncur,**  
Chair of Sefton Health and Wellbeing Board



## One Vision

A confident and connected borough that offers the things we all need to start, live and age well, where everyone has a fair chance of a positive and healthier future.

## Seven Principles and ways of working

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1 Ambitions are based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and shaped by our consultation and engagement activity

2 Recognition that health and life chances are significantly shaped by a wide range of factors

3 Public, private, and voluntary, community, and faith sectors will all work together to address these ambitions

4 Ambitions are high level, and informed by evidence and guidance wherever possible

5 Ambitions will improve health and wellbeing for everybody, but will focus on narrowing inequalities for those with greatest need

6 Prevention will be embedded in everything we do

7 Partners will work together to keep the most vulnerable members of our community safe

## Ten Ambitions

### Start well

- 1 Every child will achieve the best start in their first 1001 days
- 2 Education and training will enable every young person to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities
- 3 Every child and young person will have a successful transition to adulthood

### Live well

- 4 Health, care and wellbeing services across Sefton will work together
- 5 Everyone will have a fulfilling role which can support their needs
- 6 The wider system will have a strong role in prevention and early intervention

### Age well

- 7 Older people will stay active, connected and involved
- 8 As people grow older they will be provided with support tailored to their needs
- 9 Our communities and the built environment will meet the needs of people as they get older

### All age

- 10 The places where we live will make it easy to be healthy and happy, with opportunities for better health and wellbeing on our doorstep

## Making it happen

- The Health and Wellbeing Board will hold the health and social care system and wider partners to account
- A performance monitoring framework will provide assurance of impact and progress to the Health and Wellbeing Board
- The activity of the Health and Wellbeing Board will be reviewed regularly, ambitions updated, and progress will be shared with key stakeholders and Sefton residents



# Introduction

## What is the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS) is the overarching plan to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Sefton and to reduce health inequalities (differences in health between different communities or groups of people). We know that in Sefton, good health and wellbeing is not experienced equally across the borough, and too many people experience poor health.

The strategy is based on Sefton’s needs and assets identified in the Sefton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)<sup>1</sup> and through public and stakeholder engagement. It takes account of the latest policy, guidance and evidence. The Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) holds the Sefton health and care system, including wider partners, to account, by enabling collaboration and challenging progress on the key ambitions.

It is increasingly important that our Sefton health and care system, including wider partners, work together to meet the needs of our entire population. This means focusing on the areas of greatest need and ensuring we are doing the best we can with the resources available. We also need to increase our efforts on prevention, prioritise both physical and mental health, and create connections across the public, private and voluntary, community and faith (VCF) sectors to make lives better for people in Sefton.

## How has the Health and Wellbeing Strategy been developed?

In 2019 we spoke to members of our local communities and other key stakeholders and asked what they thought the JSNA told us<sup>2</sup>. From this we identified a number of key themes, aims and ambitions. We then carried out a series of focus groups to ensure we correctly captured everyone’s views. Existing evidence, guidance and best practice from elsewhere, was merged with our local findings to inform the final structure and content of the strategy.

## Key principles and ways of working

Our key principles and ways of working are outlined below: -

- Our ambitions are based on current and future needs as outlined in the Sefton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and shaped by our consultation and engagement events. They focus on issues that affect large numbers of people, not just the health problems that people die from.
- We recognise that health and life chances are significantly shaped by a wide range of factors known as the determinants of health. These include where we live, how we socialise, what opportunities we have, and what services are in place to support us.<sup>3</sup>
- To achieve our ambitions, the public, private, and voluntary community and faith sectors will all work together, with the interests of our communities at the heart of what they do.
- The ambitions we outline in the strategy are high level, informed by evidence and guidance wherever possible. They use real-world experiences, and lessons from landmark reports such as Due North<sup>4</sup> and Fair Society Healthy Lives<sup>5</sup>.
- Ambitions will improve health and wellbeing for everybody but will focus on narrowing inequalities for those with greatest need.
- We will embed prevention in everything we do. Prevention and early intervention is about enabling people to maintain the best health possible all the way through life.
- Partners will work together to keep the most vulnerable members of our community safe.

### What is...

**Health inequalities:** Avoidable and unfair differences in health between different communities or groups of people.

**Prevention:** stopping something which may be harmful from happening.

**Life chances** – these are the opportunities we have to improve our quality of life.

**Early intervention:** Recognising and addressing difficulties faced by children, adults and families and tackling these issues early before they become more ingrained problems

**What is...**

**Integrated commissioning:**  
Working in partnership to identify need in our communities and ensuring there are services in place to meet those needs.

**Anchor institutions:**  
these are large organisations like hospitals, local councils, and universities whose long-term sustainability is connected to the wellbeing of the populations they serve. These organisations can have a significant influence on the health and wellbeing of a local community.

## Policy Context

The Health and Social Care Act (2012)<sup>6</sup> requires local authorities to set up HWBs as a council committee, with some mandatory membership. Details of the Sefton HWB board can be found here<sup>7</sup>. The HWB can use its powers and duties to facilitate integrated commissioning and decision-making, which align with patterns of local health and health-related needs.

A recent review of HWBs by the Local Government Association clearly supports the continuing relevance and status of HWBs, JSNA and ‘Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025’ as essential and powerful drivers of population health improvement.<sup>8</sup> This is supported by the NHS Long term Plan.

The NHS Long Term Plan stresses the importance of prevention, addressing health inequalities, recognising NHS organisations as ‘anchor institutions’ and emphasising greater collaboration and integration at a borough level through the new NHS model<sup>9</sup>. This is also referenced for Sefton in the recently published Sefton2gether Plan.<sup>10</sup>

We recognise the importance of economic growth to Sefton in helping to improve people’s health and wellbeing. The National Industrial Strategy<sup>11</sup> includes a ‘Grand Challenge’ to ensure that people can enjoy at least five extra healthy, independent years of life by 2035, while narrowing the gap between the experience of the richest and poorest. Technological innovation is presented as a key means of achieving this mission, for example improving digital skills and access.

The two-way relationship between good work and good health is also a central theme in the Liverpool City Region Local Industrial Strategy, which is currently in development.<sup>12</sup>

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be delivered through a number of local plans, strategies and boards including;

- Sefton2gether – Sefton’s NHS 5 Year Plan
- Children and Young Peoples Plan
- Early Help Strategy
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- All Age Carer Strategy (currently in development)
- Sefton Older Peoples Strategy
- The Integrated Commissioning Group work programme (currently in development)
- Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board
- Adults Forum
- Health Protection Forum
- Local Safeguarding Boards

Further details on these plans and strategies can be found here<sup>13</sup>



# Health in Sefton

## The Four Pillars of Population Health

### Our Health Behaviours and Lifestyles



11.1% of Sefton residents smoke, the lowest rate in the Liverpool City Region

Two thirds of Sefton residents meet the Chief Medical Officer's recommendations for physical activity



Sefton is amongst the 10% of English authorities with the highest rates of alcohol specific hospital admissions

Almost three quarters of adults in Sefton are overweight or obese



### Priorities and practical solutions The Places and Communities We Live In, and With



1 in 5 Sefton residents live in the most deprived 10% of England

(approximately 88,000 residents).

1 in 25 Sefton residents live in the least deprived 10% of England (10,000 residents)

Life expectancy is 9 years lower for men and 8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Sefton than in the least deprived areas.

Sefton's most deprived populations also spend, on average, 18 years less in good health than those in the most affluent areas.



### The Wider Determinants of Health



There are approximately 272 fast food outlets in Sefton, 1 for every 1,000 residents. Outlets tend to be concentrated amongst Sefton's most deprived communities.

Sefton has 27 Municipal Parks, 135 Other Parks and Greenspaces and 38 Outdoor Gyms.



Air pollution is thought to be responsible for 3.8% of Sefton's deaths

### An Integrated Health and Care System

The increasing complexity of people's health calls for a more joined up, person-centred health care system.

An estimated 27% of Sefton residents have two or more chronic conditions and 17% have 3 or more chronic conditions.

Multimorbidity is projected to be highest in areas with an above average older person population and areas of high deprivation.

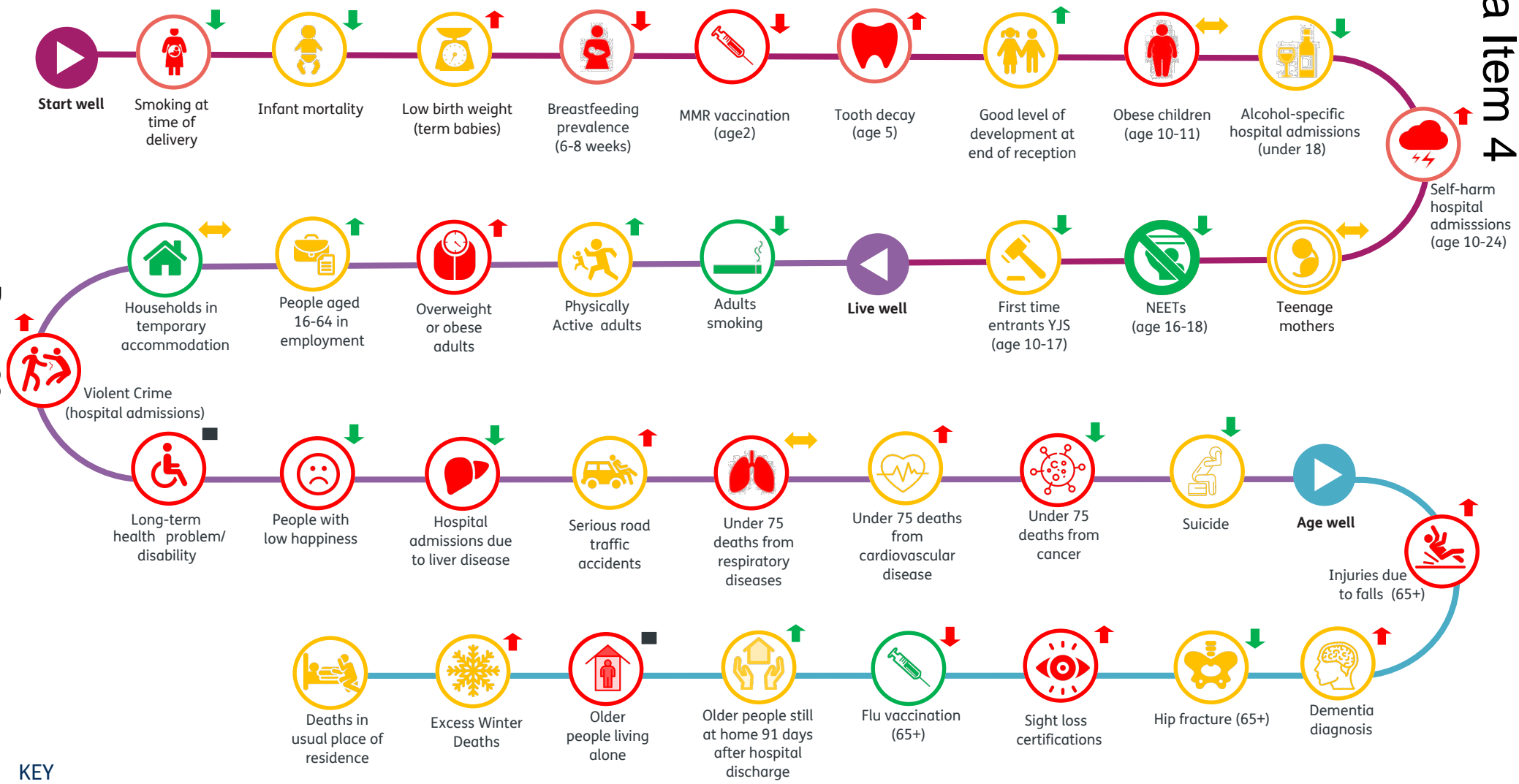


# Sefton's Health & Wellbeing Across the Lifecourse

**Current Population 275,396**

- 53,000 Under 18s
- 157,531 18 - 64
- 64,032 65+

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**KEY**

Statistical significance to England:

- Better
- No different
- Worse

Direction of travel:

- Improved since last period
- Similar to last period
- Worse than last period
- No comparator

Based on a template from Halton Public Health Intelligence Team and work produced by Centre for Public Health, Liverpool John Moores University. Icons made by Flaticon and available here: [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

# Our ambitions across all ages

We need to focus on the factors, structures and conditions that shape our opportunities for good health throughout life. The way we do this is to take a life course approach, where the emphasis is on healthy ageing from before birth to the end of life, and on the range of interventions that support this. Our approach to a healthy life is as follows;

## Start well

Where we lay the foundations for a healthy life, usually up to age 18, but includes children up to age 25 years for some children with additional needs.

## Live well

Where we ensure people have every opportunity to live a healthy life

## Age well

Where we consider the factors that help keep us healthy as we get older

## All age

Where our ambitions for Sefton apply to all age groups



Agenda Item 4

# Start Well

Children's life chances and health risks are different, even from before birth. Levelling the playing field from birth to starting school and beyond is one of the best ways to improve population health and narrow the gap in health experienced between our most and least vulnerable communities. There are many times in our lives where the right support and opportunities can make big differences to life chances.

- In Sefton we are committed to having children and young people who are heard, happy, healthy and achieving.
- The first 1001 days are a unique window of opportunity to support each child to develop their language, thinking, emotional and social abilities as fully possible. These are the basic tools children need so they can get the most out of school and other areas of life.
- In the last year there were more than 300 babies born to women who smoke. In some Sefton communities, around one in six women smoke in pregnancy and many more babies and children do not grow up in smoke-free homes.
- Health and wellbeing in pregnancy can also be harmed by substance use, obesity, poor nutrition, poor mental health and indoor and outdoor air pollution.
- We need to improve health and wellbeing through things like the promotion of breastfeeding, increasing vaccination, preventing accidents, reducing exposure to air pollution and passive smoking, and improving access to healthy housing and healthy eating, including addressing the impact of food poverty.
- Good emotional wellbeing for children, parents and carers starts with feeling safe, secure and confident. When these core elements of wellbeing are shaky or missing altogether, making progress towards being ready for school at age 4 or 5 becomes an even bigger challenge. This might be due to the impact of mental health problems during pregnancy or in the first



year following the birth of a child, current or historic abuse or adverse childhood experiences, or threats to safety and security because of problems with money or housing.

- Universal advice and support for all is essential and helps parents, carers and children alike to grow in confidence during the crucial, pre-school years when their brains are developing very rapidly. Universal services, for example health visiting, are responsive to the needs of families, increasing and reducing support where required. This ensures that additional needs and vulnerabilities are spotted early, and children and families are provided with appropriate and timely support.
- For older children, transitions into primary, secondary school and into further education and training are key stepping stones. If these transitions are good, young people can more easily achieve their full potential. In Sefton, there is a gap in educational attainment between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more advantaged peers. Amongst older children in Sefton, poor mental wellbeing, bullying, loneliness, self-harm, time out of education, exposure to crime and access to mental health services are concerns. Differences in physical health, including obesity exist along lines of income and social deprivation.
- Some groups are also at greater risk of having worse health and wellbeing outcomes as children and young adults, for example individuals with learning or other disabilities, children from groups that may be at higher risk of exclusion, and children who identify as LGBT, or children who need to be cared for by others.

## Our ambitions for Start Well are:

- Every child will achieve the best start in their first 1001 days
- Education and training will enable every young person to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities
- Every child and young person will have a successful transition to adulthood, including young carers, and children with special educational needs and disabilities for whom transition extends to 25 years.

# Live Well



As adults our health related behaviours can become a more prominent concern for our long-term health. People living within the constraints of a low income, and other social disadvantages are more likely to develop chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol.

This group is also more likely to develop serious long-term, conditions like, serious mental health problems, cancer, heart disease, stroke or lung disease earlier in life (pre-retirement age) and develop more than one condition. In addition, the amount of ill-health and reduced quality of life due to issues like back pain problems, and chronic stress are all part of this picture. Mental wellbeing for middle-aged men is also a growing cause of concern.

- Challenges from poor quality or uncertain employment, debt, caring for children and/or older relatives and physical health problems increase the risk of poor mental wellbeing and mental health conditions.
- People with mental illness are more likely to have higher rates of poverty, homelessness, prison, social isolation and unemployment and their needs often tend to be more complex and urgent.
- Alcohol and drug use, smoking and gambling can negatively affect our own health, and the wellbeing of our family and friends. The consequences can be more serious for people living in poverty and with limited networks of support.
- People with few barriers to making healthy choices and changes can benefit from high quality self-care information and services, whereas people facing many more barriers and challenges need more hands-on support
- To make a difference, we need to work together across the public, private, and voluntary community and faith sector to embed prevention into wider strategies such as housing, the economy, the NHS, transport and the local environment, and placing communities at the heart of decision-making.
- Housing, inclusive economic growth, employment, adult learning and training opportunities, healthy high streets and workplaces and person-centred support for carers are key considerations for all, and this can sometimes be summarised as “somewhere to live, someone to love, and something to do’.

## Our ambitions for Live Well are:

- Health, care and wellbeing services across the wider system will work together to support individuals, carers, families, and communities
- Everyone has a fulfilling role which can support their needs, with opportunities to contribute, learn and progress
- The wider system has a strong role in prevention, early intervention, health equity, and integrated care so that access and support is available where needed



## What is...

**Inclusive economic growth:** increasing local wealth and ensuring it is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all.

**Healthy high streets:** using high-streets as a way of supporting the health and wellbeing of local communities, for example through making sure that they are easy to navigate.

**Healthy workplaces:** Making work an environment that can support the health and wellbeing of employees, for example by making sure there is access to healthy food.

**Health equity:** ensuring that everyone has fair access to the support they need to keep healthy, by making sure that services meet the needs of all groups of communities.

# Age Well

We know that the proportion of the population that are aged over 65 is increasing in Sefton. We therefore need to consider how we can promote healthy and active ageing locally.

Older people play an important role in our communities, often supporting others through caring roles, and actively engaging with groups and events. However, for some people, growing older brings about increasing dependency and social isolation, reflecting the broader picture of health inequalities experienced in Sefton.

- Getting older is associated with an increased risk of long-term health conditions. Many people will develop multiple health problems such as; stroke, dementia and mental health problems. They are also at increased risk from infections including influenza and pneumonia and problems with sight and hearing. These factors can contribute to a high rate of frailty and falls and the loss of independence that can result.
- As people get older there are wider factors that can pose a risk to health and wellbeing, these include; care arrangements, time in hospital, hazards at home, access to suitable transport, low income, and demanding caring roles. Loss and loneliness can have a dramatic effect on health, wellbeing and independence.
- Considerations for this age group include how the health, care and wellbeing services work together, and recognising the ongoing value of preventative care for example to minimise the risk of a serious fall, infection or complication from a long-term condition.

- The social, and built environment are also a key consideration. Affordable housing that is easy to keep warm, is age and disability friendly and in a good state of repair can improve health and well-being. This enables people to maintain their independence for as long as possible. These spaces should be co-designed to create disability and age friendly places that are safe and easy to navigate for all ages.
- Wherever possible, indoor and outdoor spaces should be co-designed with the needs of older people in mind. These spaces should be suitable for all ages to provide safe spaces which are easier to navigate and move around, allowing people to be active and socialise together.
- Getting around is important for all aspects of active ageing. Transport in Sefton must reflect the needs of older people and people with disabilities.
- Within Sefton we have a range of natural assets, including the coastline and forests, as well as parks and greenspaces. Supporting older people, as well as other age groups, to make use of these spaces maximises opportunities to be physically active and can help to strengthen our communities by fostering social interaction between people of all ages.

## Our ambitions for Age Well are:

- Older people will stay active, connected and involved by being part of strong communities in which they are important.
- As people grow older, they will be provided with support, tailored to their needs which respects their dignity and individual preferences, including in relation to caring responsibilities.
- Our communities and the built environment will meet the needs of people as they get older, through age and disability friendly towns, communities, services, housing and transport.





# All Age Ambitions



Some of our actions in Sefton will cross all age groups, because there are many factors that influence our health across the life course, such as our mental wellbeing. We know, for example, that many adult mental health problems can start in childhood and continue throughout life. This section sets-out actions that should be adopted across Sefton to address the priorities identified within this report.

We understand that places and communities have assets that are valued, and the wider system has a role in supporting this through enhancing our environment, such as promoting active and sustainable travel. By working together we can:

- Enable everyone to maximise their capabilities and control over their lives.
- Empower people through access to the right information and guidance, to allow them to make informed decisions across the whole life course
- Ensure a healthy standard of living, including healthy homes, streets, schools, workplaces and leisure time, therefore helping to make the healthy choices the easy choices.

## Our All Age ambition is that:

- The places where we live will make it easy to be healthy and happy, support our physical and mental health, with opportunities for better health and wellbeing on our doorstep, where social connections are encouraged across all generations.

## What is...

**Life course approach:**  
Supporting people throughout their lives from birth until old age, with the understanding that people have different needs as they age.



# How will we make this happen?

The HWB and its partners are responsible for delivering this strategy.  
The HWB will do this by:

- Meeting regularly as a board and holding each other and wider partners to account
- Having a forward plan to ensure all elements of the strategy are progressed and reported on
- Reporting on progress in delivering against the key ambitions as outlined in the strategy
- Providing robust challenge and support to partners in relation to these key ambitions to ensure that all opportunities to improve health and wellbeing further and faster are maximised.
- Having a performance monitoring framework in place, drawn from the key national outcomes frameworks (NHS, Adult Social Care, Childrens, Public Health, Marmot) (REF14) which the HWB will scrutinise to ensure the strategy is delivering against the vision and ambitions.

- Reviewing progress on an annual basis and updating ambitions as required
- Utilising the work of Sefton Healthwatch to ensure the voice of Sefton residents remains central in delivering the ambitions of the strategy.
- Reporting to key stakeholders and residents of Sefton on a regular basis

Key actions the HWB will take: -

- It will hold the health and social care system and wider partners to account.
- There will be a performance monitoring framework which will provide assurance of impact and progress to the Health and Wellbeing Board
- The activity of the HWB will be reviewed regularly, ambitions updated, and progress will be shared with key stakeholders and Sefton residents

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**Polish:** Ten dokument jest także dostępny w innych językach, jako duży druk, tasma audio oraz druk braille a.

**Chinese:** 该文件可以以其他语言呈现，也可提供大字版本，录音带和盲文。

**Portuguese:** Este documento também pode ser feito disponível em outros idiomas, impressão grande, fita de áudio e Braille.

**Arabic:** نيفوف كمل لى لى ارب عقيرطب ءبوتكم ءو نى ءوص طيرش ىل عو ءع ءوبطم ءزى بك ءخس نبو ءى ءرأ ءا ءلب ءم ءرم ءقى ءولء ءه ءه ءحءء اءىء اءمى

**Russian:** Этот документ также доступен на других языках, большим шрифтом, в виде аудио записи и шрифтом Брайля.

# Agenda Item 5

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Children and Young Peoples Plan 2020 - 2025		
<b>Report of:</b>	Interim Director of Children's Social Care and Education	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Children, Schools and Safeguarding		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

## Summary:

The report is to present to Cabinet the Children and Young Peoples Plan 2020 – 2025 and accompanying Commissioning Strategy. The report details the steps taken to produce the plan, the governance and oversight applied to previous drafts and to seek Cabinet approval before the plan becomes operational on April 1st, 2020.

## Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet be requested to approve the Children and Young Peoples Plan 2020 – 2025 and accompanying Commissioning Strategy.

## Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The report seeks to offer assurance of the prior governance, oversight and consultation that has developed the final version of the Children and Young Peoples Plan. This information should enable Cabinet to confidentially approve the Plan for Sefton's Children and Young People.

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

Not having a Children's and Young Peoples Plan – This would leave a Strategic risk in the delivery of co-ordinated services focused on improving the identified priority outcomes for our children and Young People in Sefton.

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

### (A) Revenue Costs

This document represents the strategic approach that is to be adopted and as such there are no revenue costs identified. It is expected that the delivery of the strategy will be within the existing revenue budget for the service

### (B) Capital Costs

# Agenda Item 5

**There are no capital costs arising from this report**

## **Implications of the Proposals:**

<p><b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b> There are no resource implications identified within the Strategy. Any specific requirements or additional resource implications will be identified as detailed proposals are developed for the delivery of priorities and these will be the subject of member approval as defined within the Councils Financial Procedure Rules</p>
<p><b>Legal Implications:</b>  Children Act 2004</p>
<p><b>Equality Implications:</b>  There are no equality implications. The Strategy is applicable to all Children and Young People in Sefton equally and analysis of protected characteristic of our existing cohort have been reviewed as part of the process.</p>

## **Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable: The plan aims to ensure every child and young person in Sefton is Happy, Healthy and able to reach their full potential.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The plan aims to ensure every child and young person in Sefton is Happy, Healthy and able to reach their full potential
Commission, broker and provide core services: The Plan will inform an integrated Children's Commissioning Vision and influence all future Commissioning activity for Children and Young People.
Place – leadership and influencer: The plan states 12 priorities that will shape all activity in relation to Children and Young People in Sefton from 2020 – 2025.
Drivers of change and reform: The plan states 12 priorities that will shape all activity in relation to Children and Young People in Sefton from 2020 – 2025.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Not applicable
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener Not applicable

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

### **(A) Internal Consultations**

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5884/19) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4068/19) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

## **(B) External Consultations**

The development of the plan has been reviewed and informed by the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel. The plan has been developed in partnership with established Youth Forums in the borough, the Primary and Secondary Schools Head Teacher forums, and Every Child Matters Forum, and informed by the results of the public consultation on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Start Well section.

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

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

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Eleanor Moulton
Telephone Number:	07779162882
Email Address:	eleanor.moulton@sefton.gov.uk

### **Appendices:**

The following appendices are attached to this report:

The 2020 – 2025 Children and Young Peoples Plan.

### **Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Children and Young People's Plan defines the vision and ambitions for children and young people in Sefton. The document sets out clearly what, collectively as a Children's Trust partnership area, needs to be achieved and how that will be done. It includes an outcome measure metric chapter that the plans progress will be measured against and identifies twelve local priority areas for improvement for 2020 - 2025.
- 1.2 Sefton's Children and Young People's Plan currently runs to 2020, regular reports and updates on the progress of the current plan have been provided to both Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the health and Well Being Board. The plan has been reviewed and updated to cover the period 2020/2025 and consultation has taken place with stakeholders, including Children and Young People themselves to ensure that the plan reflects what matters most to them and takes into account what we already know.

# Agenda Item 5

- 1.3 The timescales for completing the plan run concurrently with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and is the opportunity to ensure that, wherever possible, the Strategy and Plan align and make best use of information received from the wider strategy public consultation.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 The current plan has four key priorities which are:
1. Ensure all children and young people have a positive educational experience
  2. Ensure all children have a healthy start in life and a healthy adulthood
  3. Improving the quality of lives of young people with additional needs and vulnerabilities, to ensure they are safe and fulfil their individual potential
  4. Ensure positive emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people is achieved
- 2.2 Significant progress has been made against these, notably;
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), achieving a good level of development, we are the highest in the North West (NW) and above the regional average.
  - Sefton's Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) group has improved over the 3 year period, performing better than Liverpool City Region (LCR) and staying in line with the North West.
  - Sefton has consistently exceeded the England and North-West numbers, for children benefitting from the 'Two Year Old Offer'. Since the introduction of the Two Year Old Offer in 2009, Sefton has worked in close partnership with Health and Early Years Settings to identify and engage with the families of rising two year olds whose families meet the criteria
  - We have seen a decrease in young people being involved with Anti Social Behaviour, one significant reason could be we have issued Gang Injunctions along with the police, which have significantly decreased youth Anti Social Behaviour in the Area. (80% of the cases are adults)
- 2.3 However it's recognised that largely the previous priorities remain for Sefton's children and young people and the plan chooses to refocus them under the following headings:
- Heard** – children and young people will always be central to decisions we make about them and their journeys will be shaped by their voice and experience.
- Happy** – A family life, strong families and vibrant communities where children feel safe
- Healthy** – a healthy start to life, safe and healthy lifestyles
- Achieving** – high aspiration, opportunities and achievements
- 2.4 The plan uses information that already exists, like statistics and numbers from things we already do, for instance youth clubs, educational attainment, and how many people are getting mental health support.
- 2.5 The plan's consultation and engagement approach has been reviewed and steered by the Consultation and Engagement Panel. It was recognised that



the high number of public consultations during the period meant a pragmatic approach to existing intelligence and data sources was preferable.

- 2.6 Pre-consultation took place with the Sefton Youth Making Better Opportunities with Leaders (SYMBOL) group on 13th June 2019 to test out the headlines in section I.4 and responses were incorporated into the planning of the consultation. SYMBOL suggested approaching a number of youth groups/ providers who have already collected data that may be useful to feed into the plan. This was obtained and included in the plan.
- 2.7 A small steering group lead on the rewrite of the plan which includes the Interim Director of Children Services and Education, the Integrated Social Care and Health Manager, the Sefton Young Advisor Team Leader and a Strategic Support Officer.

### **3. The Consultation**

- 3.1 Following the initial collection of existing data sets, the steering group incorporated and produced a second draft of the plan. This version was then sent by the Interim Director of Children's Services and Education to the identified Youth Groups, Every Child Matters Forum, the Chairs of the Primary and Secondary Heads Forums for cascading to all members, and key stakeholders across Social Care, Public Health, Commissioning and Sefton CCGs. The plans priorities have also been presented to the Chief Executives of Health Providers in Sefton.
- 3.2 Invitations to attend meetings and groups to discuss in detail were also extended until the 22nd November 2019. A dedicated event with YKids has been held and collective feedback has been facilitated by the CVS Youth Lead, alongside attendance at the Sefton Head Teachers forum.
- 3.3 This is the final version of the plan being presented to Cabinet for approval, with an accompanying Commissioning Vision. Please see the appendices.
- 3.4 The plan will then be shared throughout January to March 2020 with a view to it being adopted for April 2020. During this time, a detailed delivery plan will also be developed
- 3.5 Drafts of the plan have been reviewed and shaped by the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Over and Scrutiny Committee (Children Services and Safeguarding).

### **4. Conclusion**

This a presentation of the proposed Children and Young Persons plan 2020 – 2025, and accompanying Commissioning Vision. The plan is intended to be a clear vision of how all involved with the delivery of services to Children and Young People in Sefton must contribute to the 12 priorities. We will ask the Health and Wellbeing Board to hold the system to account around its delivery against these priorities.

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## Joint Commissioning Strategy and Market Position Statement for Children and Young People

### **Foreword**

This strategy is a sister document to the Children and Young Peoples plan\_2020 – 2025 for Sefton and sets out how our Commissioning activity will contribute to meeting the 12 priorities in the plan. This strategy seeks to set where we are today, how we need to shape things, and where we are headed towards in terms of the services, both organisations design, pay for and deliver in Sefton. We recognise we need to get better at holding a joined-up picture of needs, demand and supply of services in Sefton, we need to work with our providers to deliver the right services, at the right time and in the right place for our children and young people. We have an obligation to ensure we are making best use of the resources we have available to us, are we achieving value for money? Is this the best way of doing things? Are we missing part of the pathway out? This Strategy seeks to move us from a place of knowing our population needs to delivering services designed around them, that give our children and young people the sustainable outcomes they need. This strategy is in part how we will have Children and Young People in Sefton who are Heard, Happy, Healthy and Achieving

Vicky Buchanan, Interim Director of Children's Social care and Educations, Sefton Council and Martin McDowell, Deputy Chief Officer NHS South Sefton and Southport and Formby CCG.

## 1. What is the purpose of this Document?

The purpose is to set out the shared ambition of commissioners in the council and the NHS for the children and young people of Sefton. The strategy also sets out at a high level the way we intend to work together to achieve that ambition by 2025, aligning with Sefton2gether – Shaping Sefton (the NHS 5 year plan for Sefton).

This strategy will direct our joint commissioning of services to meet the needs of the Children and Young People of Sefton over the next five years. By 'joint commissioning', we ultimately mean the joint purchasing of services to meet the identified needs of the children and young people of Sefton. These needs are identified from the Children and Young Peoples plan based on what the Children's JSNA tells us <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1454739/jsna-children-august-2018.pdf>

This Strategy will not sit in isolation but will align with all our other strategies and initiatives that impact on parenting, family and community resilience.

This includes the overarching Health and Wellbeing Strategy as well as aligned strategies, including Sefton2gether – Shaping Sefton, the NHS Five Year Plan, Early Help, SEND, Public Health – Starting Well and The Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy.<sup>1</sup>

The Strategy recognises the important part that the broader market of commissioned services plays in providing vital services which meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

We are committed to ensuring that this market develops and flourishes within Sefton and that we will continually engage with our providers and our Children and Young People to ensure they can contribute to our understanding of how we can deliver high quality services, and that we as commissioners possess the evidence to support investment where it is most effective and needed.

Sefton Council and our strategic partners the CCG, will develop as a result of these engagements and our market analysis, evidenced based intentions of our service needs over the next five years. We will develop Commissioned Delivery Models which achieve high quality and Best Value for the Children and Young People in Sefton and further give confidence to the market to invest locally and enable stability, success and longevity within our provider community

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/your-council/plans-policies.aspx>

**What is Commissioning;**

Commissioning is a process that public sector organisations use to plan, procure, deliver and evaluate services for local residents.

Commissioning is the continual process of planning, agreeing and monitoring services. Commissioning is not one action but many, ranging from the health-needs assessment for a population, through the clinically based design of patient pathways, to service specification and contract negotiation or procurement, with continuous quality assessment. Commissioning effectively starts with a deep understanding of citizens and communities, ensuring services are designed and delivered according to their needs, aspirations and experiences.

Commissioning is essentially the effective design and delivery of policy, solutions or services. The best commissioners have the confidence to challenge the status quo, take on radical change, collaborate effectively with external stakeholders, gain a deep understanding of the need and target resources effectively to meet those needs. By working strategically with our partners, Council services can make a real change to the offer we give our children and young people. Commissioning should be concerned with configuring services to meet the overall needs of a given population. It is a cycle rather than a “one-off” activity, including a sequence of specifying, securing, and monitoring services. This vision encompasses all aspects of the commissioning cycle:

Often demonstrated as the Commissioning Cycle:



Commissioners will also establish a Performance Management Framework for all contracts that reflects contribution to the priorities of this plan. We will then work with providers to improve delivery against agreed timescales.

**We will commission based on the following principles, a number of which emerged following a strategic commissioning workshop held with CCG colleagues in July 2019:**

**Value for money** We aim to achieve maximum value for money from all services and commissioned activity. Every pound we spend on behalf of the taxpayer has to demonstrate its worth and we will always seek to allocate expenditure to achieve maximum impact, which can mean decommissioning services and to reduce expenditure where we can. However, whilst the price we pay for services is important to us, we recognise that it is not the only measure of value; and so the outcomes delivered and the social value achieved are also of importance. We will look to bench mark and work regionally to ensure we are achieving a price that is value for money for the council but sustainable and appropriate for the service delivery.

**Outcomes focused** Our primary focus is on the delivery of improved outcomes for children and their families and we will therefore commission only provision that delivers our priority outcomes, reduces inequality and maximises personalisation, choice and control, and supports a minimal number of moves for the child.

**Evidence based** We will base commissioning decisions on the evidence available to us, whether this is through an analysis of needs and gaps, an understanding of what works in achieving desired outcomes, an assessment of best practice, or an options analysis.

**User involvement and focus** We aim to ensure that the views of children, young people and families shape commissioning decisions; and we are committed to developing innovative ways of engaging service users, for example, through co-design and co-production. The voice of the Child will be part of all commissioning activity and subsequent performance management Framework design.

**Proportionate** Our commissioning arrangements range from multi-million pound contracts with large private sector companies, to grants of less than a thousand pounds to small voluntary organisations. We aim to differentiate our commissioning processes so that they are proportionate; for example, to the amount of spend, the level of risk involved, and the type of provider. A fundamental principle is that our arrangements and processes for sourcing and procuring provision should be as simple and streamlined as possible.

**Innovative** We will seek to improve our commissioning practice, including the development of alternative models of delivery, procurement, funding and payment.

**Provider diversity** We aim to encourage more diverse provider markets operating locally in order to stimulate quality, choice and greater value for money. We are seeking to work together to develop services, and to be in a position where placements are prioritised with good or outstanding providers.

**Transparency and fairness** Our commissioning processes and decisions will be underpinned by principles of transparency and fairness. We will develop provider and market forums to enable open dialogue and will inform providers of the reasons

for our decisions. We will build on existing provider forum networks and see this strategy as the beginning of the journey in partnership in how we get there.

### **Integrated Commissioning;**

We are committed in the future to further develop jointly commissioned services with our Strategic Health partners, the CCG. The Integrated Commissioning Group is the key vehicle for this, it is a formal sub group of the Health and Wellbeing Board and includes key commissioning, Directors and Finance representation from the Local Authority and the CCGs in Sefton. Children's Commissioning is a key workstream of this group. Joint commissioning will achieve economies of scale, savings and reduce duplication of services and most importantly drive improvements for our children and young people. The resources saved can be applied to any gaps in service delivery. This will include:

- Enabling, through established governance mechanisms, pooled resources to develop a broader joint commissioning framework across partner agencies to direct the commissioning intentions for early help whole family approaches and maximise best value.
- Develop an intelligence led approach to commissioning that draws together key public funding streams to develop a broader joint commissioning framework across partner agencies to direct the commissioning intentions for prevention and early help
- Ensure all stakeholders, including children and families, have a voice at every stage of the commissioning cycle and provide feedback to measure and review impact and enable redesigned services that better meet the needs of our children and families

## **2.Key Objectives**

Where families do require assistance, the role of the local authority will be to support families to maintain care of their children wherever it is in the child's best interest. We want to achieve this by ensuring Early Help and Universal Services are able to effectively engage families to support children to live with their own family when this is possible and ensuring that we provide excellent local placements when this is not.

We are committed to work in partnership with health and wider partners to deliver effective commissioning, co-ordination, integration and delivery of services to Children and Young People, in order to support them to achieve the best possible outcomes in life. It is important to read this plan along side the SEND Joint Commissioning Plan and Continuous Improvement Plan. This is a dedicate piece of work looking to improve the SEND offer over the next 18 months, once this period has lapsed the ongoing SEND Joint Commissioning Plan will become part the ongoing work of this plan. We wish to ensure all activity relating to Children and Young People can demonstrate a contribution to the 12 Priorities in this plan and can demonstrate that by measurements that are part of the score card;

<b>HEARD</b>	<b>Priority 1.</b> Ensure children’s voices are heard.
	<b>Priority 2.</b> Engage with a wide range of youth networks and groups that support young people
	<b>Priority 3.</b> Place children and young people at the core of decisions we make about them.
<b>HAPPY</b>	<b>Priority 4.</b> Ensure positive emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people by empowering families to be resilient
	<b>Priority 5.</b> Protect those at risk of harm
	<b>Priority 6.</b> Encourage fun, happiness and enjoyment of life
<b>HEALTHY</b>	<b>Priority 7.</b> To enable positive mental health and Wellbeing through prevention where ever possible and to provide timely support and access to services when needed.
	<b>Priority 8.</b> To Enable children’s health and development.
	<b>Priority 9.</b> Reduce health inequalities so children and young people can achieve good health.
<b>ACHIEVING</b>	<b>Priority 10.</b> Children are ready for school
	<b>Priority 11.</b> Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills so they are well prepared for adulthood.
	<b>Priority 12.</b> Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities achieve their full potential

### 3. Strategies which impact upon Service Shape and Demand

As part of the development of this plan the key areas of activity with their own strategies for affecting change have been highlighted as Emotional Wellbeing, Early Help, Public Health, Carers, Transitions, these areas all have their own strategies that this Commissioning Vision will contribute to:

**Emotional Wellbeing:** Focus on female self-esteem, transition into high school and national best practice is around a whole school’s approach and embedding mental health and Wellbeing into our schools.

**The Early Help Service;** Prevention focus, help as soon as problems start to emerge and reduce the risk of social and emotional development harm, this can be early years, around good parenting, early help in pregnancy and throughout childhood and adolescents

Sefton strategies and policies can be found at: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/your-council/plans-policies.aspx>

#### The NHS in Sefton;<sup>2</sup>

The Sefton NHS Five Year Plan identifies the following key focus for children and Young People in 2020 – 2025;<sup>3</sup> and as part of the joint emphasis on ensuring that all

<sup>2</sup>

Link to 5 Year Plan



of our children “start well” in life. This aligns with the developing Health & Wellbeing Strategy:

We will be looking to commission jointly and across the whole Care and Health pathway for Children and Young People in the following areas:

- Mental Health
- Healthy Weight
- Developing trauma informed practice across Sefton. Skilling up the workforce to sensitively recognise, respond to and support parents to recover from their own unresolved childhood trauma can prevent and protect children from harmful experiences and strengthen communities.
- providing the right timely, care for children and young people with a learning disability, autism or both delivered in the community,
- further integration of substance use services,
- Supporting the transition of children and young people to adults,
- Increasing the number of children who are ready for school.

The above priorities will be implemented on a phased basis over the five-year period and as part of the joint commissioning framework where there is alignment with Council services. This will ensure there is sufficient capacity to support their successful implementation. The development of Primary Care Networks and their alignment with the Council's Community First localities, and as part of a strengthened health, care and wellbeing locality model that encompasses wide-ranging partners, will be key to supporting successful delivery.

In addition to this the national NHS long term plan sets out specific expectations in relation to Mental Health. Targets will need to be set out for Sefton but noting the ambition is to improve access to, and quality of, mental health services for children and young people nationally:

- 345,000 additional CYP aged 0-25 will have access to support via NHS-funded mental health services and school- or college-based Mental Health Support Teams (in addition to the FYFVMH nationally commitment to have 70,000 additional CYP accessing NHS services by 2020/21).
- There will be a comprehensive offer for 0-25 year olds that reaches across mental health services for CYP and adults.
- The 95% CYP Eating Disorder referral to treatment time standards achieved in 2020/21 will be maintained.
- There will be 100% coverage of 24/7 mental health crisis care provision for children and young people which combines crisis assessment, brief response and intensive home treatment functions
- CYP mental health plans will align with those for children and young people with learning disability, autism, special educational needs and disability (SEND), children and young people.

The long term plans identify; improvements in maternity care such as the further roll out of baby friendly initiatives, integrated support in neonatal care, the roll out of a national children and young people transformation programme.

In LD and Autisms, improvements are expected in; physical health check rates, locally met need, quality that is measured by involving service users and family, Key worker models, crisis support re commissioning, and reducing medication for this group.

## **Public Health;**

A recent systematic review of public health interventions, suggested that local and national public health interventions are highly cost saving. The review demonstrates a median return on investment of public health interventions of ~14:1. Thus, for every £1 invested in public health, £14 will subsequently be returned to the wider health and social care economy. The highest returns are seen from policy interventions, but behaviour change and health protection interventions also provide valuable returns.

## **Smoking**

Most smokers start as teenagers, two thirds before the age of 18. The best way to reduce smoking amongst young people is to reduce it in the world around them. As commissioners, we want to see smoke free estates, homes and places. Providers will be expected to support employees and service users to stop smoking.

PHE estimates potential savings from investment in tobacco-control interventions of £1 = £2.07 by year 5

= £3.92 by year 10

= £11.38 over the lifetime of smoker who quits.

## **Alcohol**

Every £1 Spent on motivational interviewing and supportive networks for alcohol dependence returns £5 to the public sector

([http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Making%20A%20Difference\\_Evidence%28finalE\\_2018%29web.pdf](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Making%20A%20Difference_Evidence%28finalE_2018%29web.pdf) )

## **Tackling Obesity and unhealthy diet**

The majority of adults and a large proportion of children in Sefton are overweight or obese. Overweight and obesity can lead to long term conditions, can significantly reduce life expectancy and has costs to the health system and the economy. Obesity rates are highest for children living in the most deprived areas.

Studies suggest that if levels of obesity could be reduced by 1% every year from the predicted trend between 2015 and 2035, £300 million could be saved in direct health and social care costs in the year 2035 alone.

([https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/tipping\\_the\\_scales\\_-\\_cruk\\_full\\_report11.pdf](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/tipping_the_scales_-_cruk_full_report11.pdf) )

## Mental wellbeing

Public Health Wales has reviewed the “Best Buys” recommended by WHO and identified the following interventions to improve mental well-being are likely to include:

Supporting parents and children, e.g. parenting skills training, pre-school education, home learning environment
Reducing conduct disorder through investing £1 in parenting programmes to prevent conduct disorder returns £8 over 6 years
Investing in school based social and emotional learning costs £132 per pupil per year and can save the health sector £39 in the first year, rising to £751 by the 5th year
Investing £1 in anti-bullying interventions in schools can return £15
Improving working lives - Promoting wellbeing in the workplace
Cost: £40,000, savings £340,000 within 1 year to a business of 500 employees

## Early Intervention

Investing in the first 1001 days from conception to the second birthday is cost-effective and has the most potential for action. Early years interventions are much less expensive than services needed to address the physical, mental, behavioural and socio-economic consequences of poor early child development. Effective early child development interventions include;

- support to mothers before and after birth
- breastfeeding and nutrition support
- parenting support
- access to health services and childcare
- access to early education
- Investing in universal (accessible to all) interventions along with additional resource proportionate to need for vulnerable children works and it is cost-effective
- every £1 invested in early years interventions returns £1.30 - £16.80
- every £1 invested in parenting programmes to prevent conduct disorder returns £8 over 6 years from health care, education and criminal justice costs

## The Health and Wellbeing Strategy - Start Well<sup>4</sup>

The full strategy can be found here [LINK](#). The strategy highlights the following key ambitions for the Start Well stage of life:

- Every child will achieve the best start in their first 1001 days
- Education and training will enable every young person to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities

<sup>4</sup> Link to PH Strategy

<sup>5</sup> Masters R, Anwar E, Collins B, Cookson R, Capewell S. Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review. JECH Online First, published on March 29, 2017 as 10.1136/jech-2016-208141

- Every child and young person will have a successful transition to adulthood

## Young Carers

We will see a new all age Carers Strategy in 2020 which will build and further develop upon the key principles of the existing that;

- Young carers are identified and supported so that they can live fulfilling lives and progress with their education, career and life aspirations.
- That we: Provide young carers with information, support, an education and activities to ensure they can have a happy and fulfilled life, realising their ambitions.
- Young carers will be involved in discussions with health professionals regarding the person they care for. Young carers will have the skills and knowledge to carry out their caring role including a knowledge of prescriptions and medication.
- Young carers will be supported at school or college. Schools and colleges will understand the issues experienced by young carers. Schools and colleges will develop plans to allow young carers to be contacted during the school day by the person they care for.
- With a view to Young carers make a smooth transition to becoming adult carers if they choose to carry on in a caring role

## Transitions

Multi Disciplinary Team Transitions Board reviews all children coming through the system. Transitions planning begins at 16 years, or 14 if the Child has high ends needs and attends a Special School offer.

Good Transition between Children's and Adults Services should focus upon:

- Promoting independence
- Positive risk taking
- A Strength based approach to meeting care and support needs
- Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)
- Inter Agency planning
- Person Centred Planning
- Principles of the Mental Capacity informing all practice.
- Continue to build on good joined up working between Children's and Adults.
- Clear roles and responsibilities between Health and Social Care

The issues to address in this area are getting our PBS offer right, which is extremely important to complex high cost transitions however they only provide a limited service.

PBS helps reduce cost and helps Social Workers to determine the level of support required. Continuing Health Care is problematic; waiting for decisions can hold up the progression of a case and cause conflict with families. This is why we want and need to strengthen joint commissioning arrangements and in this area in particular.

There is a need to utilise PBS at an earlier stage and offer wider access and capacity. PBS is seen as critical in this area as it reduces support need and/or quickly identifies specific ongoing support needs. As we see more complex needs specialised provision such as PBS is critical in response.

The exploration of the use of the Dynamic Support Tool model to support joint Health and Care planning, with a flexible outcome focused should also be part of our response to changing need and demand.

Income maximisation through accessing the correct benefit entitlement is another area that we are seeking to improve upon.

The Transitions Board also highlighted Respite as an issue, we have seen this raised in the area of SEND and in the Sufficiency Statement (2018 – 2021)<sup>5</sup>

## Housing

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment told us that the most prevalent tenure type in Sefton is Owner occupied (with varying levels in parts of Sefton, such as 90% in Formby and 46% in Bootle). The greatest unmet need is for smaller homes, especially one, 2 and 3 bedroom homes. Our Local Plan, housing planning policy, seeks a mix of property types on all new-build housing schemes.

Under occupation being is one of the biggest issues for us with 39% of homes having 2 or more spare rooms. There is the potential to make better use of some of the existing housing in Sefton. We have already seen a growth in the size of the private rented sector across Sefton, with many landlords converting properties into smaller sized homes such as Houses in Multiple occupation (HMOs). The Council has introduced Planning policies and Housing Licensing schemes to try to ensure these are of a suitable quality, which is important as such homes are often occupied by vulnerable people including young people.

There is additional need for affordable housing of all types in the North of Sefton. In Bootle and Netherton but over all we have an overall small surplus of affordable housing, but shortages of one bedroom homes. A more specific Housing Market assessment for those with support needs will be carried out and the results will could help us engage with the market about developing different types and models of housing. This suggest provides an opportunity for the use of the housing market to meet the needs of those in transition, particularly with housing associations who provide affordable homes.

first, new models of housing might include Housing First type approaches, whereby the a home and tenancy is constant provided to the person and the a suitable support service package can be built around that individual.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/social-care/children-and-young-people/children-looked-after/children-in-care-and-care-leavers/children-looked-after-and-care-leavers-sufficiency-strategy.aspx>

Sefton are party to a new housing protocol agreed between Liverpool City Region Councils and many housing associations. The purpose of the new protocol is to provide 16-18 year olds leaving care with a better route to securing a suitable home and tenancy with a Housing Association.

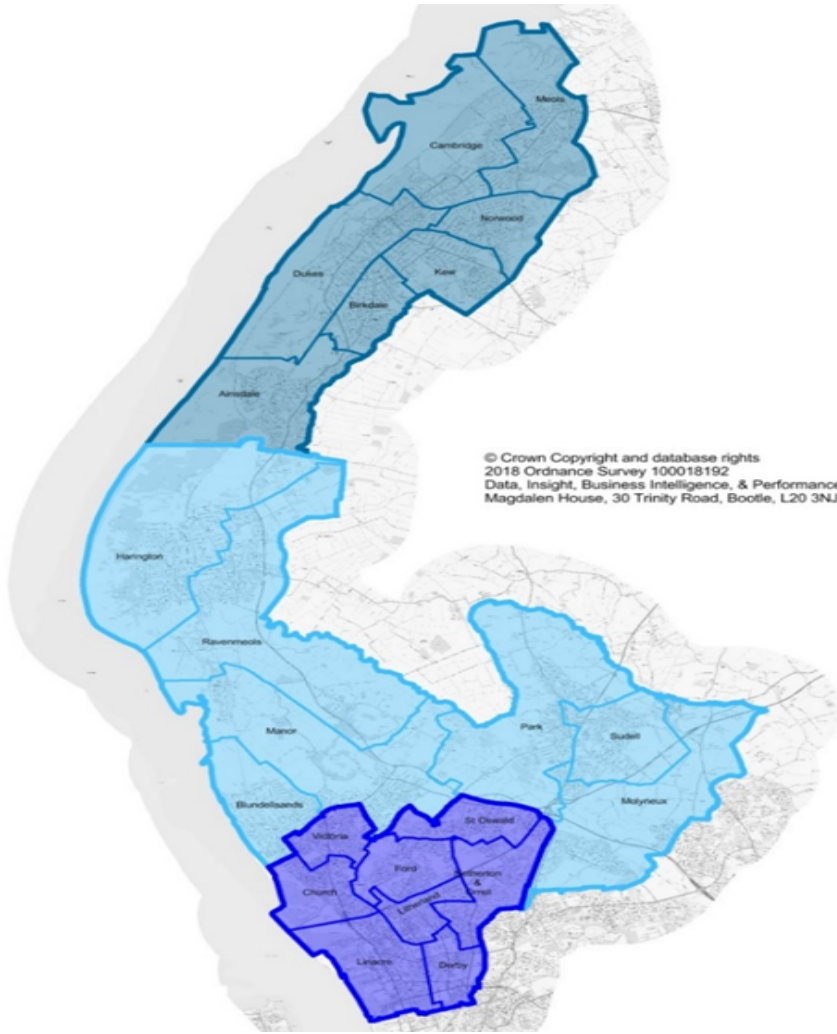
#### 4. The Current picture for Services to Children and Young People in Sefton.

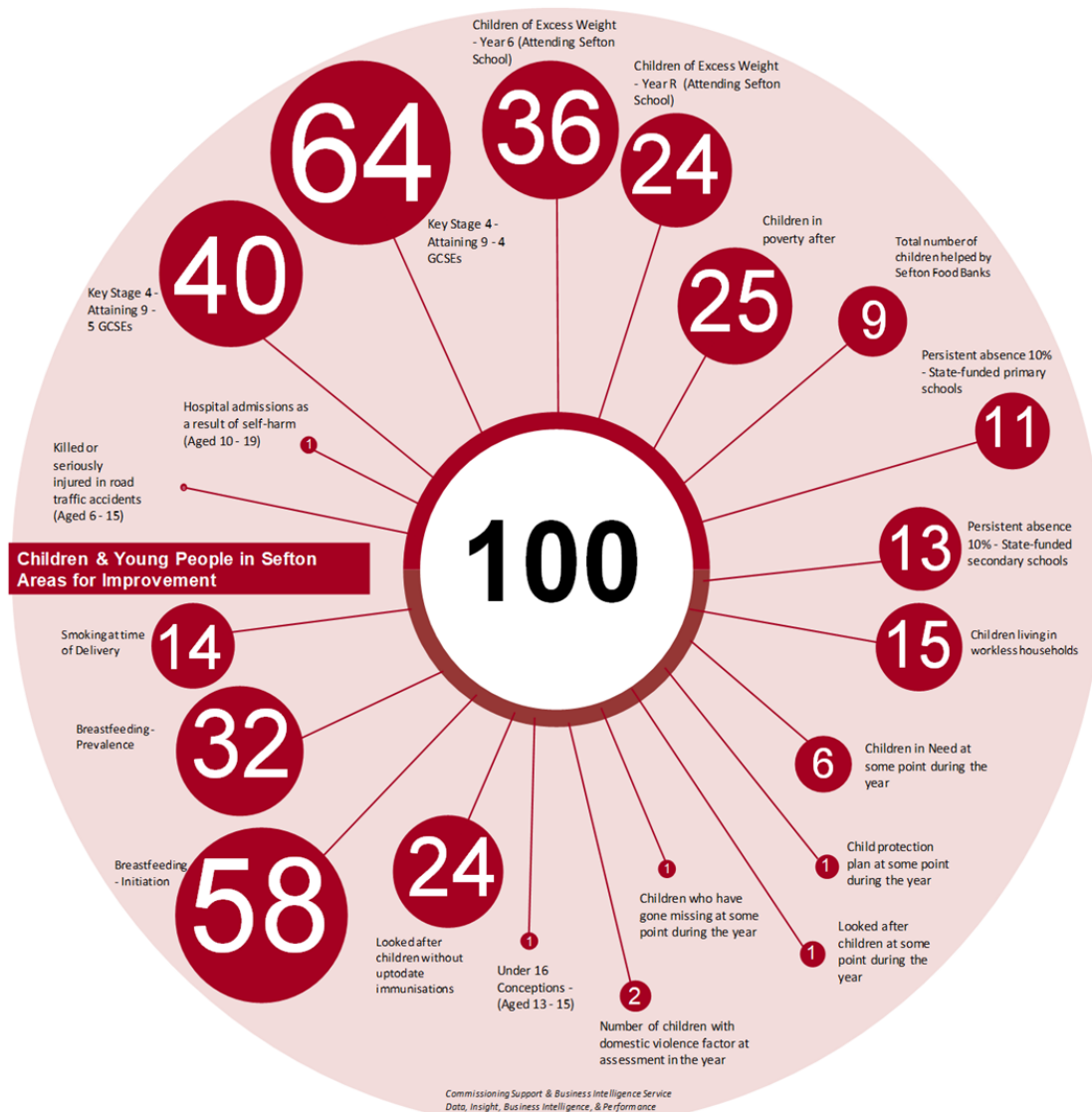
##### What is it like for Children and Young People living in Sefton?

56,566 Children & Young People living in Sefton;

- Children aged 0-4: 14,847
- Children and young people 4-16: 35,179
- Young people 17 & 18: 6,540
- Approximately 20% children and young people living in low income families
- 20,834 children in Primary schools
- 14,732 children & young people Secondary schools
- 2,463 young people in 6<sup>th</sup> form settings
- 27% average Free School Meals
- 5,095 children and young people with SEND
- 494 Children Looked After
- 2,351 Children in Need
- 242 Child Protection Plans in place
- 1,657 Families receiving Early Help Services

South Sefton Clinical Commissioning Group  
Southport and Formby Clinical Commissioning Group





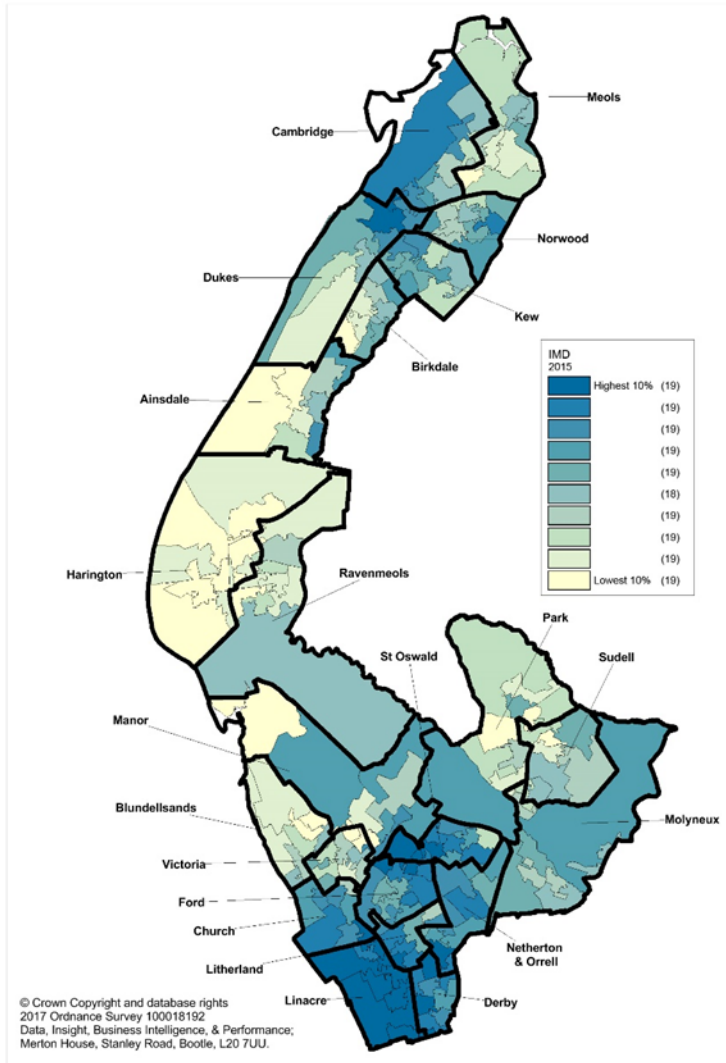
This diagram provides an illustration of the key performance indicators for Children & Young People in Sefton: areas for improvement.

**Deprivation across Sefton**

The 7 domains of deprivation:

1. Income deprivation
2. Employment deprivation (people of working age who are involuntarily excluded from the world of work, either through unemployment, ill health or family circumstances)
3. Health and disability
4. Education, skills and training
5. Barriers to Housing and key local services.
6. Living environment 'indoors' and 'outdoors'
7. Crime





- **21%** of children and young people in Sefton are living in low income households and **17%** in poverty. (*A child is defined as being in poverty when living in a household with an income below 60% of the UK's average*).
- Continual increases can be seen in Sefton's rate of hospital admission for self-harm in children and young people aged 10 to 24, and this has increased to 602 per 100,000. This is significantly higher than the England average, which has shown only small changes over the past five years. Nationally self-harm admissions have been found to be higher for young women than young men.
- Sefton's rate of hospital admission for mental health affecting those aged under 18 has fluctuated over the same period, with a high 146.6 per 100,000 in 2015/16. There has been a reduction in 2016/17 yet Sefton is still higher than England (like self-harm rates mental health admissions in England have shown minimal changes year on year).
- The rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) aged 16 to 17 within Sefton has been higher than the rate seen across England since the measure's introduction (2016); however, these have shown a year on year reduction. The rate of children looked after in Sefton has

shown an overall increase from 2012 to 2017 and has continually been above the rate seen across England during this period.

- The rates of Sefton young people who have received a custodial sentence have fluctuated, the current year is below the national rate. However, three of the past six years have had higher rates than that of England. First time entrants to the youth justice system rates in Sefton have shown year on year reductions and have been below the England rate in for the past four years.
- The number of children and young people living in Sefton (0-25 year olds) is 62,100 a fall of 14% (9,990) since 2001.
- Sefton is a good place for children and young people to live and grow up. Most receive their immunisations, with rates being close to the national average, with a few exceptions. - overall, our children and young people achieve in school. However, there are still some that do not reach their full potential which impacts on their ability to go into further education, training and to get a job.
- The health of children and young people is generally improving and they have access to a wide range of physical activity opportunities.
- Almost 20% of our children are obese when they leave primary school at 11 years.
- The number of hospital admissions related to alcohol use in under 18's is also higher (though declining) than the England average and childhood smoking rates are average.
- There are fewer teenage mothers in the borough than in previous years. Whilst the total number of births in Sefton is not rising, there has been an increase in the number of babies born to non-British born women. These mothers may need additional support to access maternity and other health services. Sefton mothers are more likely to smoke during pregnancy and less likely to breastfeed their baby at 6 weeks.
- Some of our children and young people cannot live with their parents or families; they live with Foster Carers, in children's homes or are adopted. These children and young people are more likely to experience poor life chances
- As of November 2019, there are 549 looked After Children
- Further Data Sources: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1454739/jsna-children-august-2018.pdf>, [Fingertips.phe.org.uk](http://Fingertips.phe.org.uk)

## **Financial Challenges**

The 2019 -20 budget for Children's Social Care in Sefton is £33.339M, and £18.4 Million for NHS South Sefton and Southport and Formby CCGs/ This has steadily increased over the past 3 years. Early help spend £2 Million on a range of services delivered by the Voluntary and Community sector to support their offer to Families.

Children's Social Care	2017/18	2018/19
	£000's	£000's
Budget	27067	28137
Outturn	28570	33407
Variance	1503	5270
Packages & Placements	2017/18	2018/19
	£000's	£000's
Budget	13642	14382
Outturn	15933	19466
Variance	2291	5084

### Cost of Residential and Foster Placements:

The current average residential placement value is £172,000 (per placement, per year) and in-house fostering costs £42,000 per placement per year

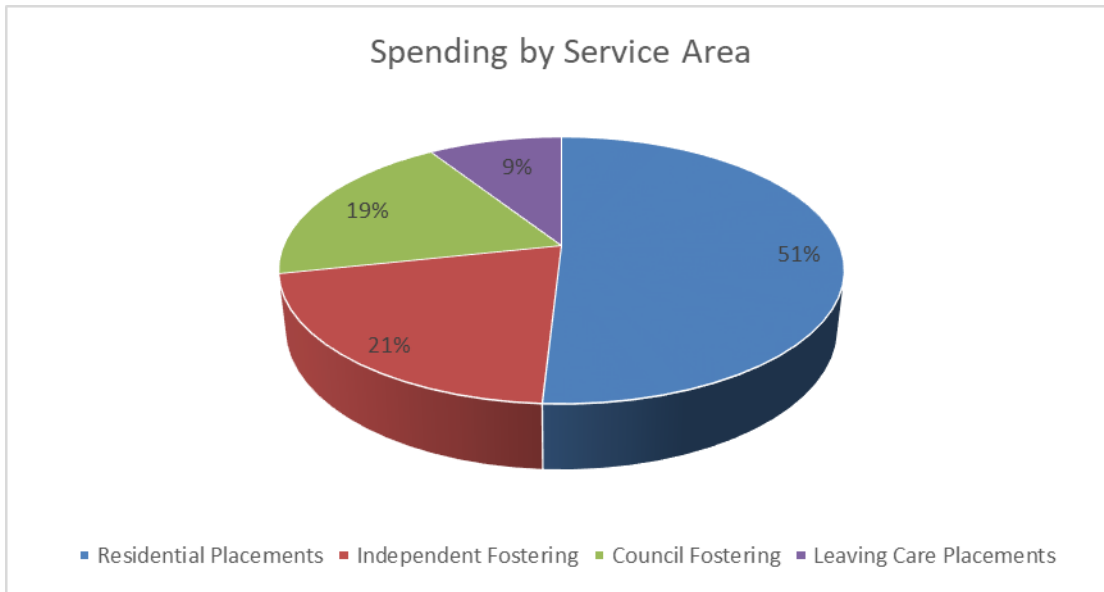
When we look at CIPFA data on spend in 2017/18 we can see that although spend is increasing we are below regional spend:

Area	Spend per head of population on Schools and other Educational and Community expenditure (£)	Spend per head on Children and Young Peoples Services (£)	Spend per head Combined + Youth Justice (£)
Sefton	620	160	780
Wirral	562	192	754
Knowsley	660	224	884
St Helens	671	196	867
Liverpool	697	165	863

### Performance Challenges:

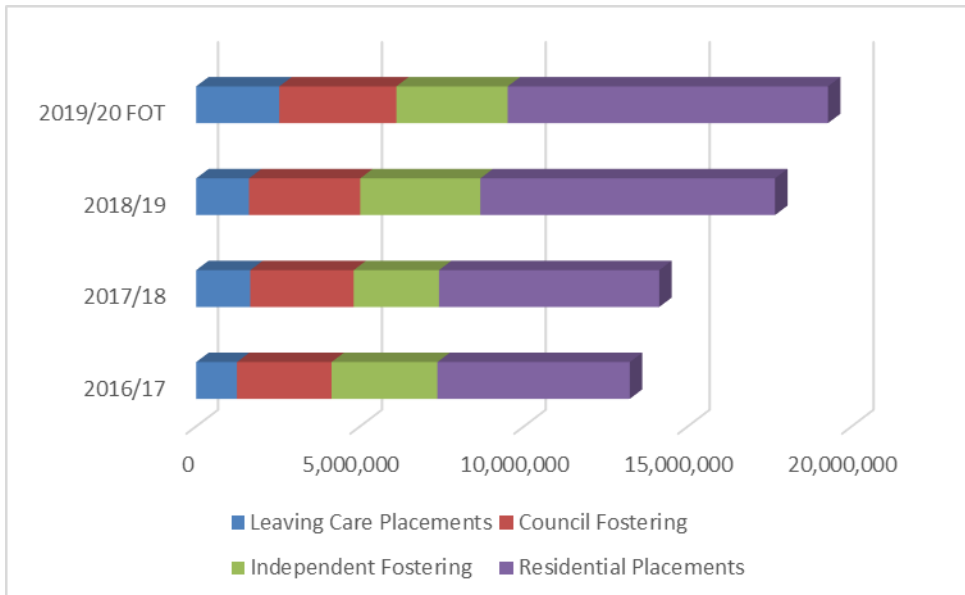
For the Council, there is a continued need to focus on ensuring contacts get to the right part of the system, efficient assessments within statutory time frames, correct application of child protection process and activating missing children return interview. For our CCGs, the current focus is on improving Mental Health Service capacity issues with waits longer than targets across the board, and a focus on working with Speech and Language Therapy to continue to reduce waiting times.

The Chart shows the amount of money spent in these service areas in 2018/19



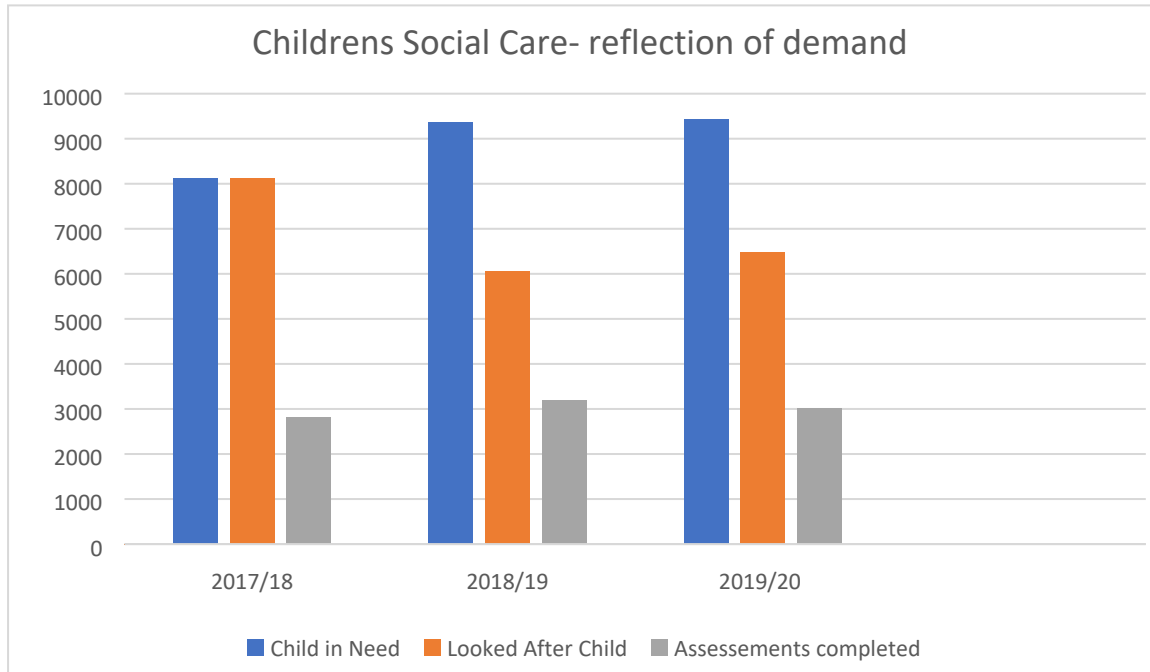
Residential Placements	51%	£8,990,268
Independent Fostering	21%	£3,663,575
Council Fostering	19%	£3,396,645
Leaving Care Placements	9%	£1,612,732

The Graph below showing the trend in Council spending by Service area on Children and Young People over the last three years and (forecast to 2019 – 20).



**Demand:**

The table below shows us that while capacity remains broadly constant (the number of assessments completed remains largely unchanged) demand for our services consistently exceeds our capacity and so we need to be ready to absorb and/or reduce demand through prevention.



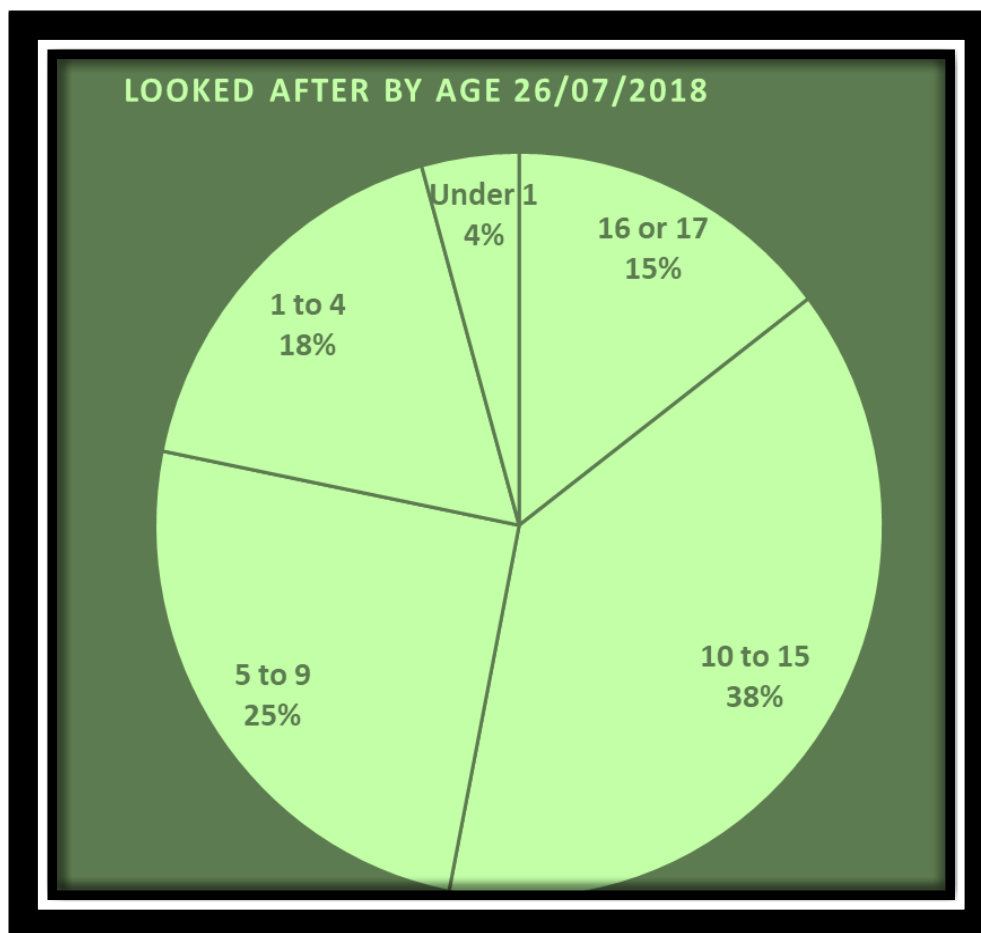
**The Looked After Child 2018 rate was 90 per 10,000 nationally this is 64 per 10,000. The 2019/20 figures are projected based on the first 6 months data.**

Every three years the Local Authority is required to produce a sufficiency statement to illustrate the supply and demand in their area and what plans are in place to address any imbalances. What the 2018/21 Sufficiency statement tells us:

The 2018 Stability Index figures identify whilst Sefton’s placement changes are on par with or just under national average, there is room to improve.

- 12% had 2 or more placement changes in 2016/17; (10% nationally)
- 3% had 2 or more placement changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17; (3% nationally)
- 21% had 2 or more placement changes over two years (2015/16 - 2016/17); (22% nationally)
- 29% had 2 or more placement changes over three years (2014/15 - 2016/17); (30% nationally)

The chart below identifies that the largest age group of Sefton looked after children are 10 – 15 year olds.



An analysis of the Strengths and Difficulties data identified that a third of looked after children have an emotional health and wellbeing need. Good emotional and mental health is important in helping to strengthen the child's capacity for relationships, improve educational attainment, promote social inclusion, expand opportunities and improve general health and wellbeing. This further emphasises the importance of an integrated approach to mental health provision, to increase capacity for our children and young people.

**SEND Demand** – The SEND JSNA has now been updated and is awaiting final sign off before it is published, however it reflects 3.32% of Children in Sefton have an Educational Health Care Plan, 9% of all school Children receive SEN Support.

**Equality of Access** – Appendix one shows the make-up of protected characteristics in Sefton, analysis of CIPFA comparator data shows that Sefton is unusual in its lack of Ethnic diversity it is an outlier in terms of the % of White British population. This would suggest that we must focus on provision being accessible to all and ensure the impact on all groups is equally felt. There is no evidence of need being disproportionate or in barriers of access for any particular protected characteristic.

**Current Contracting Activity:**

We currently see a complex picture of spend across care and health. This makes meaningful contract management a challenge and there is a strong potential for duplication and efficiencies to be made. We recognise that Joint Quality

Management whereby we share intelligence, agree a joint approach and toolkit and jointly measure services in outcomes is key to achieving good quality and maximising our commissioned services across health and care.

Sefton is currently named on the following regional purchasing systems with the intention of maximising our buying power and shaping the market in our region:

- North West Foster Flexible Purchasing System
- North West Residential Flexible Purchasing System
- North West Leaving Care Dynamic Purchasing System
- North West Care and Support Dynamic Purchasing System

The use of the frameworks has assisted us in understanding the market in a wide area and where the gaps of service can be found. It gives access to a wide geographical data set supplied through the use of these frameworks which allows us as a Local Authority to review where our disparities need to be addressed and has subsequently led to the work in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) to endeavour to address these gaps in a specific geographical area. This includes the NHS England Transforming Care Partnership agenda and the identified need for a wider footprint crisis response service.

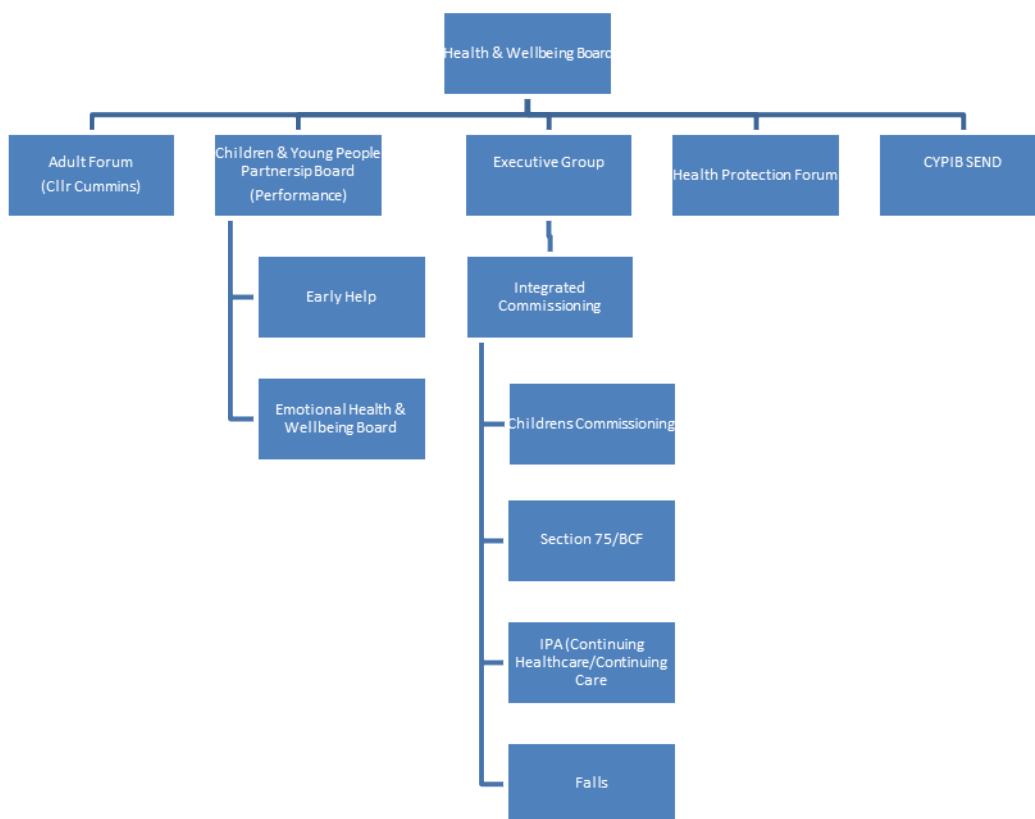
Further opportunities are available through the Liverpool City Region Market Reform Programme.

The programme was established in April 2019 with an aim to achieve strategic reform throughout the children's social care placement sector across the LCR.

It seeks to ensure that there is sufficient and diverse range of organisations committed to closer working with the six Councils that make up the commissioning cohort within the LCR and who will provide high quality services which deliver the best outcomes to our children and young people.

The initiative will also ensure sustainable long term pricing and greater social value to our local communities.

## 5. Commissioning Infrastructure and Oversight:



The diagram above demonstrates the Governance Structure for this work. The Health and Wellbeing Board (incorporating our Children’s Trust) gives overarching vision through the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and oversee the delivery of the Children and Young Peoples Plan. Its gives overarching Governance and Accountability with membership from across Health, Social Care, the third sector and Police and Housing.

## 6. How we will work with the Market

Opportunities to work with the council are advertised through the NW Procurement portal the Chest. In Health the contracting process is subject to different regulations although the NHS Long Term Plan is emphasising a move towards collaboration as opposed to competition and this has resulted in, for example, the formation of the Sefton Provider Alliance. We would like to encourage greater engagement with providers, given the opportunity to the market to hear their views before formal procurement processes, using PINS (Prior information notice), Bidder Events and reinvigorating regular provider forums, ensuring key stakeholders are part of the conversation.

Detailed Market Position Statements will be produced for all commissioned areas of activity and the market will be fully engaged to assist in the development and



procurement of models of delivery which meet the needs of the Sefton population and to enable long term business planning and stability for the provider network and which may include a partnership approach through the Sefton Provider Alliance.

Currently work is underway to look at joint health and contract management tool kits, standards, intelligence log, shared existing data sources, a move toward contract management by supplier and not singular contract, and an outcome focused contract management approach. This will support a more positive aligned approach to the market.

### 7. Commissioning Priorities



We have seen a significant rise in Looked After Children over the last 5 years with far greater complexity and the rise in emotional and mental health needs.

The Liverpool City Region work is focused on the Critical level of need coming through our doors, and the need to increase the number of beds, now and in the next 5 to 10 years. Generally, the demand needed is more for psychology based offers and to meet those with Self Harming conditions. We do not need more of what we have got but something different. We need to focus on early help and consider whether we have the right services

Pilot with a charity supplying a befriending support service including goods and services such as furniture or help to set up home after care, and hosting arrangements such as a host family to support a Child or Young Person whilst a more long term solution is sought. In other areas this has helped significant numbers of families, saved money, and alleviated pressure on early help

We have 117 residential beds across 26 homes in Sefton. Only 20 of these placements are Sefton Children. Our market is impacted by the lack of sufficiency in neighbouring authorities. We need to develop a relationship with the market whereby all are clear on the benefits of placing a Sefton Child with ongoing support and joint working, understanding of other placements and overcoming compatibility issues. We aspire for the quality of our homes to be a standard that we would expect for our own family.

We currently experience a decreasing number of foster placements, younger children who are displaced into residential settings, subsequently residential providers are not able to meet needs of more complex young people who are then displaced into supported and independent living provision.

The main cause being the inability to meet Emotional and Mental Health Needs. 62% of our placements in 2018 were out of borough.

A recent review of emergency and short breaks provision identified a need to ensure capacity, flexibility and a service offer that can be managed through to transitions.

Identified gaps within Sefton's provision include:

- Personal care and support / community residential provision
- Foster care (internal and IFA) to meet complex needs
- Internal foster carers particularly for children with disabilities
- Residential provision which can support young people with Emotional and mental health issues.
- Move on residential provision which is accountable and works within a defined timeframe
- Evidenced based therapeutic models
- Wrap round services for foster carers regarding behaviour support and interventions

- Mother and baby assessment, foster carers and residential placements (development of a framework)
- Exit strategy models and planning for “move on” to lower intensity models which prepare young people for adulthood

The current level of expenditure is not sustainable, and we will be actively exploring both individually as a council and collectively as members of the Liverpool City Region ways of reducing the levels of fees charged whilst ensuring that the highest level of quality afforded to our Children and Young People - including the introduction of:

- New block contracts with the Independent Sector targeted at specific levels of need and complexity both for Residential and for Fostering Services
- The creation of Community Interest Companies to deliver Residential and/or Fostering services to create Social Value back into the community
- Development of our own directly delivered Residential Services
- The commercial acquisition of selected companies who meet our principles and values and who we believe will be in a position to further develop their offer within and beyond Sefton
- Development of a subsidiary trading arm to our existing Trading Company to deliver a range of Children’s Services
- PDR linked performance model to outcomes achieved.

At this moment in time, we are evaluating all these options to ensure that we possess sufficient capacity within the market which will offer Value for Money and good quality. We need services to shift their emphasis to being outcome focused and supportive of flexibility around the child’s needs to prevent break down in placements and escalation to more complex service provision. We need services that are focused on the assets and strengths of the Child and Young Person in their care, seeking at all times to develop and strengthen these to reduce reliance and promote self worth and independence. These are the types of services that we will commission from in the future, and who in turn, will have a future with this Council as a provider and partner for the long term and be secure in making that investment with us.

This Strategy and Market Position Statement seeks to give clarity to the market and ensure we maximise in all ways what the market can offer. We will be developing with providers and stakeholders, a predictive model of what we need the market to look like. and we will be seeking assistance with our appraisal of potential delivery models to achieve this and which best meet the needs of our community.

We would invite providers and stakeholders to express their thoughts and ideas and would welcome new ways of working and innovation to further inform our strategy and commissioning intention

Commissioning activity will build care and support offers that are outcome focused and support the needs of the individual Child. Allowing our Social Workers,

Occupational Therapists and other Health Care Professionals to build care and support that is the right level and from a range of offers built around the person.

- engaging and drawing on the experience of local community leaders and partners
- engaging and drawing on the experience of local leaders from schools, hospitals and other locally based agencies
- engaging and working with children, young people and their families
- collaborating with providers
- mapping resources
- specifying and measuring outcomes
- managing knowledge and assessing needs
- prioritising investment
- shaping and managing the markets
- promoting improvement and innovation
- managing and leading the children’s services system

We will ensure the Voice of the Child is clear and are committed to co-production. Sefton benefits from a strong network of Community and Voluntary Youth groups which we will work with to ensure that we deliver on our Heard group of priorities. Understanding the lived experience and what matters to Children and Young People will be reflected in all specifications and performance management frameworks.

The Integrated Commissioning group will take forward agreed key priorities for Commissioning over the next 12 months and commit to a full review and proposal for the following year to Health and Wellbeing Board on an annual basis.

<p>Where do we want to be</p>	<p>We will prioritise early intervention and focusing resources on services which create as closely as possible a normal home life for the Children and Young People in our community. Enabling and supporting rather than doing to build confidence, self-esteem and resilience</p> <p>We will make more efficient use of framework agreements – employing benefits realisation evaluations of current framework arrangements and agreement to continue or adopt other mechanisms. Including NW and Liverpool City Region.</p> <p>We will be focused on realigning support delivery services against national best practice, and commission those services which effect a reduction in reliance on the residential market.</p> <p>Where services are commissioned with the residential market we will be encouraging and developing closer working relationships with local providers who can demonstrate good quality and value for money.</p> <p>Services will be commissioned and procured on both a local and regional footprint employing new ways of working and new models</p>
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	<p>of service delivery as highlighted on Page 2 of Working with the Market.</p> <p>Integrated Commissioning initiatives will continue to be developed between the Council and the CCG to ensure a whole system approach and the adoption of unified processes and procedures and most the effective and efficient service delivery for our Children and Young People</p>
<p>How are we going to get there</p>	<p>We will have clear agreed work plans that are fully approve and have implemented Performance Management Frameworks linked to priorities.</p> <p>Throughout 2020/21 we will be engaging with the market to explore our ideas and proposals further and gain a better understanding of the dynamics and pressures within it and how we can develop our ideas and priorities further to enable investment, growth and sustainability within our provider community The outcome of these engagements will give us an informed view of how we can progress and develop our relationship with key providers and will give surety to their investment over the coming years.</p> <p>By the conclusion of the Children Young people’s plan in 2025 we will have reprofiled the supply of services to Children and Young People to meet need and demand and support new ways of working. This will be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that our priorities and our actions meet the needs of our Children and Young People.in Sefton.</p>
<p>Actions we will undertake throughout 2020/21</p>	<p>We will undertake a series of locality-based engagement events to promote our ideas and listen to provider and stakeholder views. Providers and stakeholders will be informed in the New Year of these events so that they will be able to choose which they would wish to attend.</p> <p>Following these consultations, we will be setting out our specific commissioning intentions and procurement activity and invite providers to express interest. Some models of service delivery will be commissioned within 2020/21 and others over the coming three years, depending upon our agreed priorities and the complexity of the commissioned models which we are seeking to introduce.</p>
<p>Timeline for activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultations will take place during February and March of 2020</li> <li>• The outcome of these consultations will be conveyed in more specific commissioning intentions in May 2020</li> <li>• Tendering documentation will be issued in June 2020 alongside a series of locality workshops to assist all</li> </ul>

providers with their understanding of the tendering requirements and subsequent submissions

- We will be aiming to implement the New Contracts in our agreed priority areas by the end of September 2020
- Concurrent with this activity there will be the further market engagement opportunities for the development of commissioning priorities for 2021/22, where we will be reviewing other models of service delivery and developing the procurement strategy for that year with the aim of having these in place to deliver from the start of the 2021 Financial Year.

Consultation	→			
	Specific Intentions			
		Tendering Documents Issued		
			New Contracts	
				Review of Service Delivery and Procurement Strategy in place
February to March 2020	May 2020	June 2020	Sept 2020	April 2021

Actions we would ask of you

We would welcome your views and ideas about this strategy and our commissioning intentions at any time and these should be submitted in the first instance to;  
[Commissioningandcontracts@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:Commissioningandcontracts@sefton.gov.uk)

## Glossary of Terms

**SEND** – Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities. A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her

**ACES** - Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years) such as experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home; and having a family member attempt or die by suicide. Also included are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding such as growing up in a household with substance misuse, mental health problems, or instability due to parental separation or incarceration of a parent, sibling, or other member of the household.

**Early Help** - Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.

**Child in Need** - Child in need of services means a child under the age of 18 years and: whose behaviour, conduct, or condition endangers the health, safety, or welfare of the child or another person who has been reported as absent to law enforcement for at least 24 consecutive hours from the parent's home without consent

**Looked After Children** - A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care

**Child Protection** - Child protection and safeguarding means protecting children from abuse, and identifying and stopping abuse that is already happening.

Abuse of a child or young person under the age of 18 is defined as follows.

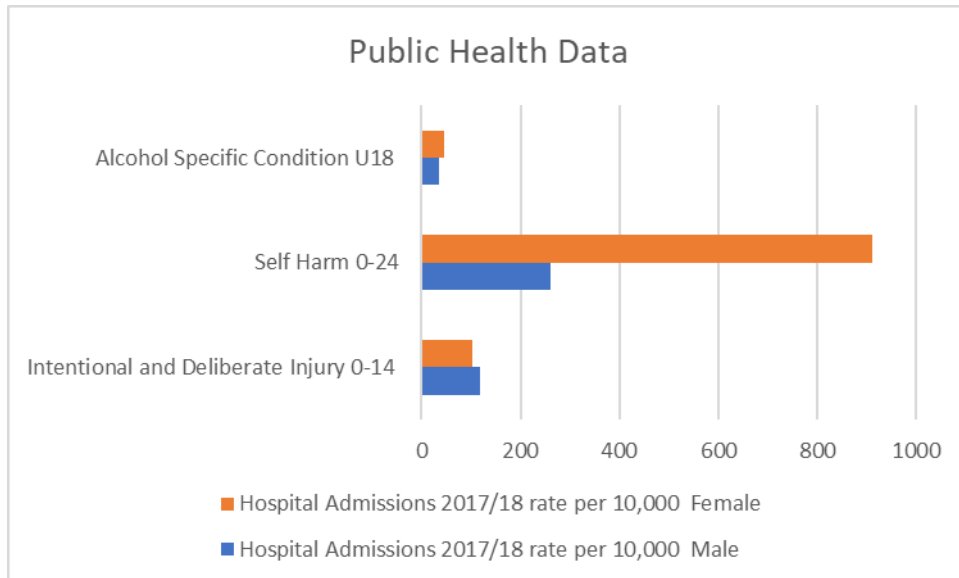
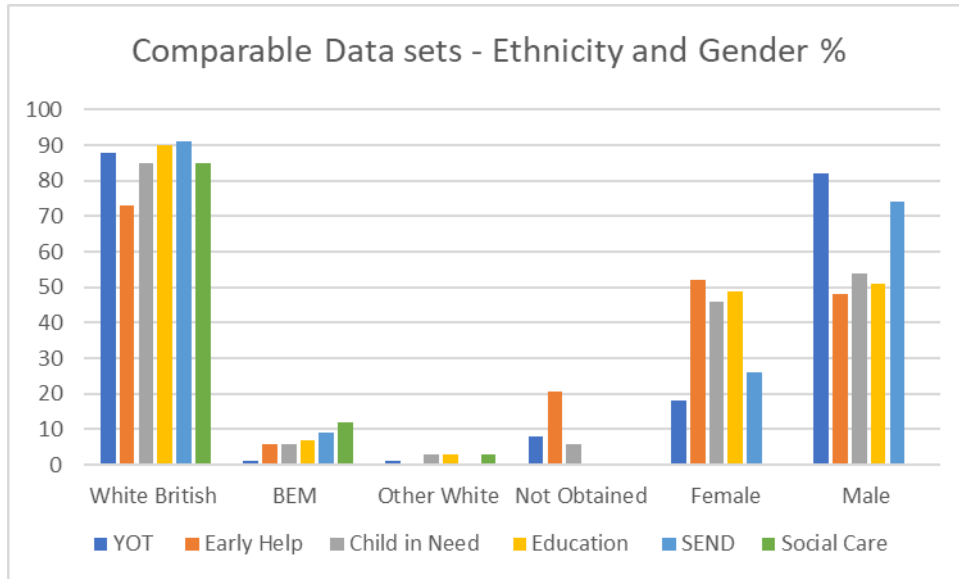
- Abuse is a deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to harm a child or young person's safety, well-being and development. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional.

- Neglect of a child or young person also constitutes abuse and can be defined as failing to provide or secure for a child or young person the basic needs of physical safety and well-being.

**Health and Care** – For the purposes of this document this means all services involved in supporting children, this can mean Health Services, Public Health Services, Early Help services, Educational support, and Children's Social Care services,

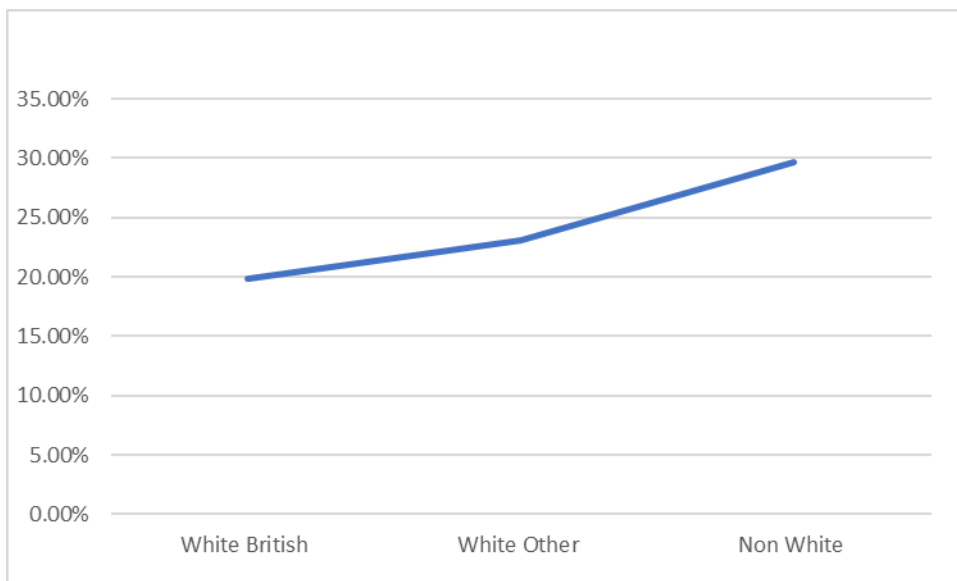
## Appendix One:

### Our Protected Characteristics make up:



This table shows Obesity %s by Ethnicity.





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Page 75

# My Sefton

HEARD, HAPPY, HEALTHY, ACHIEVING

The plan for all children, young people and their families living in Sefton

Children and Young People's Plan  
**2020/25**

*"A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove..... but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."*

*Forest E Witcraft*

## Foreword and Introduction

Welcome to ‘My Sefton: happy, healthy, achieving, heard’, our 2020-2025 plan for all children, young people and their families that sets out how we intend to maximise the health and wellbeing of all our children and young people living in Sefton

Together, we at Sefton Council, NHS South Sefton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS Southport and Formby CCG, have agreed a series of priorities for future services and support. These priorities are based on what children, young people, their families and their carers have told us of their experiences and what we know about their current care.

Sefton Council led on the development of an exciting partnership vision for the Borough of Sefton called Sefton 2030. When developing the vision partners worked closely with our communities, including children and young people, to understand what was important to them.<sup>1</sup>

This is our single strategic and overarching plan for all services which affect children and young people across Sefton. It sets out how the Council, with its strategic partners, intends to achieve improvements.

We have used information from our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to inform the plan and will seek to ensure that children and young people’s needs are understood and met. This information together with what we already know about our area from previous work and conversations has informed the priorities in this document. This plan, therefore, has been written around the four themes of:

- Heard
- Happy
- Healthy
- Achieving

We have also set out clear actions for how we will address the priorities under each theme and how we will measure the progress of these actions. While it is important to measure progress, we acknowledge there has to be a balance with how children and young people experience life and what is important to them. These priorities incorporate the seven principles for corporate parenting:

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<sup>1</sup> Any references to “child” or “children” should be taken to mean any young person aged 0-19, care leavers up to the age of 25 and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 25 for whom the local authority continues to provide support.

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
2. To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. To consider the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people.
4. To help children and young people gain access to and make the best use, of services provided by the local authority.
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people.
6. For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work, and
7. To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living

Alongside this, we have a plan for the whole of the local NHS called Sefton 2gether, led by the CCGs. Like Imagine Sefton, the plan is rooted in all that we know from the JSNA and then goes further, based on discussions with our health and care partners in the borough and from speaking with our residents about what they would like for the future. Sefton 2gether's ambitious priorities for children, young people, their families and carers are reflected in and complement those contained in this plan – My Sefton: happy, healthy, achieving, heard.

We know we cannot achieve our priorities without working together with our wider partners across health and care in Sefton. Working together is important in times of challenge, austerity has seen significant cuts in the money going to public services so there is a need to work differently and achieve better with less. Organisations from the public sector, schools, voluntary, community and private sector have been working together to provide support to children and young people and their families as we understand that it is our collective responsibility to ensure we can create the right conditions for children and young people to thrive in Sefton.

We recognise that each organisation is just one part of a whole system and that by working together we can make the best use of the resources available to provide support where it is most needed.

These organisations are committed to maintaining, strengthening and maximising partnership working to best support the children and young people of Sefton. This plan will build upon the strength we have in Sefton around our partnership working and what we already do well.

Cabinet Member

CCG Chief Officer

Director of Children's Services

## What's the story in Sefton?

The Sefton Children's JSNA, complete in August 2018 highlights the following key points for us grouped by our themes:

Heard:	Happy:	Healthy:	Achieving:
Child Sexual Exploitation referrals fluctuate with the highest count being 97 in Quarter 4 of 2015/16 and the lowest 43 in Q3 of 2016/17.	Children looked after rate per 10,00 was 85 in 2017, compared to 61.7 nationally again this continues to rise.	In Sefton in 2017 2.4% of Pupils had a Statement of Special Educational Needs or EHC Plan, compared to a national average of 2.8%	In 2017 95% benefited from funded early education (24% more than the English average). 98% of 3 and 4 year olds also benefited. Pupils in these early years phase development attainment was in line with national averages.
The Carers Trust 2019 reported that there are an estimated 700'000 young Carers in the UK, 68% are bullied and miss an average of 48 schools' days per year, 48% reported being stressed. Sefton Carers support 600 young carers.	In 2016/17 the rate of Family Homelessness was at 0.3 per 1000, nationally this was 1.9. This equates to a count of 31 households. For Young people aged 16 -24 this rate was 0.16 per 100,000 in 2016/17 (19 individuals) below national average.	In 2017 3.6% of our pupils had a Learning Disability (this figure has consistently been around 4% since 2013).	In Key Stage 4 the % of Pupils attaining Grade 9 to 5 or 9 to 4 in English and Maths was below the national average at 37% and 60% (English averages were 43% and 64% in 2016/17). 94% went on to education or training after this stage
	The of Children living in poverty in 2017/18 in Bootle was 28% before housing costs and 31% after housing costs, for Sefton Central this is recorded as 15 % and 19% and for Southport 21 %	In 2017 15.5 children in every 1000 pupils enrolled in one of Sefton's state funded schools were recognised as having autistic spectrum disorders, this has risen from 14.4 in 2015.	In Key Stage 2 pupils attainment in Reading, writing and Maths were all above national averages.

and 30%.

Hospital Admissions for Mental Health Conditions are higher than national averages at 97.5 per 100,000 in 2016/17 down from 146.6 in the previous year. 1 in 10 Children are affected by Mental Health Problems. Self-Harm has increased and is higher than national averages

Rates are continually higher than England and the North West

Our LA's Overall Absence has decreased by 0.16% from 4.94% in 2017/18 to 4.78% in 2018/19, which is 0.24% higher than the National average of 4.54% and equivalent to 21,128 more missed sessions in your LA than the National cohort, with pupils at our LA missing an average of 12.3 sessions (this is 1.7 more than the National cohort) Our LA's average for the last 3 academic years is 4.88% and we have been consistently higher than the National average in the last 3 academic years for Overall Absence.

The rate of NEET for 16 -24 years olds was at 4.5 % in 2017. This figure has improved between 2013 and 2017 but still remains higher than national averages

First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10 – 17 was at 220.2 in 2016 this had fallen since 2012 when it was at 578.7. The rates are below national averages

The overarching aims for starting well in Sefton, taken from the Health and Well Strategy:

- Every child will achieve the best start in their first 1001 days
- Education and training will enable every young person to unlock the door to more choices and opportunities
- Every child and young person will have a successful transition to adulthood

In 2025 we will know we have made a difference by raising the % of Children achieving a good level of development from 69% to 74%. Continue to reduce the proportion of our 16 – 17 Not in Education and Training. Improve the experience of Transitions experience as measured by our annual survey and by having a fully adopted joint transitions pathway.



## About the plan

We have looked at the last plan and what is still important to our children, young people and their families. This plan has been shaped by the analysis of our performance and progress to date, alongside the trends identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which allows us to establish trends across a wide range of data.

More importantly through Consultation with a wide range of Youth Groups, Schools and Key Stakeholders and Professionals.

we have also listened and what children, young people and families tell us has led us to identify a number of priorities for action over the course of this Plan. We recognise achievements from the last plan to include:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), achieving a good level of development, we are the highest in the North West (NW) and above the regional average
- Sefton's Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) group has improved over the 3 year period, performing better than Liverpool City Region (LCR) and staying in line with the North West
- Sefton has consistently exceeded the England and North-West numbers, for children benefitting from the "Two Year Old Offer". Since the introduction of the Two Year Old Offer in 2009, Sefton has worked in close partnership with Health and Early Years settings to identify and engage with the families of rising two year olds who families meet the criteria
- We have seen a decrease in young people being involved with Anti Social Behaviour, one significant reason could be we have issued Gang Injunctions along with the police, which have significantly decreased youth Anti Social Behaviour in the Area. (80% of the cases are adults)

We recognise that some areas from our previous plan still need our focus and these are reflected in the 2020 – 2025 plan.

Child health and wellbeing are dependent on supportive and safe homes; studies repeatedly show the importance of having at least one supportive caring adult to establishing childhood resilience. This is critical so that children are able to bounce back when difficulty threatens that happiness. Through access to play, leisure, sport, cultural activities and positive interaction in families that spend time together, there are opportunities for happy memories to be made and resilient capacities to be built, all of which greatly enhance the foundation for happiness and lifelong wellbeing.

Our ambition is to improve outcomes for all children as we want to break the link between a person's background and where they get to in life.

We will be child focused, children and young people are our primary concern, we will listen and respond to children and young people and we will focus on strengths and building resilience. We will support our children, young people and their families to lead healthy lifestyles and have good emotional wellbeing and mental health.

We will do this through the actions in 12 priority areas under each of the headings Heard, Happy, Healthy, and Achieving shown below. These 12 priorities are based on what the evidence in the JSNA and our consultation tells us we need to get better at.

We have identified a short set of indicators where we want to see real positive change. There is a detailed action plan being developed in draft which describes the actions in terms of steps of delivery and impact Some of these we are able to deliver through the services we directly provide, and others require us to a combined effort to influence wider changes. Importantly, we will always look at the story behind the data through the eyes and voice of children, young people and families.

## Heard

*Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.*

*United Nations Convention on the rights of a child. Article 12*

These are our priorities:

**Priority 1. Ensure children’s voices are heard and families will get the right support and help at the right time.**

We will give children and young people opportunities to be engaged in decision making processes and give them as much influence as possible.

Children and young people will be treated respectfully as we recognise that children, young people, parents and carers (including Young Carers) are experts by experience

We will take time to listen, it is a two-way conversation.

We will do what we say we are going to do and recognise that involvement is a continuous process and not just a one off exercise.

**Priority 2. Engage with a wide range of youth networks and groups that support young people**

We will work with children and young people to understand what works for them in terms of involvement and will we also accept. that children and young people are not always going to tell us what we want to hear – in the way we want to hear it

We will be respectful of difference and celebrate diversity.

Based on our localities model and primary care networks we will continue to provide universal services that are accessible to everyone in the borough.

**Priority 3. Place children and young people at the core of decisions we make about them.**

We will ensure that children and young people will always be central to decisions we make about them and their journeys will be shaped by their voice and experience. Children will be supported by professionals they trust who listen to them, made to feel their opinion is valued and take actions to meet their needs and tackle concerns they raise.

Young people say: Everyone wants to feel safe (Imagine Sefton 2030). Sefton value, we listen value and respect each others views. Look at info from youth groups e.g. Symbol, Chameleons.

**The actions we will take:**

We will listen to children and young people by ensuring that barriers to participation and progress are addressed using multiple techniques and methods so we can hear the voice of the child. We will work closely with Young Advisers at Sefton CVS and key youth groups in the Borough to ask questions, clarify understanding and give them the opportunities to be engaged in decision making processes and have as much influence as possible. We will support families to access the right help at the right time, through activity such as the redesign of integrated advocacy services, improving our local offer, and ensuring equality of access to our universal services. We will help build tolerant communities that value all children and young people as members and give them positive opportunities to contribute. We will be joined up and inclusive and challenge poor practice and accept challenge constructively. More children and young people will express satisfaction with our services and we can evidence improvements. The SEND continuous improvement work has the voice of the child at its heart.

**An action plan will be developed to show where any measures we look at are held to account.**

## Happy

*Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.  
United Nations Convention on the rights of a child, Article 31*

These are our priorities.

**Priority 4. Ensure positive emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people by empowering families to be resilient.**

We will create and promote children and young people’s emotional health and wellbeing by supporting them and their families to make positive choices. We will have strength informed approaches to ensure engagement and strengthening of families including promoting healthy relationships.

We will improve access to the right support from the right service at the right time and build on the strength of families and their inclusive networks.

This will be a key consideration at points of transition.

**Priority 5. Protect those at risk of harm**

We want all children and young people to be safe and to feel safe. We will help children live in safe and supportive families and ensure the most vulnerable are protected by tackling those factors which risk harming their life chances, including those children and Young People acting as carers. We will reduce the impact on children living in households which experience neglect, domestic abuse or parental substance use by the provision of a range of support and services. We will prevent and safeguard all children from exploitation and safeguard individual children who are identified as at risk.

We will work to address the concerns expressed to us through the consultation on Gangs and Knife Crime in our communities.

**Priority 6. Encourage fun, happiness and enjoyment of life**

We want children and young people to live in a good environment that they can enjoy. Sefton is a great place to live and grow up. We have a wealth of resources and assets in the community such as the coast and green spaces that can be used for pleasure, sport and other leisure opportunities.

We will encourage and provide or commission a diverse range of culture, exercise and socially connective activities in our borough ensuring a One Council approach with Green Sefton and Localities

Young people say: Being near the river and coast makes me feel happy and well. Young People told us feeling safe has a direct link to feeling happy. “If you are happy all other things will fall into place”

## The actions we will take:

We will have a family approach and will work with our partners to develop vibrant communities that take responsibility for the aspirations, opportunities and achievements of their young people so families and children experience a positive home life.

We will promote partnership working including joint commissioning so we can invest in children and young people's futures. We will improve information and advice on access to play, leisure, sport and cultural opportunities. We will utilise Early Intervention and Prevention services such as the roll out of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) working to help build resilience and strengthen protective factors in the lives of children and young people and their families to reduce the impact of these experiences on future life chances.

We want to develop a confident and competent workforce to ensure all professionals working with children and young people have appropriate awareness, training and ongoing support, that's built around the needs and outcomes of each individual. The outcomes and impact we are aiming for will be monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure we are supporting positive social connections and relationships.

## Healthy

Every child has the right to the best possible health, (United Nations Convention on the rights of a child, Article 24)

These are our priorities:

**Priority 7. To enable positive mental health and Wellbeing through prevention where ever possible and to provide timely support and access to services when needed.**

We will do all we can to identify problems early as we know the vast majority of mental health problems experienced in adult life emerge before young people reach adulthood. We will ensure high quality specialist services for those who need them.

We will strengthen the protective factors of mental health and wellbeing by enabling children and young people to develop skills around building friendship, self-esteem, resilience and mindset.

**Priority 8. To Enable children’s health and development.**

We will promote positive health choices by parents, especially during pregnancy. We will encourage care that keeps children healthy and safe and promote children’s health and development. Where problems are identified in health and development they can get support as early as possible. Focusing efforts on the 1<sup>st</sup> 1000 days and school readiness.

We will encourage children and young people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight through education, support and commissioned services.

**Priority 9. Reduce health inequalities so children and young people can achieve good health.**

We will endeavour to offer the right infrastructure to promote good health behaviours and reduce lifestyle factors that lead to early illness such as smoking and poor diet that will affect young people into adulthood.

We will reduce a range of risk taking behaviours including, alcohol and other drug use and unhealthy Sexual Activity.

We will take a preventative approach to manage rising demand across education, health, social care and SEND from the earliest point in a child’s life through focused operational improvement in this area and ensuring the system works together, for example linking economic growth Agenda, Living Well Sefton and Active Sefton to

contribute to the environment we need to achieve this.

Young people say: “I play rugby”; e.g. being fit and healthy (Sefton Imagine 2030), more youth friendly things for people to do are our priorities.

The 2019 Health and Wellbeing Strategy Consultation identified the top issue under “Start Well, Grow Well” to be help Children and Young People with Mental Health Problems including problems with drink drugs and self harm. The CYPP consultation told us “if children are protected and preventions have been put in place children will have better mental health”

## The actions we will take:

We want children and young people to be healthy and will promote healthy eating, delivery of the North Mersey Prevention Programme and a review of mental health services recognising the importance and significance of getting this right. We will seek to reduce hospital admissions for children and young people around alcohol and will continue to commission services and use campaigns such as Responsible Drinking and Challenge 25.

We will develop locality profiles in order to understand what the current risks are to young people including that young people know about healthy relationships and issues relating to consent. This will allow us to provide a quality provision targeted to local needs and inequalities and we will also focus on transitions from primary to secondary school, starting school further education and working life to improve outcomes. We will clearly measure and demonstrate improved relevant Child Health Profiles Indicators from the Baseline.



## Achieving

*Every child has the right to an education. Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full.  
 United Nations Convention on the rights of a child, Articles 28 and 29*

These are our priorities:

**Priority 10. Children are ready for school**

A great start will shape children’s lifelong health and wellbeing. We will ensure that all children are ready for school with good social and emotional development. We will secure and sustain better all-round outcomes for babies and children which narrows the gap between vulnerable children and others.

We will take a preventative approach from the earliest point in a child’s life in order that we can identify problems in children’s health and development so they can get help with their problems as early as possible.

**Priority 11. Raise achievement and ensure young people have the life skills so they are well prepared for adulthood.**

We will have a clear understanding of the aspirations of our young people and what they have told us is important to them. We will respect and encourage the hopes and dreams of the children and young people we work with.

We know high quality education is the greatest liberator so want all pupils to make at least “good” progress in every year of their education. We will ensure that all children attend good or better educational settings in Sefton and barriers to participation and progress are addressed. There will be a broad and balanced curriculum equipping them with the life skills they need to be independent and successful as an adult. These skills and opportunities to achieve will also value the contribution of sport, cultural,

**Priority 12. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities achieve their full potential**

We want children with complex individual needs to have the best life chances. We will enhance joint commissioning of support between education, health and care services for children with special educational needs and disabilities. To ensure services work together. We will ensure that all parts of the Sefton Send Local offer work together to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and that they achieve their full potential and that people know the range of services available to them. We will ensure all children have access to an educational setting that is appropriate to their needs, including those with SEND and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. We will from the earliest point in a child’s life encourage independence, where appropriate, and ensure families have timely

social and health education in preparing young people for their future. When preparing for adulthood we will have pathways to employment that ensure they are moving towards good quality sustainable work. We will focus on ensuring our children leave school with the right skills such as financial management, how to deal with bullying and citizenship, and maintaining wellbeing when carrying out caring responsibilities.

access to support so their experience improves and the needs of their children are identified early and met.

We will encourage equalities of access to universal services so all Children and Young People with SEND and/or Autism can gain maximum benefit from what Sefton has to offer.

Through our consultation of this plan Young people told us we need to instil the right life skills and not judge young people by numbers and grades only.

## The actions we will take:

We want young people to leave school with the appropriate skills and qualifications they need and the opportunity to access, training, apprenticeships and employment which will include working with skills and employment resources and local colleges to improve access to learning and meaningful opportunities. The local offer will be kept up to date, refreshed regularly and promoted to ensure we are providing good information, advice and guidance to young people and their families.

We will continue to provide universal services with a focus on specific groups and communities and equality of access for all through this plan and the SEND Improvement Plan and SEND Joint Commissioning Plan to ensure delivery of these ambitions

## Delivering our Vision

The Health and Wellbeing Board (incorporating our Children's Trust) gives overarching vision through the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and oversees the delivery of the Children and Young Peoples Plan. It gives overarching Governance and Accountability with membership from across Health, Social Care, the third sector and plans to include Police and Housing.

The Children and Young Peoples plan will be delivered through the work of the Children's Improvement Board and Operational Service Improvement Plans and through the development of a comprehensive Integrated Commissioning plan.

The Commissioning plan will be clear of our demand, supply and unmet need and our intentions to work with the market, and how we manage the complex range of services across the Council, Health and wider partners to meet the needs of our Children within the challenging budget envelope, working on a regional basis where the benefits are clear and ensure seamless delivery of services whether the need is health or Social Care in the most effective way.

## Useful Links:

**PHE Child Health Profile for Sefton**

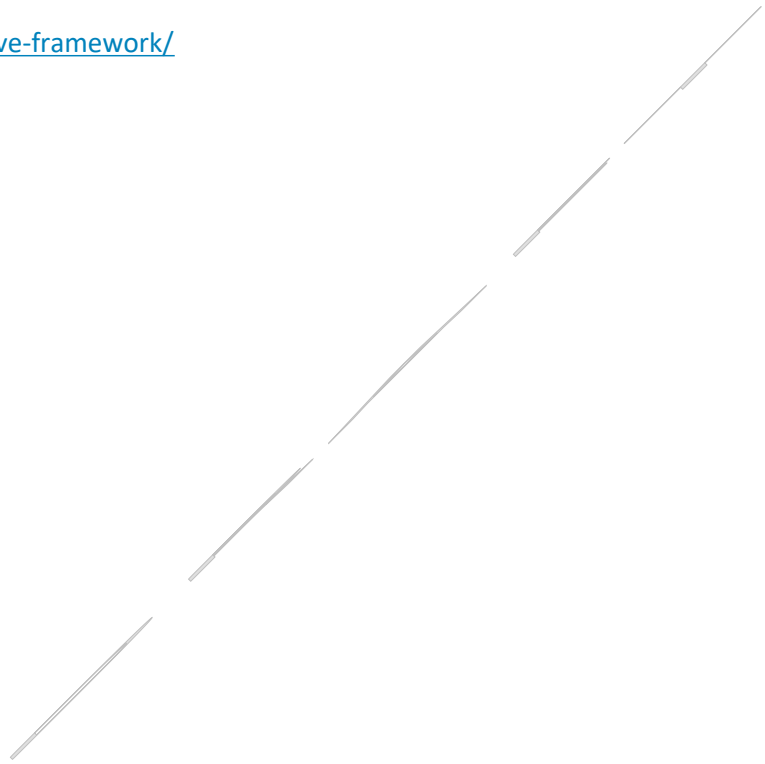
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/0/gid/1938132696/pat/6/par/E12000002/ati/101/are/E07000026>

**Thrive Model**

<http://implementingthrive.org/about-us/the-thrive-framework/>

**Early Help Strategy TBA**

**Health and Wellbeing Strategy TBA**





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# Agenda Item 6

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Early Help Strategy		
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Communities	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Children, Schools and Safeguarding		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

## Summary:

To update the Cabinet on the progress made towards the establishment of a Sefton Early Help Strategy. The paper also asks the Cabinet to note and approve the final version of the strategy.

## Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet be requested to approve the Early Help Strategy.

## Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To ensure the Cabinet is fully informed of the progress towards finalising the Early Help Strategy.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:** (including any Risk Implications)  
None identified

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

### (A) Revenue Costs

This document represents the strategic approach that is to be adopted and as such there are no revenue costs identified. It is expected that the delivery of the strategy will be within the existing revenue budget for the service

### (B) Capital Costs

There are no capital requirements arising from this strategy

## Implications of the Proposals:

### Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

There are no resource implications identified within the Strategy. Any specific requirements or additional resource implications will be identified as detailed proposals are developed for the delivery of priorities and these will be the subject of member approval as defined within the Councils Financial Procedure Rules

# Agenda Item 6

<b>Legal Implications:</b>
None identified
<b>Equality Implications:</b>
None identified

## Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<b>Protect the most vulnerable:</b> Through the intervention by the Council and its partners at the most critical moment when young people and parents/carers require our support to prevent further reliance on public sector in the future. The delivery of services which are based on the needs of the most vulnerable in society
<b>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</b> It is essential that we develop and strengthen approaches to support young people and families.
<b>Commission, broker and provide core services:</b> A range of services are provided to support young people and families.
<b>Place – leadership and influencer:</b> Leadership is essential and identifying locations to support families in communities is a key part of our core purpose.
<b>Drivers of change and reform:</b> The strategy acknowledges that agencies will be addressing their own distinct needs and meeting a range of key performance indicators against a variety of policy drivers and aims to provide an umbrella framework of key principles that can be applied across all agendas.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

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

### (A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5900/19) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4084/19) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

### (B) External Consultations



Consultation has been held with partners including police, health , voluntary sector , schools through the Early help Partnership Board. Further consultation was held with the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **Implementation Date for the Decision**

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

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Tanya Wilcock
Telephone Number:	07890596169
Email Address:	tanya.wilcock@sefton.gov.uk

## **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1: Early Help Strategy document**

**Appendix 2: Strategy on a Page**

## **Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Following the publication in July 2018, of revised statutory guidance; “Working Together to Safeguard Children: guidance to inter-agency working’ to safeguard and promote the welfare of children” the Council looked to produce with its partners an Early Help Strategy. On the 13th March 2019, the Health and Wellbeing Board received a paper to present an initial draft of an Early Help Strategy and outline the next steps in producing a final version.
- 1.2 Subsequent to the Board, partners met on 20 March 2019 to discuss the detail of the new Early Help Strategy and an initial draft version was presented to the group. The outcome of this meeting was that the strategy needed further work in the form of a more detailed narrative. Partners provided feedback resulting in the Strategy being further updated.
- 1.3 The Early Help Partnership Group has now been re-established and held their first meeting on 3 July 2019. The partnership group agreed further changes to the Early Help Strategy and changes to the strategy on a page. A final draft Early Help Strategy has now been completed with an accompanying ‘Strategy on a page’. These can be viewed at appendix one and two.
- 1.4 In August 2019 a final draft iteration of the Strategy was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 1.5 The final version of the strategy was signed off by the Early Help Partnership Group at their next meeting, on the 24th September 2019.

### **2. Background**

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- 2.1 Early help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family early on when a problem emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth through to adulthood and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own.
- 2.2 We have long established the essential need for agencies to work together to meet our communities needs and deliver a strategic approach that ensures right help, right person, right time.
- 2.3 The Strategy aims to ensure Sefton is a good place for children and young people to live and grow up, receive immunisations, have access to a wide range of physical activity opportunities and enjoy overall improving health. The JSNA (which can be viewed here [https://www.sefton.gov.uk/your-council/plans-policies/business-intelligence,-insight,-performance/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-\(jsna\).aspx](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/your-council/plans-policies/business-intelligence,-insight,-performance/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-(jsna).aspx)) highlights areas we need to improve on as obesity rates, alcohol related hospital admissions in under 18's, the higher smoking rates in pregnancy and lower than average breast feeding rates. The number of looked after children in Sefton is rising and was reported as 544 at the last count.

## 3. Summary of the Strategy

- 3.1 The Early Help Strategy describes the vision, principles and partnership commitments required to deliver as follows;

3.1.1 **Vision** - Our ambition is that all children, young people and families in Sefton will be heard, healthy and happy, and aspire to be the best they can be. In Sefton we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We believe that children should grow and achieve within their own families and communities, when it is in their best interests and it is safe for them to do so. By working together, we will develop flexible services which are responsive to children and families' needs.

3.1.2 **Principles** - The principles we will adopt will be based upon the following:

- A system wide approach, with joint, pooled resources and pathways operating across organisational boundaries
- An outcome focussed, system wide approach delivering long term sustainable solutions for individuals and families to secure resilience and independence
- A shift from acute provision to an increase in prevention and early help activity
- Evidence based services that are built around customer need
- Locality based delivery

3.1.3 **Partnership Commitments** - As a partnership, we will:

- Understand those families where children may be at risk of not reaching their full potential and share concerns
- Build a relationship with the family as early as possible, and work with

them to create a family environment that provides children with the best life chances and prevent problems from arising or escalating

- Reduce the number of children and their families requiring support from specialist services.

## **4. The scope of the strategy**

- 4.1 Effective early help requires a whole family approach and encompasses all stakeholders working with children and families. This includes Health, Police, Education, Children's Social Care, Local Authority Early Help, Voluntary and Community organisations and the wider public.
- 4.2 The strategy acknowledges that agencies will be addressing their own distinct needs and meeting a range of key performance indicators against a variety of policy drivers and aims to provide an umbrella framework of key principles that can be applied across all agendas.
- 4.3 Engagement with the strategy by all sectors will require some cultural and operational changes but by doing so, and actively working together to deliver outcomes, we believe that we will positively change the relationship between the community and the public sector in ways which build and strengthen community resilience.
- 4.4 We are still at the beginning of this journey and the strategy is aspirational, but we are building on solid foundations established through the success of existing early intervention work.”
- 4.5 This extract is particularly pertinent as all the agencies listed will need to commit to the strategy for it to be successful. Each service should place as much importance on this strategy, and the accompanying action plan, as they would to their own internal strategies and policies. For real change to be achieved the vision and principles should become embedded within each organisation and their culture. This is challenging due to every agency having competing priorities, but the strategy cannot fully realise lasting improved outcomes without this commitment.
- 4.6 The Strategy will work alongside and align with the Children and Young Peoples Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Strategy will be effective immediately.

## **5 Conclusion.**

- 5.1 The strategy has been through an extensive process of development and co-production. The Early Help Partnership Group are confident of the quality of the document and the positive impact it will help to bring about for our Children, Young People and Families.
- 5.2 A partnership approach will be crucial to ensuring the success and implementation of this Integrated Early Help Strategy. This document has been developed in consultation with the following key partners:

# Agenda Item 6

- North West Boroughs
- DWP Job Centre Plus
- Light for life
- Merseycare
- Merseyside Police
- Parenting 2000
- Probation
- Registered Social Landlords
- Education
- SWACA
- VENUS
- Young Carers
- CVS & other voluntary sector organisations

# Sefton Integrated Early Help Strategy for Children, Young People and Families

2020 - 2025



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# Foreword and Introduction

We are delighted to introduce the revised Early Help strategy for Sefton.

This integrated strategy is central to delivering our shared ambition that all children, young people and families in Sefton will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. It has been co-produced with partners, as we recognise that early help is a collaborative approach, not just an isolated service provision.

The strategy is just the beginning. We realise this strategy cannot be achieved by a single organisation. Working together is important in times of challenge, austerity has seen significant cuts in the money going to public services so there is a need to work differently and achieve better with less. In line with the newly refreshed Children and Young People's Plan we will ensure children are heard, happy, healthy and achieve. We understand that it is our collective responsibility to ensure we can create the right conditions for children, young people and families to thrive in Sefton. We will need to continue to work with partners to embed the strategy, develop skills and knowledge across the workforce, to ensure practitioners are confident with the approach.

We understand that for many children, young people and families problems may emerge. Early help is provided to prevent or reduce the need for statutory or specialist interventions wherever possible. Early help seeks to meet the need, resolve the problem and prevent it becoming entrenched.

As we refresh the strategy, we celebrate the work that has already been done and look forward to the next stage of early help and how much we can achieve together to support children, young people and families across Sefton

**Councillor John Joseph Kelly**  
Cabinet Member

**Vicky Buchanan**  
Interim Director of Children's Social Care and Education



### Our Behaviour



Support Inspiration

Tailor support to the needs of the individual child, young person & family



Support children, young people & families

Constructively challenge when needed



Support each other

Ensure there is sufficient learning & development for the frontline workforce young person and family

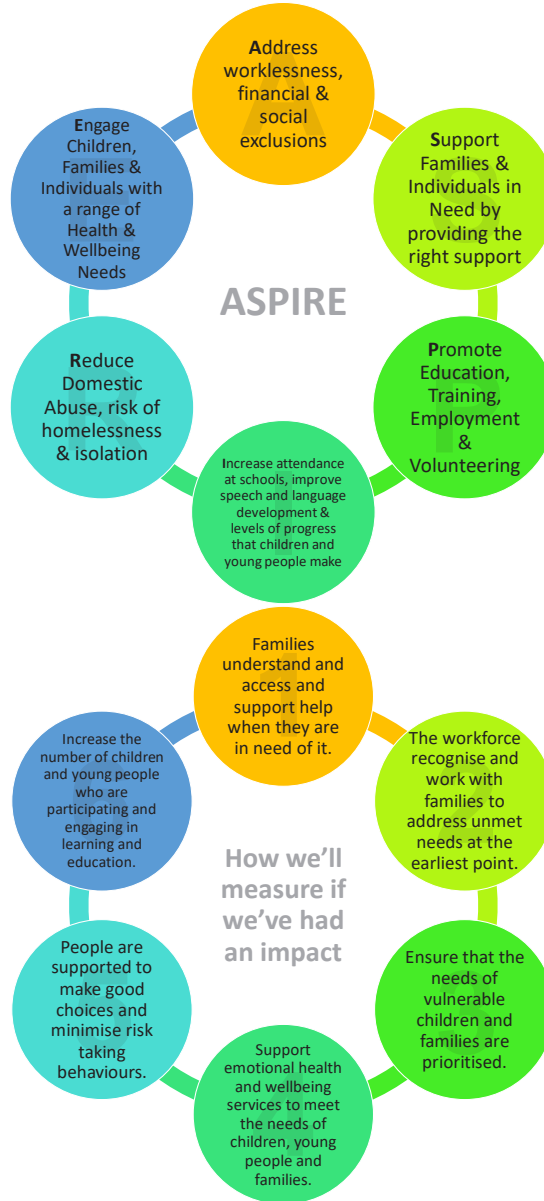


Take responsibility

Create opportunities for success



### Our Model



### Our Passion



Families understand & access help & support when they are in need of it. (uptake of early help offer, increase in EH assessments, referrals, reduction in inappropriate referrals to CSC, decrease in stepping up)

The workforce recognise & work with families to address unmet needs at the earliest point (Timeliness of referrals, length of time on a plan, timeliness of referral to assessment 'drift')



Ensure that the needs of vulnerable children & families are prioritised. (Allocation timeliness, categorising of need, SEND EHC plans, 2 Year old offer, Appropriateness of lead practitioners)

Support emotional health & wellbeing services to meet the needs of children, young people & families. (Health indicators, Commissioning, A&E attendances)



People are supported to make good choices and minimise risk taking behaviours. (Young Offenders, Exploitation, A&E attendances, Bullying)

# Sefton Early Help Strategy





Outcomes plan in place to reduce risk and enable family to be supported by universal services through a consistent Team Around the Family

- Provide play, learning, leisure, culture & sporting opportunities
- Improve social, emotional & mental health and wellbeing
- Increase employment opportunities
- Reduce families at risk of financial exclusion
- Increase participation, volunteering, voice and influence
- Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- Support children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning
- Support schools and settings to improve attendance & develop positive behaviour
- Increase the early identification & prevention of neglect
- Increase the early identification & prevention of criminal and sexual exploitation
- Encourage physical activity & healthy eating
- Promote sexual health & positive relationships
- Minimise the misuse of drugs, alcohol & tobacco
- Promote positive inter-parental relationships
- Improve attainment & close attainment gaps

# Preface

In July 2018, the Government published revised statutory guidance; ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children: guidance to inter-agency working’ to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This sets out the legal requirements that health professionals, social workers, police, education professionals and others working with children must follow. The guidance emphasises that effective

support and safeguarding for children and young people is the responsibility of all professionals working with children and young people and provides advice in support to sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2014, where the primary duties for all agencies are set out.

# Scope of the strategy

Effective early help requires a whole family approach and encompasses all stakeholders working with children and families. This includes Health, Police, Education, Children’s Social Care, Local Authority Early Help, Voluntary Community and Faith organisations and the wider public.

The revised strategy acknowledges that agencies will be addressing their own distinct needs and meeting a range of key performance indicators against a variety of policy drivers and aims to provide an umbrella framework of key principles that can be applied across all agendas.

Engagement with the strategy by all sectors will require some cultural and operational changes but by doing so, and actively working together to deliver outcomes, we believe that we will positively change the relationship between the community and the public sector in ways which build and strengthen community resilience.

We are still at the beginning of this journey and the strategy is aspirational, but we are building on solid foundations established through the success of existing early intervention work.



**Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018**  
*‘Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to: identify children and families who would benefit from early help; undertake an assessment of the need for early help; provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child’*

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# Introduction

Early help and early intervention mean taking action to support a child, young person or their family early on when a problem emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth through to adulthood and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own.

We know from what children and their families tell us that it can be daunting asking for help. Families have told us that they don't want to have to tell their story more than once to lots of different people. This strategy will help us to make every contact count.

The Strategy supports 'right help, from the right person at the right time' principles being adopted across Sefton which will help ensure a cohesive early help offer. The strategy will be delivered by all partners collectively with a commitment to:

Working better together in an open, honest partnership approach with consent of the child and their family

- Identifying strengths and needs and working together to find practical and achievable solutions
- Providing the right information and advice to enable children and their families to make positive changes themselves with support tailored to their needs
- Help children and their families to build protective factors and family resilience to prevent situations recurring.



# What is it like for Children and Young People living in Sefton?



The number of children and young people living in Sefton (0-25 year olds) is 62,100 a fall of 14% (9,990) since 2001.



Sefton is a good place for children and young people to live and grow up. Most receive their immunisations, with rates being close to - or above - the national average.



On the whole our children and young people achieve in school. However, there are still some that do not reach their full potential which impacts on their ability to go into further education, training and to get a job.



The health of children and young people is generally improving and they have access to a wide range of physical activity opportunities.



Almost 20% of our children are obese when they leave primary school at 11 years.

The number of hospital admissions related to alcohol use in under 18's is also higher (though declining) than the England average and childhood smoking rates are average.



There are fewer teenage mothers in the borough than in previous years. Whilst the total number of births in Sefton is not rising, there has been an increase in the number of babies born to non-British born women. These mothers may need additional support to access maternity and other health services.



Sefton mothers are more likely to smoke during pregnancy and less likely to breastfeed their baby at 6 weeks.



Some of our children and young people cannot live with their parents or families; they live with Foster Carers, in children's homes or are adopted. These children and young people are more likely to experience poor life chances



As of November 2019 there are 550 Looked After Children

### If Sefton had 100 children (0-18 years inc.)

As they grown up:

- 19 will live in poverty
- 6 will be low birth weight babies (below (2.5kg)
- 66 will be achieving good development in Early Years Foundation Stage One
- 76 will achieved year 1 phonics
- 93 will make expected progress in primary school in Reading
- 94 will make expected progress in primary school in Writing
- 93 will make expected progress in primary school in Maths
- 58 will achieve A\*-C GCSEs including Maths and English
- 25 will be overweight/obese in reception
- 35 will be overweight/obese by year 6
- 16 will be eligible for free school meals
- 5 will be persistently absent from school
- 13 will live with lone parent families

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### If Sefton’s constituencies had 100 children (0-18 years inclusive)

As they grown up:

	Southport	Central	Bootle
Will live in poverty	15	9	29
Will be low birth weight babies (below (2.5kg)	7	6	8
Will make expected progress in primary school	93	96	92
Will achieve A*-C GCSEs including Maths and English	58	58	52
Will be overweight/obese in reception	22	23	28
Will be overweight/obese by year 6	36	31	39
Will be eligible for free school meals	13	13	28
Will be persistently absent from school	8	7	9
Will live with lone parent families	19	15	31

Detailed analysis of our families and their communities can be found in:

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment  
[https://www.sefton.gov.uk/your-council/plans-policies/business-intelligence,-insight,-performance/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-\(jsna\).aspx](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/your-council/plans-policies/business-intelligence,-insight,-performance/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-(jsna).aspx)

# Vision

Our ambition is that **all children, young people and families in Sefton will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be.**

In Sefton, we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We believe that children should grow and achieve within their own families and communities, when it is in their best interests and it is safe for them to do so. By working together, we will develop flexible services which are responsive to children and families' needs.

Sefton is establishing a vision for the future that will provide:

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A system wide approach, with joint, pooled resources and integrated pathways operating across organisational boundaries

An outcome focussed, system wide approach delivering long term sustainable solutions for individuals and families that enables (to secure) resilience and independence

- A shift from acute provision to an increase in prevention and early help activity
- Evidence based early help interventions that are built around customer need
- Locality based delivery with a trauma informed workforce

Early help is everyone's responsibility; we want children, families, communities and agencies to work together so that families are assisted to help themselves and are supported as soon as a need arises, thereby improving their wellbeing and life chances.

Early help means providing help for children and families as soon as problems start to emerge or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future. If early help is not offered, there is a very real risk that for some children, their social and emotional development will be irrevocably impaired, they will experience significant harm, or their family life will break down.

Although research shows that the most impact can be made during a child's early years, and in particular their first 1001 critical days, early help is not just for very young children, as problems may arise at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. Early help in pregnancy and supporting parents to be good parents is also important. Early help includes targeted services designed to reduce needs or prevent specific problems from becoming entrenched, and there is substantial evidence that early help can make a difference in improving outcomes.

As a partnership, we will:

- Understand those families where children may be at risk of not reaching their full potential and share concerns
- Build a relationship with the family as early as possible, and work with them to create a family environment that provides children with the best life chances and prevent problems from arising or escalating
- Reduce the number of children and their families requiring support from specialist services.

Sefton's Integrated Early Help Strategy has been developed across the partnership and will align with Sefton's vision for the new operating model. This will enable us to provide a joined up, effective early help offer for children aged 0 to 19 years (up to 25 for children with disabilities) and their families. Support services will be provided at a locality level, will be evidence-based and delivered through a shared partnership approach to delivering universal and early help services.

# Early Help Outcomes across the Partnership

Sefton’s Turnaround Programme has been mainstreamed and there is a detailed multi-agency plan in place; the Service Transformation Maturity Plan. This plan will be monitored through the Sefton Early Help Partnership Group and updated regularly. There is strong commitment across the partnership, at all levels, to delivering change which improves the outcomes and experience for children and their families. This maturity model will be used to measure the impact and success of early help alongside **ASPIRE** - the Locality Outcomes Framework.

**ASPIRE** includes:

Sefton are committed to delivering an effective all age partnership early help offer and a more effective whole family systemic locality-based approach to early help.

Through ASPIRE early help priorities have been identified to support the reduction in demand, and impact, upon statutory services by preventing escalation, where safe to do so, to statutory and specialist services. We also focus on families coming to early help from statutory and specialist services, bringing them down the continuum of need and helping them to access, and remain accessing, universal services.

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A

Addressing Worklessness, financial and social exclusions

S

Supporting Families and Individuals in Need by providing the right support

P

Promoting Education, Training, Employment and Volunteering

I

Increasing Attendance at schools, improve speech and language development and levels of progress that children and young people make

R

Reducing Domestic Abuse, risk of homelessness and isolation

E

Engaging Children, Families and Individuals with a range of Health and Wellbeing Needs

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Our key priorities include:



Provide play, learning, leisure, culture & sporting opportunities

Improve social, emotional & mental health and wellbeing



Increase employment opportunities

Improve financial resilience of families and reduce at risk of financial exclusion



Increase participation, volunteering, voice and influence

Ensure children and families feel safe in their communities by tackling and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour



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Support children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning

Support schools and settings to improve attendance & develop positive behaviour



Increase the early identification & prevention of neglect

Increase the early identification & prevention of criminal and sexual exploitation



Encourage physical activity & healthy eating

Promote sexual health & positive relationships



Minimise the misuse of drugs, alcohol & tobacco

Promote positive inter parental relationships



Improve attainment & close attainment gaps



# Guiding Principles for the Early Help Partnership

Problems may emerge at any point through childhood and adolescence. Early help is provided to prevent or reduce the need for statutory or specialist interventions wherever possible. Early help seeks to meet the need, resolve the problem and prevent it becoming entrenched.

Within this context our early help approach is based on a set of shared principles:

1. **Early help is everyone’s responsibility.** All children and young people should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Parents have the primary responsibility to meet the needs of their children and ensure the wellbeing and prosperity of their family. We recognise that parenting can be challenging and asking for help should be seen as a sign of responsibility rather than a parenting ‘failure’. It is essential that when support is required, we all act to provide the right help, from the right worker, at the right time, to improve children’s life chances.

**Wherever possible all children and families’ needs will be met by universal services.** Universal services working with children and adults have a role to ensure families are achieving positive outcomes, to be aware of potential difficulties and act early to prevent needs escalating. Universal services must remain involved even if a child is receiving additional or specialist support to ensure there is a joined up, whole system response to meeting needs.

3. **Listen to children and families and treat them as partners.** In most cases it should be the decision of the parents when to ask for help or advice, although there are occasions when practitioners may need to engage parents actively, and with their consent, help them to prevent problems becoming more serious. All services must keep the child at the centre of the solution, encourage families to harness their own resourcefulness and build supportive community networks, thereby enabling families to develop resilience.

4. **Focus on whole Family working.** Sefton is committed to a culture shift in the way that we engage and work with families. In particular, adopting a ‘whole family approach’ and strongly encouraging multi- agency working. This requires a workforce development strategy that underpins all work with children and families across thresholds. The principles of ‘whole family working’, ‘sustained outcomes’ and building ‘progression’ into the way that we work with families will help to ensure that education, employment and training are a key feature in families’ action plans.
5. **All services will work together with children and families to promote family strengths, build resilience and independence.** This includes effective information sharing and joint working between professionals in children’s and adult’s services to reduce the impact that adult’s problems have on children’s experiences.
6. **Understanding needs.** We can best understand the needs of children and families within their communities and maximise our multi-agency resources using evidence-based approaches, learning from feedback and listening to the voice of the child and family. With robust performance management in place we will be able to evidence positive, sustainable impact and best value.
7. **Ensure clear pathways to support.** We want all families to have easy access to support when it is needed. We will set out clearly what support is available and make it easy for families to contact services themselves.
8. **Everyone will encourage integrated working.** This includes anyone who works with children and families, part or all of the time; whether employed, self-employed or in a voluntary capacity. If you are a nurse, volunteer, teacher, early help worker, sports coach, social worker or any other member of the children’s workforce, integrated working and building strong working relationships concerns you. We want the services supporting children and families to work much more closely together, forging lasting and meaningful relationships that improve the lives of the children of Sefton in the short, medium and long term.

OfSTED, Early Help: Whose Responsibility? 2015

*‘Local authorities and partner agencies delivering early help to children and families should improve the quality and consistency of assessment and plans by ensuring plans are regularly reviewed and that these reviews evaluate the child’s and family’s progress’*

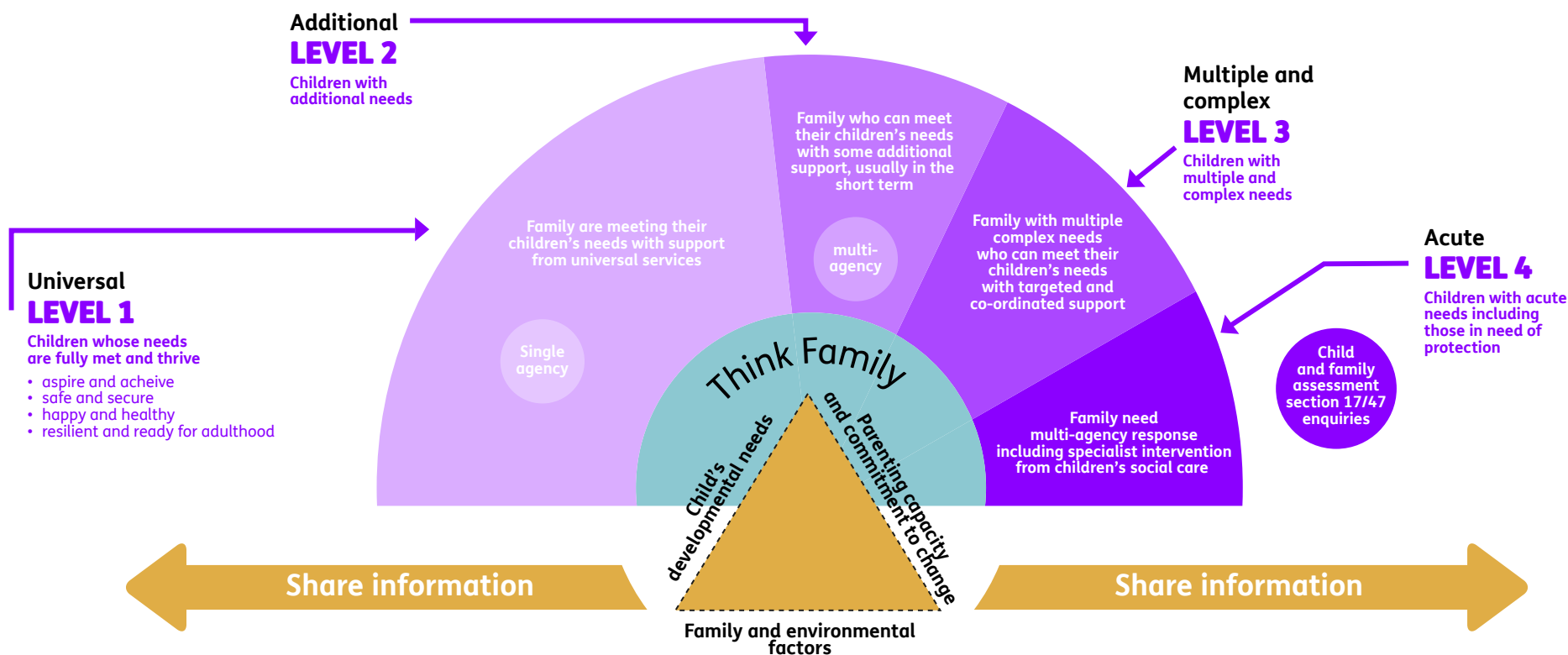
# Our Early Help Approach

Effective support through the ‘right help, from the right worker, at the right time’ principles will improve the relationship between the four levels of need; **Universal, Additional, Multiple and Complex and Acute need.**

Since 2014 we have successfully used a ‘threshold of need’ model to correctly identify the level of need and proportionate support needed. The Level of Need document published in October 2017 is fully implemented across the partnership; this document is however currently under review.

*‘Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments should be evidence-based, be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided and identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed through a statutory assessment...’*

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# Assessment and planning for children and families in Sefton

Identifying needs at an early stage using the Early Help Assessment gives agencies working with children, young people and their families a common tool to understand the needs of the child or young person and their family. It is only once the full needs are identified that the appropriate support can then be put in place. It is an expectation that where the needs of a family have been identified for additional support, an Early Help Assessment for the whole family will be completed, in partnership with the family.

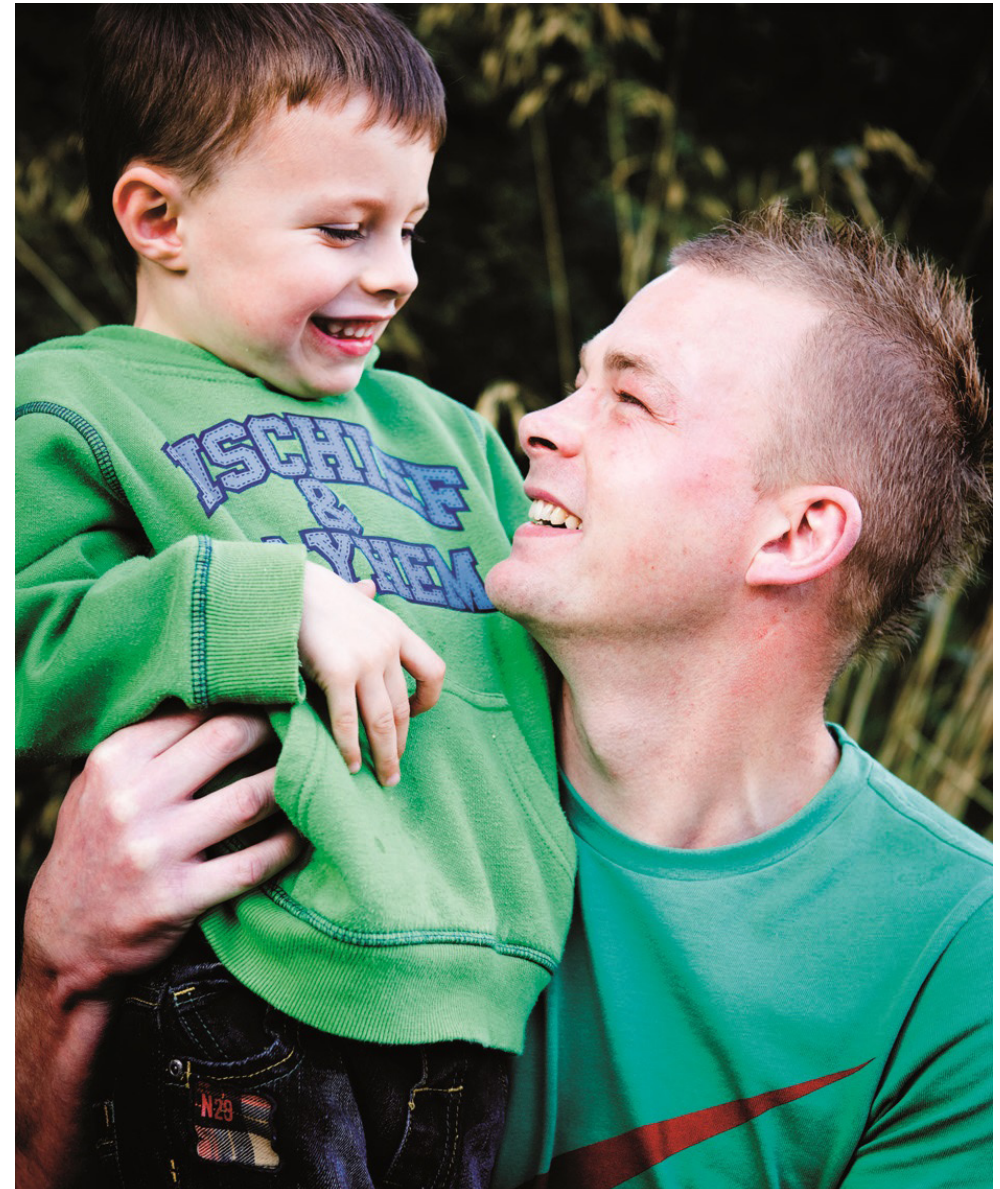
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 makes it clear that safeguarding children and families and promoting their welfare is the responsibility of all practitioners working with children and young people, and that practitioners should understand the criteria for taking action across a continuum of need, including Early Help.

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child

Early help assessments should be evidence-based and co-produced with families, be clear about the action to be taken, and services to be provided, and focuses on improving outcomes.

Within the assessment it is important to highlight the strengths and resources within the family. This is a useful focus when agreeing the action plan and helping other agencies to understand the protective factors within the family and identify





how they can facilitate change. The more strengths present, the lower the risk will be and as support progresses it would be expected that risk factors decrease, and strengths increase.

It is not expected that practitioners will be experts in all areas of the assessment. During the assessment stage the Team Around the Family (TAF) can begin to be established. The practitioner completing the assessment will act as the lead until their role in supporting the family comes to an end. The Lead Worker can call upon their colleagues supporting the family to assist in the assessment process. This ensures that the intervention is proportionate, appropriate, timely and effective.

The Early Help Family Assessment is designed to help families to develop self-help and self-management skills in order to better meet their long term needs and to reduce their reliance on public services.

If the outcome of this assessment is single agency, the work will be completed by a lead worker. If however, the outcome identifies multifaceted problems and need for more than one agency, then a multi-agency action plan should be put in place through the assess-plan-review process.

An ongoing programme of training will be available for all practitioners regarding the assess-plan-review process and associated tools. Partners will be encouraged to complete assessments, which will be quality assured to maintain a high standard.

Other assessment tools are available to complement Early Help Family Assessment. The Outcome Star tools are a suite of assessment tools that can be helpful in evaluating, areas of, need and strength and supporting families.

For instances where neglect has been identified as the primary factor, the Graded Care Profile 2 should be completed with the contribution of practitioners involved and used as the ongoing assessment tool to measure outcomes.

Sefton's Assess-Plan-Review guidance for practitioners; provides them with a guide of how to deliver effective early help support and explains the criteria for providing help to children, young people and their families.

# Sefton Council's Locality Model

Sefton's locality model is a joined-up and collaborative way of working to help our residents achieve improved health, wellbeing and independence.

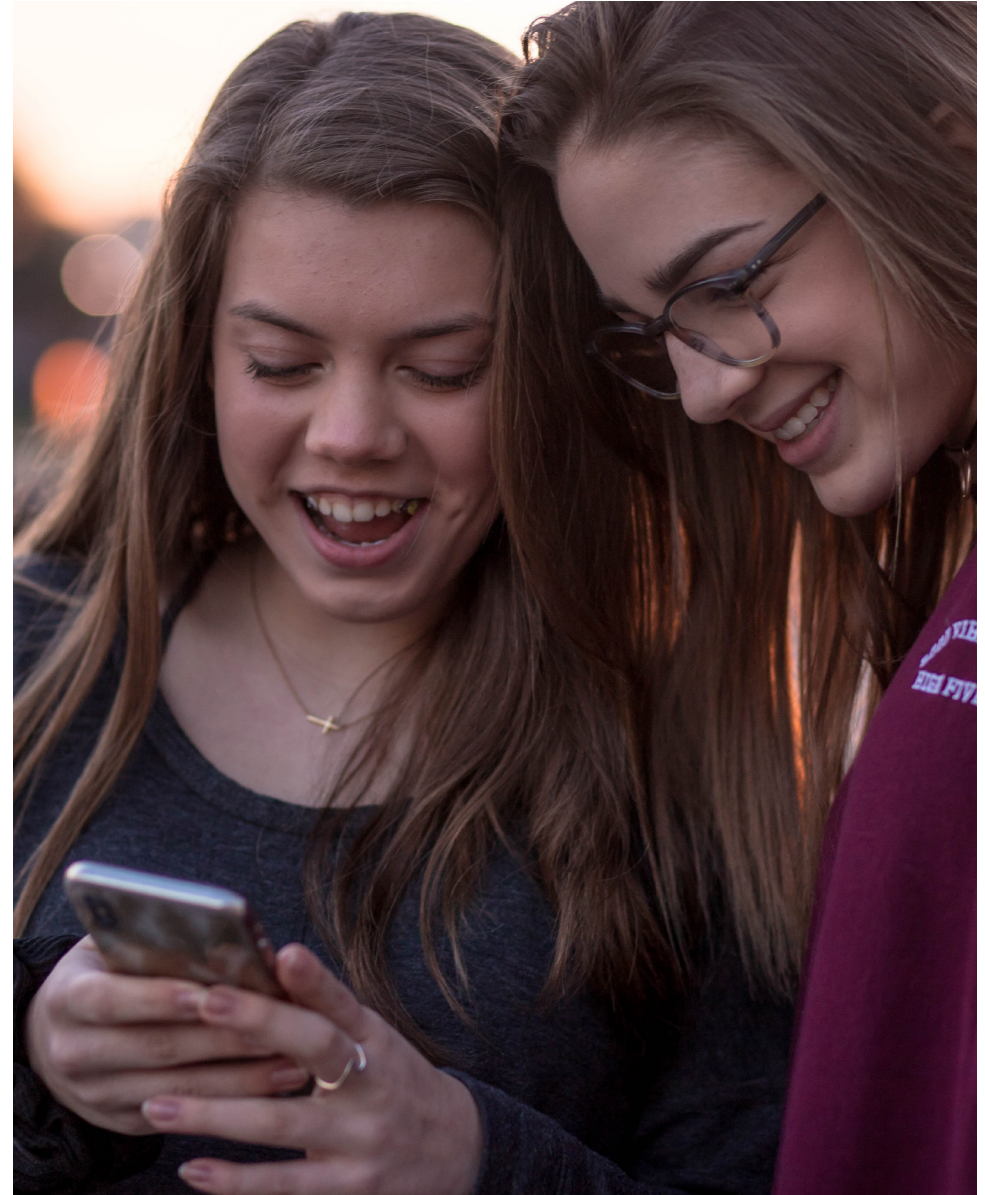
The locality early help model takes a whole family approach which helps to identify what needs to be done and what action needs to be taken, with a focus on strengths. Together we will look at what is going well, what could be better and what needs to happen to achieve improvement.

The localities delivery networks will help to facilitate much stronger collaboration and integration across universal and targeted services. This will include schools, GPs and other health services, the police, voluntary, faith and community sector agencies and a wide range of Council services such as Housing Options and Children's Social Care.

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## Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018

*'Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments should be evidence-based, be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided and identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed through a statutory assessment...'*



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# Delivery model for Early Help

To ensure we have a mature early help system we need to transform the way professionals work with each other and with families, and to develop the right culture, systems and behaviours that support the delivery of the model across the partnership. We have, through the work of the Sefton Safeguarding Children Board, a strong commitment by partners to undertake this transformation and to develop the right culture, systems and behaviours needed to have a mature early help system in place in Sefton.

The key areas for development during 2020-2025 are:

## 1. Establish Effective Leadership, Partnership Working and Governance

There are many positive examples of multi-agency working across Sefton to deliver good outcomes for children and their families and we will continue to expand on this to focus on developing more effective streamlined and joined processes. Delivery and accountability for this Early Help Strategy and the Early Help Performance framework will move from Sefton Safeguarding Board to the Early Help Partnership Group, a sub group of the Health and Well-being Board. The Board will also have oversight of:

- Each partner agency's response to implementation of this Strategy.
- Developing an effective outcome-based performance management and quality assurance framework to measure impact.

## 2. Establish easy to use Early Help online information and advice

In order to help children and their families and practitioners across the partnership to understand the wide range of information and services available we will build on the Sefton local offer website as a central portal to bring information together. This local offer website already provides

information, advice and guidance to the public on a range of family issues, including support from partner agencies. Other online websites, advice centres, telephone helplines or supports and services not linked, will be connected to this so that families and practitioners can access these.

## 3. Develop a suite of tools for early help practitioners to use – ensuring a whole family strength based consistent approach to working with children and families

To accompany the revised early help assessment and plan we will develop a suite of early help tools to assist practitioners to understand the child and family journey, consistently monitor and review children's progress, evaluate the impact of support and interventions offered to improve outcomes and how to measure a family's engagement and their satisfaction level.

## 4. Develop effective and timely processes for sharing information between agencies

To enable early help to be more effective and ensuring the right help, at the right time, we will work with partners to remove barriers to effective working and ensure that families don't need to have a series of assessments before receiving the support they need to. We will:

- Ensure we have in place clear information sharing arrangements
- Ensure we are making the best use of IT systems and portals across agencies and departments

## 5. Refresh structures and pathways that support the access to early help

The Early Help approach is embedded in the Assess-Plan-Review guidance for practitioners and is available to all practitioners through the Sefton Early Help website.

The Council's existing early help services have been realigned to localities and renamed to 'Family Wellbeing' creating a locality based, systemic, family key worker (casework) service to work with children and families deemed as intensive need under the continuum of need, including children deemed on the edge of escalation to statutory services and those stepped down from statutory services.

Parenting programmes will continue to be provided for practitioners working with children and families open to both statutory and early help services.

Locality based Early Help will continue to develop greater integration and alignment with communities and partner agencies, exploring co-location and coordination of processes with early years provisions, health, schools, children and adult substance misuse services and emotional and mental health services those provided by voluntary, community and faith sectors.

This revised strategy also has key links with the approach for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Sefton Children with SEND should be supported at the most appropriate level for their needs at the earliest point when these become apparent. Early help supports this approach and enables coordinated early support for children with SEND and their families.

We will work with commissioners and providers to ensure that early help informs the interventions required in each locality and across the borough and that these are developed in accordance with need and ensuring impact.

The multi-agency Task and Finish Group will develop and agree clear pathways to support access to early help and ensure children, families and practitioners have clear information on how to access early help.

## 6. Develop a skilled and competent workforce across the partnership

Delivery of early help requires effective working between professionals and between services including an understanding of each other's role, responsibility, organisational culture and values. A lead worker forum will be launched to strengthen and enhance the Early Help offer, to build on the delivery of evidence-based practice. This includes:

- Awareness raising to ensure that the 'levels of need relating to risk' are clearly understood and communicated between professionals so that families can move between early help and specialist statutory services at the right time and when required.
- Information sharing and conversations between professionals to identify families who would benefit from early help.
- Implementing whole family approaches whilst keeping the child at the centre and undertaking strength-based assessments of families including effective engagement and conversations with children and their families.
- Holding and managing risk.
- Working with difficult to engage families.
- Embedding evidence-based approaches and interventions across the partnership – including sharing good practice and developing online resources for practitioners.
- Building relationships with and getting to know families.
- Reducing the number of 'hand-offs' and ensuring consistency of lead workers.

- Identifying and engage family support networks.
- Reflecting on their work with families and get different perspectives from managers and peers.
- Access training and learning opportunities to develop skills across the partnership.

The practice models include:

- Restorative based work across the children’s workforce building relationships with children, young people and their families.
- Family Group Conferencing in Early Help and Children’s Social Care.
- Motivational interviewing, focussing on strengths in the individual, and help them explore their own solutions to their behavioural issues.
- Understanding attachment and trauma informed practice across the workforce.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences training.

**7. Develop a joint commissioning framework for early help**

More joined up commissioning will achieve economies of scales savings and reduce duplication of services. The resources saved can be applied to any gaps in service delivery. This will include:

- Enabling, through established governance mechanisms, pooled resources to develop a broader joint commissioning framework across partner agencies to direct the commissioning intentions for early help whole family approaches and maximise best value.

- Develop an intelligence led approach to commissioning that draws together key public funding streams to develop a broader joint commissioning framework across partner agencies to direct the commissioning intentions for prevention and early help
- Ensure all stakeholders, including children and families, have a voice at every stage of the commissioning cycle and provide feedback to measure and review impact and enable redesigned services that better meet the needs of our children and families.





## Conclusion

Our integrated strategy for early help builds on our previous achievements and takes us on a journey with families in Sefton to maximise their opportunities for the future. An implementation plan that supports it will help us to deliver success. Our early help journey will continue in partnership with statutory and voluntary partners, communities, and partnership with children, young people and their families.

### **Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018**

*'A lead practitioner should undertake the assessment, provide help to the child and family, act as an advocate on their behalf and co-ordinate the delivery of support services. A GP, family support worker, school nurse, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs co-ordinator could undertake the lead practitioner role.'*

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# SEFTON EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2020-2025

## VISION

Our ambition is that **all children, young people and families in Sefton will be safe, heard, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be.**

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Early help is everyone's responsibility.
2. Wherever possible all children and families' needs will be met by universal services.
3. Listen to children and families and treat them as partners.
4. Focus on whole Family working.
5. All services will work together with children and families to promote family strengths, build resilience and independence.
6. Understanding needs.
7. Ensure clear pathways to support.
8. Everyone will encourage integrated working.

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## DELIVERY MODEL PRIORITIES

1. Establish Effective Leadership, Partnership Working and Governance
2. Establish easy to use Early Help online information and advice
3. Develop a suite of tools for early help practitioners to use – ensuring a whole family strength based consistent approach to working with children and families
4. Develop effective and timely processes for sharing information between agencies
5. Refresh structures and pathways that support the access to early help
6. Develop a skilled and competent workforce across the partnership
7. Develop a joint commissioning framework for early help

## RISKS/INTERDEPENDENCIES

### Risks:

- Misalignment between partner priorities.
- Day to day service demands hinders progress.
- Reductions in frontline staff/workforce.
- Statutory functions take priority.
- Demands from Children's Social Care impact on capacity to deliver

### Interdependencies:

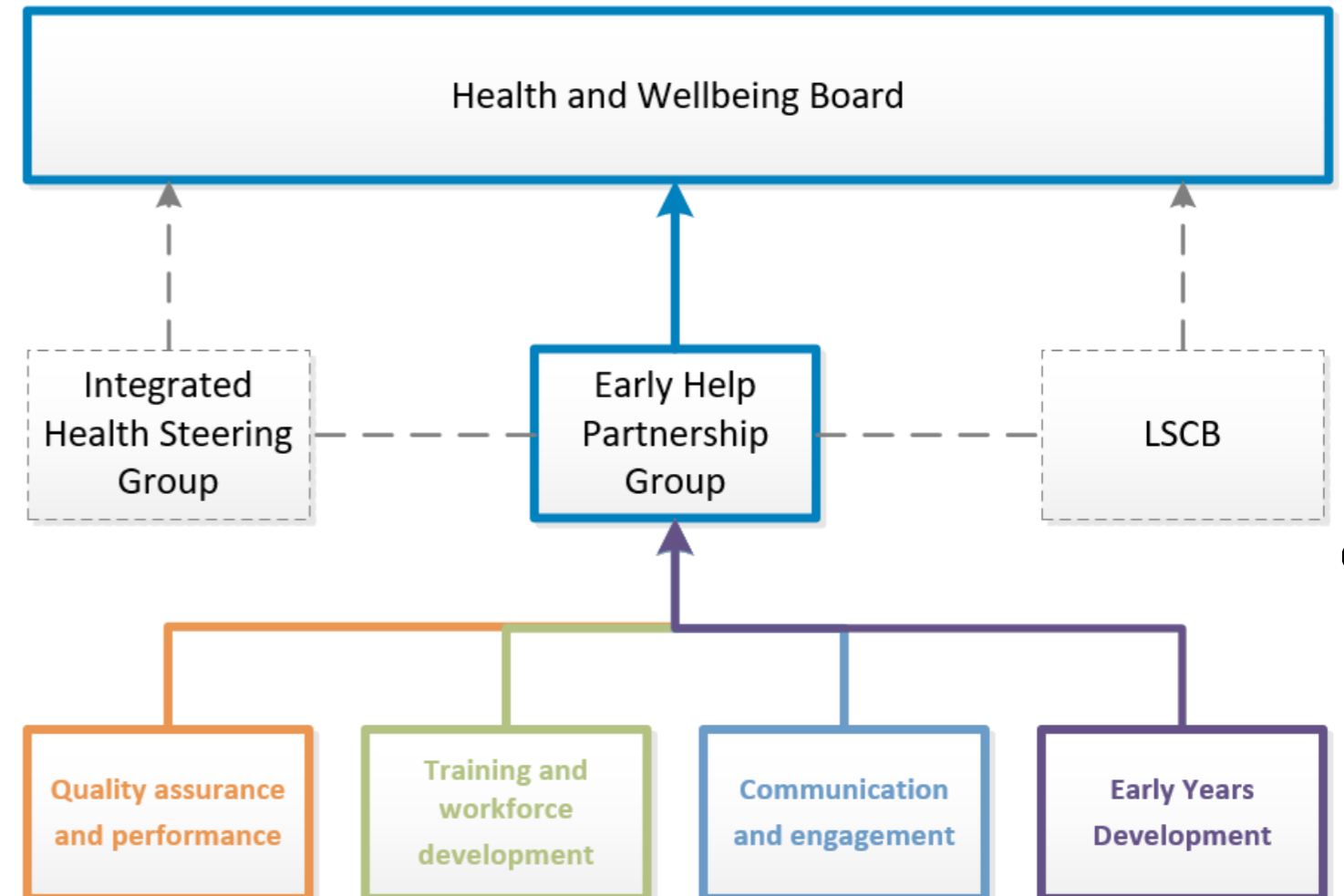
- Partner engagement
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Children and Young People's Plan
- LSCB
- Community Safety Board

## WHY WE NEED A STRATEGY

Effective early help requires a whole family approach and encompasses all stakeholders working with children and families. This includes Health, Police, Education, Children's Social Care, Local Authority Early Help, Voluntary and Community organisations and the wider public.

Engagement with the strategy by all sectors will require some cultural and operational changes but by doing so, and actively working together to deliver outcomes, we believe that we will positively change the relationship between the community and the public sector in ways which build and strengthen community resilience.

## GOVERNANCE



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<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Purchase of Winter Service Facility		
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Highways & Public Protection	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Localities		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

## Summary

To seek approval for the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer in conjunction with the Head of Highways and Public Protection to enter into an agreement to purchase the depot currently used to deliver the winter gritting service (winter service facility), located at Heysham Road, Netherton from the existing term maintenance contractor and agree an extension to the existing contract. This facility has replaced the previous council owned facility which was no longer fit for purpose as it did not meet the requirements of the Council's statutory duty and could now be disposed of.

## Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that:

- (1) The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer in conjunction with the Head of Highways and Public Protection be authorised to enter into an agreement to purchase the winter service facility located at Heysham Road, Netherton from the existing term maintenance contractor (Graysons H&E Services) as detailed within this report.
- (2) The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer in conjunction with the Head of Highways and Public Protection be authorised to vary the existing contract to include a 20% reduction in tendered rates, as agreed with the existing contractor and extends the existing winter service contract for a period of 4 years. Provision for this extension is included within the existing contract.
- (3) The Head of Corporate Resources in conjunction with the Head of Highways and Public Protection be authorised to dispose of the council owned site of the former winter facility on Damfield Lane, Maghull in accordance with the Council's Asset disposal policy.

## Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The purchase of the facility will save revenue funding over the remaining 9 years of the existing contract and allow the Council to consider alternative methods of procuring or providing the statutory winter service after that point, including bringing the service in-house.

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

The alternative is not to purchase the facility and therefore not take advantage of the revenue rate reductions offered by the contractor. Furthermore, at the completion of the existing contract, the Council will have to re-procure the contract to include the provision of a winter facility, thus potentially paying for the facility twice.

Based on the above and the financial analysis contained within the report, the 'do nothing' option would place the Council in an adverse financial position due to the need to contract its own facility and fail to take advantage of the 20% revenue savings.

A further option would be for the Council to build its own facility at the end of the contract which would be excessively expensive in comparison to the proposed recommendation in this report.

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

### **(A) Revenue Costs**

There will be a 20% saving on revenue rates for the remainder of the contract. This is estimated at £191k per annum based historical activity. This level of saving would cover the associated borrowing and increased facility costs of this proposal.

### **(B) Capital Costs**

There will be a capital cost of £2.6m. This will be funded from Public Works Loan Board borrowing. The period of borrowing will be linked to the useful life of the asset, 25 years, and will be met by the annual saving on contract rates and thus will be contained within the services revenue budget.

## **Implications of the Proposals:**

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b> All resource implications are detailed in the main body of the report
<b>Legal Implications:</b> See body of report
<b>Equality Implications:</b> There are no equality implications.

## **Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Not applicable
Commission, broker and provide core services: This proposal strengthens the Council's resilience as, in the event of provider failure, it will own a fit for purpose facility from which an alternative provider could deliver the service from. It will allow the Council to procure the service in future without the cost of provision of a facility or to bring the service in-house.
Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable



Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The Council will be able to dispose of the previous facility for redevelopment, as it is no longer fit for purpose in accordance with statutory guidance. That land is identified as a housing site within the Local Plan.
Greater income for social investment: The proposal includes a reduction in revenue rates paid to the contractor of 20% which would potentially cover associated borrowing and increased facility costs.
Cleaner Greener Not applicable

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

### (A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5886/19) has been consulted and comments and views have been included within this report.

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4070/19) has been consulted and comments and views have been included within this report.

There have also been internal consultations with Executive Directors and property colleagues to ensure the robustness of the proposal.

### (B) External Consultations

Discussions have taken place with the service contractor who is supportive of this proposal

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

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jerry McConkey – Service Manager Transportation & Highway Infrastructure
Telephone Number:	0151 934 4222
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:Jerry.mcconkey@sefton.gov.uk">Jerry.mcconkey@sefton.gov.uk</a>

### Appendices:

None.

### Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## 1.0 Background

1.1 The Council has historically operated its own winter service facility based at Damfield Lane, Maghull (at the junction with A59 Northway). In 2013, the

# Agenda Item 7

Government introduced additional statutory guidance which is extremely complex and includes a revised requirement for the storage of reserve salt stocks to improve the Council's resilience in extreme weather conditions.

- 1.2 The Council's existing facility became unsuitable at this point as it is of insufficient size to accommodate the increased stocks. The service contractor has stored the additional salt at their own premises since that time in order that the Council meets its statutory requirements.
- 1.3 Due to the above, when the Council retendered the winter service contract, it included the provision of a purpose-built facility which would meet the requirements of the statutory guidance and protect the Council from risk.
- 1.4 The contract has been awarded for 6 years with a possible extension of up to 4 years (4 x 1). The new facility is located on Heysham Road Bootle.

## **2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 It is proposed to purchase the newly built winter service facility from the service contractor. This has been discussed with the contractor who is amiable to sell the facility subject to the Council confirming the full contract extension (4 years) now. As a result, the contract will run for 10 years from the start date in 2018. As part of this proposal the contractor has agreed to reduce his tendered rates by 20%, subject to contractual price fluctuation clauses. Such clauses are common to all Engineering Contracts let by the Council and any fluctuations are traditionally contained within revenue budget allocations.
- 2.2 The incumbent contractor has delivered this service to the Council constantly since 1999 and has been successful on each tendering exercise since that date.
- 2.3 It is proposed to dispose of the previous winter facility to gain a capital receipt for the Council.
- 2.4 Upon completion of the contract, the Council will be able to consider bringing the service in-house, or retendering the contract. Either way the existing cost implications of having to pay for the facility will no longer be a requirement as the Council will own its own facility. Any subsequent retender will only have the requirement of supply of gritting vehicles and drivers which will dramatically reduce the costs to the Council.

## **3.0 Cost Implications**

- 3.1 *Headline Financial Analysis* - the capital cost is £2.6m. This will be funded from Public Works Loan Board borrowing. The period of borrowing will be linked to the useful life of the asset, 25 years, resulting in annual repayments of £146k (based on borrowing rates as at Nov 2019). In addition, there are increased costs of running the new facility, due to its larger footprint, of £44k per annum.

The estimated annual savings are £191k based on the average contract costs over the past 10 years which would therefore cover the borrowing and increased facility costs.

3.2 *Detailed Acquisition Costs* - the contractor has agreed to sell the newly constructed facility to the Council for the sum of £2,500,000. The purchase will also require an additional £132k for acquisition fees, broken down as follows:

- Stamp duty land tax £115,000
- Legal fees £10,000
- Clerk of Works/Surveyors £2,000
- Asset Management fees £5,000

Subject to approval, a supplementary Capital estimate for this proposal is included within the Growth and Strategic Investment Cabinet Report that is also on this agenda. If Cabinet approve the acquisition, this will be reported to Council within the Growth and Strategic Investment Report.

3.3 The contractor has provided a full breakdown of the construction costs of the facility which have been checked and substantiated by Property Services colleagues as follows:

*'We would reference the BCIS cost data (based on 4Q 2019) which provides a median unit cost rate of £1,500 per m<sup>2</sup> for a similar building type and size in this location which results in a provisional cost estimate of about £2.56 million.'* This excludes the cost of land purchase which is currently estimated at £350k.

3.4 *Detailed Borrowing Costs* - based on an estimated useful life of the facility of 25 years, over this period the Council would borrow £2.632m. This would result in a repayment per annum of £146k and a total outlay of £3.7m.

3.5 The disposal of the existing depot is expected to generate a capital receipt of £250k and this will be allocated to the Council's Single Capital Pot.

3.6 *Detailed Revenue Savings Assessment* - an analysis has been undertaken of winter gritting operations over the last 10 years. Applying these numbers to the 20% rate saving would indicate potential revenue savings of between £190k and £280k per annum. A risk analysis has also been undertaken.

## **4.0 Five Case Business Model**

### **4.1 Strategic**

The Council needs to plan for the future and take initiatives to reduce future revenue costs. The facility meets the requirements of government statutory guidance and ownership of the facility will place the Council in the best possible position to make strategic decisions on the future procurement and delivery of the service. Purchase of the facility will provide a cost-effective solution for the Council, coupled with ongoing revenue savings and opportunities for the future.

### **4.2 Economic**

The Council needs access to the specified facility. The current contract allows the contractor to recover the cost of the facility through his tendered revenue rates. At

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the end of the contract, the Council would have to either retender in the same manner or build its own facility. By purchasing the facility now, the Council will benefit from a 20% reduction in tendered rates for the remainder of the contract which will offset the prudential borrowing payments and additional running costs. The proposal offers the Council excellent value for money now, with the opportunity for continuing revenue savings for the future. In addition, should the Council decide to retender the contract at the end of the current contract, it can do so based on ownership of the facility. This will generate a substantially lower tender value which would only require the provision of vehicles and drivers.

## 4.3 Commercial

Purchase of the facility will allow the Council, should it wish to, the option to utilise the facility for its own use. This could include bringing the service back in house at the end of the contract, rather than retender it, and also potentially offer the use of the facility to other Liverpool City Region Combined Authority member authorities. The facility has been offered to the Council for a purchase price of £2.5m (with an additional cost to the Council of £132k in acquisition fees) in return the Council will grant the 4-year contract extension now, and the contractor will reduce his tendered rates by 20% for the remainder of the contract, subject to existing contract price fluctuation clauses.

## 4.4 Financial

The cost to purchase the facility is £2.62m funded through prudential borrowing. Professional property colleagues have confirmed that should the Council decide to build its own facility at the end of the contract, the cost at 2019 rates would be £2.56m plus the cost of land purchase (likely to be at least £350k). Furthermore, this option for the Council to build its own facility would not generate the 20% revenue saving which is estimated to be between £191k and £280k per annum over the remainder of the contract.

### 4.4.1 *Savings on Maintenance and Running Costs on the Existing Depot*

The existing Depot, which is recommended for disposal attracts the following annual expenditure:

- Water rates - £500.00
- Business rates - £3,400.00
- Electricity costs – £1,000.00
- Maintenance - £5,000.00 (average)
- **Total existing annual expenditure £9,900.00** (These costs are currently funded from the existing revenue budget for Winter Service)

### 4.4.2 *Additional Maintenance and Running Costs of the New Facility*

Purchase of the new winter facility will attract the following costs (which will be offset by the disposal of the existing depot)

- Business rates - £44,140 (This assumes a rateable value of £90,000 and a non-domestic rating multiplier of £0.491)
- Maintenance and Utilities – £10,000 (This is based on the existing maintenance and utilities for the existing facility, factored up due to the larger footprint)

- **Total annual expenditure £54,140** (these costs will be funded from the existing revenue budget for Winter Service)

#### 4.4.3 Financial Summary

##### **Costs**

£2,500,000	Acquisition Cost (Land & Building) (One Off)
£132,000	Acquisition Fees (One Off)
£54,140	Estimated New Facility Maintenance / Premises Costs (Per Annum)

##### **Benefits**

£250,000	Capital Receipt from Sale of Existing Site (One Off) (subject to Cabinet decision)
£350,000	Estimated Residual Land Value
£190,861	Estimated 20% Annual Contract Saving (Based on 10 Year Actual)
£9,900	Existing Facility Premises Costs (Per Annum)

#### 4.4.4 Options Appraisal

The Net Present Value (NPV) appraisal technique has been used to assess the financial viability of both the recommended option to purchase the facility and the option for the Council to build a facility on a new site. NPV represents the return / gain on initial investment in present day terms in line with the Treasury Green Book appraisal methodology using a standard discount factor of 3.5%. A positive NPV indicates that a project is worth undertaking from a financial point of view. The output from the appraisal has been captured in the table below.

Options	Option Description	NPV	IRR	Payback (Yrs.)	Discounted Payback
1	Purchase (Recommended Option)	£182,634	4.15%	16.25	24.13
2	Council Build	-£249,596	2.72%	19.19	No Payback

The recommended option results in a positive NPV of £0.18m indicating that the project is worth undertaking from a financial point of view. This represents a gain of 7.31% on the initial purchase price investment of £2.5m.

The Council build option produces a negative NPV which indicates that this would not be worth undertaking from a financial point of view.

#### 4.4.5 Sensitivity Analysis

This financial appraisal also considers sensitivity analysis to assess the impact of changes to key assumptions in the business case. The key points from the sensitivity analysis are:

- **Annual Contract Savings** – Annual contract savings have been calculated at 20% of the average cost for the last 10 years. These are assumed at £190,861 per annum. These would need to fall to £179,780 per annum to produce a negative NPV (a reduction of 5.8%). However, given the saving is based on the overall contract spend, then if the contract saving were to reduce, for example

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due to improved weather conditions in any year, then this would be fully offset by the overall reduction in cost.

- **New Facility Premises Costs** – The annual premises costs have been estimated at £54k and the higher cost compared to the current facility (£9.9k per annum) is due to the increased footprint and the prudent approach taken to cost estimation. These costs would need to increase by over 20% to produce a negative NPV. Ongoing revenue costs such as these would be fully reviewed and understood prior to the purchase.
- **Acquisition Fees** – Acquisition fees would need to increase from 5.3% to 13% i.e. from £132k to £315k to produce a negative NPV for the proposal. Fees will be formalised and understood prior to purchase to ensure that fees do not escalate above this point.

The detailed sensitivity analysis is as follows:

Sensitivity Group	Sensitivity Description	Projected Net Present Value (NPV) £000s	% Discounted Return / (-Loss) on Initial Investment %
Recommended Option (25 Year Analysis)		183	7.31%
Contract Saving Sensitivities	Annual Contract Saving Based on Actual Costs Incurred in the Last 10 Years Less 10%	(132)	-5.28%
	Annual Contract Saving Based on Worst Year in the Last 10 Years	1,599	63.95%
New Facility Premises Cost Sensitivities	Premises Costs Increased by 10%	93	3.74%
	Premises Costs Increased by 20% [Breakeven]	0	0.00%
	Premises Costs Increased by 30%	(85)	-3.40%
Acquisition Fee Sensitivities	Acquisition Fees Increased from 5.3% to 7%	140	5.59%
	Acquisition Fees Increased from 5.3% to 13% [Breakeven]	0	0.00%
	Acquisition Fees Increased from 5.3% to 20%	(185)	-7.41%

## 4.5 Management

Ownership of the facility will allow the Council to manage and control this significant asset, controlling its use, both for the existing contract but more importantly for future service delivery and opportunity. The Council will manage the facility and the contractor will have indemnity insurance and be liable for any damage caused in the delivery of the service. This has been the case historically when utilising the existing depot at Damfield lane.

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<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Procurement of Payroll System		
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Corporate Resources	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Cabinet Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member, Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

## Summary:

This report sets out the background to the Council's current arrangements for the Payroll Software System. It also seeks authority to commence a procurement exercise for the provision of a new contract for a replacement Payroll Software System.

## Recommendation(s):

- (1) That the Head of Corporate Resources be authorised to conduct either an OJEU compliant procurement process or a mini competition using an OJEU advertised Framework Agreement (e.g. Crown Commercial Services Framework RM3821) for a Payroll Software System. If an OJEU Compliant Procurement Process is used, then the proposal would be to enter into a contract for a maximum of 7 years of an initial 5 year period with an option to extend for up to 2 periods of 12 months. If a mini competition is used, then the proposal would be to enter into a contract for a period of four years.
- (2) That the Head of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be granted delegated authority to award the contract, resulting from the procurement exercise and to award any extension thereof.

## Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

1. The current contract relative to Payroll Software Solution is due to end on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.
2. To have appropriate and best value contractual arrangements in place for the Payroll function by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

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

There is no provision within the existing contract to extend beyond 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Consequently, a procurement exercise is required.

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

### (A) Revenue Costs

It is anticipated that the cost of the contract for the Payroll Software System will be within the current budget available on the basis of the proposed procurement route detailed later within this report. The maximum contract is five years with an optional extension period of up to a maximum of two additional twelve month periods.

### (B) Capital Costs

**Based upon initial investigation it is not anticipated that there will be any capital costs to be incurred.**

## Implications of the Proposals:

### Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

Staff from the Corporate Personnel, the ICT Client Team and the Procurement Team will be required to develop a specification and tender documentation detailing the Council's requirements for the Payroll Software Solution. Legal colleagues will provide specific advice throughout the procurement exercise.

Depending on the outcome of the procurement exercise, there is the potential requirement for staff from Corporate Personnel and the ICT Client Team to develop and implement transition plans, e.g. user acceptance testing, staff training and the development of new operational working procedures.

### Legal Implications:

A Payroll Software System enables the Council to meet its statutory obligations in terms of service delivery and statutory reporting requirements. The Council must also comply with procurement legislation and associated legal terms and conditions.

### Equality Implications:

There are no equality implications.

## Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: N/A
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: N/A
Commission, broker and provide core services: This proposal will ensure that a core element of the council's activity can be delivered
Place – leadership and influencer: N/A
Drivers of change and reform: N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A



Cleaner Greener N/A
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## What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

### (A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5876/19) and Chief Legal & Democratic Officer (LD4060/19) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

### (B) External Consultations

Not applicable

## Implementation Date for the Decision

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

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Paul Cunningham</b>
Telephone Number:	<b>0151 934 3209</b>
Email Address:	<b>Paul.cunningham@sefton.gov.uk</b>

## Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

## Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

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## **BACKGROUND**

1. Cabinet is aware that the Council outsourced a number of services, including Payroll Services, to an external provider for a 10 year period between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018.
2. During the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018, the external provider managed Payroll Services.
3. At the point at which the Payroll service was outsourced, a contract with a Software System provider was in place. Therefore, this contract novated across from the Council to the external provider of Payroll Services on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008.
4. Subsequently, the contract for the Payroll Software expired. The expiry of this contract occurred during the period of time that Payroll was outsourced.
5. As a result, the Payroll provider entered into a new contractual relationship with the same Payroll Software Company. This provided stability and continuity of service.
6. However, the contract for the provision of Payroll Software was designed to be coterminous with the Council's partnership arrangement with the external provider and thus ended on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019.
7. This presented the Council with significant risk at the point of service transfer, therefore it was agreed that the Payroll provider would extend the contract with the Payroll Software Company for a limited period of time with no provision for an extension. This was done to mitigate the immediate risk to the Council.
8. The intention was that the Payroll provider would extend the contract with the Payroll Software Company for a period of three years to run from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.
9. Cabinet are therefore requested to provide approval to begin a procurement exercise for the provision of a Payroll Software System that will come into operation from 1 October 2021.

## **PROPOSED PROCUREMENT PROCESS**

### **Timescale**

10. There are two procurement routes that are available to the Council. This will either take the form of an OJEU compliant procurement process or a mini competition using an OJEU advertised Framework Agreement (e.g. Crown Commercial Services Framework RM3821) for a Payroll Software System.

If an OJEU Compliant Procurement Process is used, then the proposal would be to enter into a contract for a maximum of 7 years of an initial 5 year period with an option to extend for up to 2 periods of 12 months. If a mini competition is used, then the proposal would be to enter into a contract for a period of four years. These options are currently being evaluated to determine the most appropriate

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approach for the Council and once conducted will be the subject of a report to the Cabinet Member Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services

11. Should Cabinet approve the request to enter into a Procurement exercise, then the following indicative timeline would be adhered to:

January 2020 – September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop Service Specification and tender document</li><li>• Develop basis for evaluation</li><li>• Establish terms and conditions</li></ul>
September 2020	Publish opportunity in the OJEU Contracts finder and on The Chest or if using a Framework Agreement, publish a mini competition on the chest.
Oct-Nov 2020	Evaluation and Moderation of Bids
December 2020	Award Contract
January-September 2021	Implementation and Mobilisation of Contract,
October 2021	Contract Start Date

11. The contract will be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT). A qualitative dimension, as well as a price, will be taken into account which reaching an award decision.

## **Governance**

12. With regards to governance of this Procurement exercise, it is envisaged that the Head of Corporate Resources would appoint a Board who would have responsibility for providing overall strategic leadership for the exercise. It is envisaged that the Chief Personnel Officer and senior officers from the ICT Client Team, Procurement, Legal and Finance would be represented.
13. A Project team would also be established. The Project team would have responsibility for developing a draft Service Specification and establishing the basis of evaluation. This would be subject to approval by the Board.

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# Agenda Item 9

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet  Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)  Council	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020  14 January 2020  23 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme 2020/21, Council Tax Base 2020/21 and Changes to Council Tax Discounts for Empty Homes		
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Corporate Resources	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

## **Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide details of the review of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20 and to recommend that there is no change to the scheme for 2020/21 for working age claimants.

The report also asks that Cabinet recommend to Council changes to discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes discounts following the outcome of a public consultation, and an additional increase to the Council Tax long-term Empty Homes Premium following a consultation exercise that took place in 2018.

In addition, the report also asks Cabinet to recommend to Council an increase in the Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) budget from £150,000 to £170,000 from 2020/21 onwards.

Finally, the report provides an updated Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish area for 2020/21.

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## **Recommendations:**

### **Cabinet:**

- (1) Note the contents of the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20.
- (2) Recommend to Council that there are no changes to the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 for working age claimants.
- (3) Note the outcome of the recent consultation and equality impact assessment on the proposed changes to Council Tax Empty Homes discounts as set out in Annex B.
- (4) Recommend that Council approves changes to discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes discounts from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, to reduce the discount on uninhabitable properties from 50% to 0%, and to reduce the discount for the first month that a property is empty from 100% to 50%.
- (5) Recommend that Council approves a change to the long-term Empty Homes Premium from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, to increase the premium charged on properties that have been empty for 5 years or more from 100% to 200%.
- (6) Recommend that Council approves the relevant 2020/21 Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish Area as set out in Annex A.
- (7) Recommend that Council approves an increase in the Exceptional Hardship Fund budget from £150,000 to £170,000 from 2020/21 onwards.

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

- (1) That the report be noted.

### **Council:**

- (1) Note the contents of the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20.
- (2) Approve that there are no changes made to the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 for working age claimants.
- (3) Note the outcome of the recent consultation and equality impact assessment on the proposed changes to Council Tax Empty Homes discounts as set out in Annex B.
- (4) Approve the changes to discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes discounts from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to reduce the discount on uninhabitable properties from 50% to 0%, and to reduce the discount for the first month that a property is empty from 100% to 50%.
- (5) Approve a change to the long-term Empty Homes Premium from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, to increase the premium charged on properties that have been empty for 5 years or more from 100% to 200%.

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- (6) Approve the relevant 2020/21 Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish Area as set out in Annex A.
- (7) Council approve an increase in the Exceptional Hardship Fund budget from £150,000 to £170,000 from 2020/21 onwards.

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## **Reasons for the Recommendations:**

### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Each financial year the Council must consider whether to revise or replace its local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council must approve and adopt the 2020/21 Council Tax Reduction scheme by 11 March 2020, as set out in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2017.

This report comments on the impact of various changes made to the scheme in recent years together with the impact of the Government's Welfare Reform changes. After consideration of the factors outlined later in the report it is proposed that the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 remains unchanged for working age claimants.

### **Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts**

Reducing the level of support offered by the current discretionary local empty homes discounts may encourage owners of empty homes to bring them into use more quickly. It would remove the current favourable treatment of empty homes, encourage better use of local housing stock, bring the Council's policy more into line with other local Councils in the Liverpool City Region who do not offer discretionary empty homes discounts and provide a much-needed increase in council tax income.

### **Long-term Empty Homes Premium**

Increasing the long-term empty homes premium is intended to encourage owners to bring them back into use. Recent legislation allows the Council to increase the premium on properties that have been empty for longer than 5 years to 200% from 1st April 2020. Any additional income raised from the premium will help support the provisions of Council services.

### **Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)**

The Council set the current budget of £150,000 in 2013/14. Since then the average Band D council tax charge in Sefton has increased by 25.6%. To keep pace with the increases in council tax the fund would have had to be increased by £38,500 in 2019/20. The fund has also been utilised to meet the cost of discretionary discounts awarded to care leavers since 2018/19. These discounts are costing approximately £19,000 in 2019/20. The suggested increase of £20,000 would offset the cost of the care leavers discounts in 2020/21 and restore some of the capacity of the EHF to alleviate the burden of council tax charges on CTRS claimants who are suffering exceptional hardship.

### **Council Tax Base**

In accordance with Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended, the Council is required to set a tax base for both Sefton Council and for each Parish Area for 2020/21 before 31st January 2020.



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

### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

The Council last revised its local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2018/19 following a public consultation process. The changes introduced in April 2018 continue to address the Council's priorities to minimise the impact on vulnerable residents, by striking a balance between dealing with Council priorities whilst supporting those experiencing financial hardship. As a result, the changes made in 2018 continue to be fully monitored and evaluated. No alternative options for change have been considered for 2020/21.

### **Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts**

The Council could choose not to make changes to discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes discounts. This approach would not provide an additional incentive for owners of empty homes to bring them back into use more quickly. A lower level of Council Tax income would be generated and a higher level of savings would need to be achieved in 2020/21.

### **Long-term Empty Homes Premium**

The Council could choose not to increase the long-term empty homes premium; however, this would not provide any further incentive for owners of long-term empty homes to bring them back into use.

### **Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)**

The Council could choose not to increase the EHF budget. However, this would restrict the Council's capacity to alleviate the burden of council tax payments on those CTRS claimants experiencing exceptional hardship in 2020/21 and in future years.

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

#### **(A) Revenue Costs**

### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21**

There would be no additional revenue implications because of a decision to retain the current scheme. The cost of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been reflected in the Council Tax base.

### **Proposed changes to discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes discounts and Long-term Empty Homes Premium**

This report includes a number of proposals that would have an impact on the Council's tax base and forecast Council Tax income if they are approved. These include:

- Reducing the current level support offered by the discretionary Council Tax empty property discount from 100% to 50% (for up to 1 month).
- Removing the discretionary uninhabitable property discount.

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- Increasing the empty homes premium charged on properties that have been left empty for longer than 5 years from 100% to 200%.

## **Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)**

Increasing the current EHF budget from £150,000 to £170,000 will cost £20,000 in 2020/21 and in future years. This budget is held in the General Fund so Sefton Council meets the full cost of discounts awarded under the scheme.

If Members agree the proposals within this report the financial implications will be outlined in the forthcoming budget reports for 2020/21.

## **Council Tax Base**

Changes to the Council Tax base will have an impact on the level of Council Tax income transferred from the Collection Fund to the Council's General Fund in 2020/21. It will also impact on the amounts due to the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Fire and Rescue Service, and the Combined Authority.

The following table shows the impact of net changes in the year, forecast growth, and proposed changes to discretionary discounts and premiums, on the Council Tax base between 2019/20 and 2020/21, based on the 2019/20 Council Tax Band D charge:

<b>Council Tax Income</b>	<b>Sefton Council £000</b>	<b>Police &amp; Crime £000</b>	<b>Fire &amp; Rescue £000</b>	<b>Combined Authority £000</b>
Tax Base 2019/20	132,027	16,981	6,629	1,597
Net changes	22	3	1	0
Forecast Growth	478	61	24	6
Reducing the Empty Property Discount to 50%	342	44	17	4
Removing the Uninhabitable Property Discount	280	36	14	3
Increasing the Long-term Empty Homes Premium	178	23	9	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>133,325</b>	<b>17,148</b>	<b>6,694</b>	<b>1,613</b>

## **(B) Capital Costs**

No capital costs applicable.

## **Implications of the Proposals:**

### **Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):**

The proposed changes to discretionary Council Tax empty homes discounts and the long-term empty homes premium is forecast to increase Council Tax income.

### **Legal Implications:**

#### **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

By Section 5 of Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012) for each financial year each billing authority must:

- a. Consider whether to revise its Council Tax Reduction Scheme or to replace it with another scheme
- b. Make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement is to have effect.
- c. If any revision to a scheme, or any replacement scheme, has the effect of reducing or removing a reduction to which any class of person is entitled, the revision or replacement must include such transitional provision relating to that reduction or removal as the authority thinks fit.
- d. Before revising its scheme or making a replacement scheme, an authority must:
  - i. Consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it.
  - ii. Publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
  - iii. Consult other such persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

#### **Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts**

The Council has discretionary authority to set local discounts for empty homes under S.11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by Section 11 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012.

#### **Council Tax Empty Property Homes Premium**

The statutory provisions which empower the Council to effect the proposed changes are set out in this report.

To comply with public law principles of good decision making, a consultation on the proposals has taken place and the outcomes are detailed in this report.

### **Equality Implications:**

The equality Implications have been identified and mitigated.

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## **Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable: The options proposed will help to maintain fairness and consistency. The changes that the Council introduced to the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2018 are intended to work more effectively with Universal Credit, align the provision for children, disability, and caring responsibilities.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Not applicable
Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable
Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Provide support to those in financial hardship as well as supporting people into work.
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener: Not applicable

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

### **(A) Internal Consultations**

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5890/19) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4074/19) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

### **(B) External Consultations**

#### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21**

The precepting authorities (Merseyside Fire Service and Merseyside Police) and the combined Authority have been informed of the recommendation no change to the local scheme for 2020/21.

#### **Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts**

A public consultation ran for 7 weeks from 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019 to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019. The consultation requested views on two proposals:

- (1) to reduce the discretionary discount on uninhabitable properties that is currently 50% for 12-months to 0% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, and
- (2) to reduce the discount for the first month that a property is empty from 100% to 50% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

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The Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside supports the Council's proposals to change Council Tax discounts from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

## **Empty Homes Premium**

A public consultation on the proposal to increase the Council Tax empty homes premium ran for 5 weeks from 29th October 2018 to 3rd December 2018. The consultation requested views on the proposal to increase the premium charge from 50% to 100% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

It also asked for views to further increase the premium charged on properties that have been empty for 5 years or more to 200% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, and those empty for 10 years or more to 300% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside supported the Council's proposals to increase the Council Tax premium from 50% to 100% in-line with the new legislation from 1st April 2019. In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner would also support the Council if it made the following changes to the premium: -

- 200% premium from 1st April 2020 on properties empty for 5 years or more; and
- 300% premium from 1st April 2021 on properties empty for 10 years or more.

## **Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet recommendation to Council and approval by Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020.

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Diane Turner, Customer Centric Services Manager
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	0151 934 3481
<b>Email Address:</b>	diane.turner22@sefton.gov.uk

## **Appendices:**

Annex A: Council Tax Base Report 2020/21

Annex B: Summary of feedback from the consultation on changing Council Tax Empty Homes discounts and the associated equality impact assessment

Annex C: Summary of feedback from the consultation on increasing Council Tax long-term empty homes premium and the associated equality impact assessment.

## **Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

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## 1. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

### 1.1 Introduction / Background

1.2 Local Council Tax Reduction replaced Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is a discount awarded to households on a low income to help towards Council Tax payments. The amount awarded is based on a person's household and income. The local scheme rules only apply to working-age Council Tax payers. Pensioners are protected by legislation and must be provided with the level of Council Tax support specified by the Government.

1.3 The grant transferred to the Council, Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire Service in 2013/14, £24.2M; to fund the local scheme was £3M lower than had previously been provided to fund CTB in 2012/13. The Council therefore had to introduce changes to the national default Council Tax Support Scheme in order to ensure that the local scheme was cost neutral. As the Government had specified the level of support that had to be provided to pensioners, the saving requirement had to be met by reducing the level of support available to working age claimants and through changes to Council Tax empty property discounts.

1.4 The Council is required, by law, to review the Scheme each year irrespective of whether it is being amended.

1.5 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 must be agreed by Council by 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

## 2. Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20

2.1 To satisfy the requirement to review the Scheme, the following areas have been evaluated:

- Claimant caseload
- Scheme expenditure
- Impact on most vulnerable claimants
- Welfare Reform changes
- Council Tax collection
- Attachment of Benefits
- Review of the Council's principles for the Scheme
- Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund.

### 2.2 Claimant Caseload

The table below shows the caseload data at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 compared to caseload data at the end of each year since the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was introduced in 2013/14:

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Year	Date	Pensioners	Working Age	Total	Change
2013/14	03.04.14	14,655	16,025	30,680	n/a
2014/15	01.04.15	13,925	15,349	29,274	-1,406
2015/16	31.03.16	13,206	14,886	28,092	-1,182
2016/17	31.03.17	12,541	14,524	27,065	-1,027
2017/18	31.03.18	11,970	14,005	25,975	-1,090
2018/19	30.09.18	11,650	13,951	25,601	-374
2018/19	31.03.19	11,404	14,160	25,564	-411
2019/20	30.09.19	11,183	14,190	25,373	-191

The working age caseload can be split further:

Year	Date	Employed	Other	Total	Change
2013/14	03.04.14	2,874	13,151	16,025	n/a
2014/15	01.04.15	2,748	12,601	15,349	-676
2015/16	31.03.16	2,504	12,382	14,886	-463
2016/17	31.03.17	2,193	12,331	14,524	-362
2017/18	31.03.18	1,900	12,105	14,005	-519
2018/19	30.09.18	1,763	12,188	13,951	-54
2018/19	31.03.19	1,597	12,563	14,160	+155
2019/20	30.09.19	1,286	12,904	14,190	+30

2.3 Pensioner Claimants: Since the implementation of the scheme in 2013/14 the number of Pensioner Claimants has declined in every year. The total change in pensioner claimant numbers between 2013/14 and 2018/19 was -3,251, which is a reduction of -22.2%. Pensioner claimant numbers have continued to fall in 2019/20.

## 2.4 Scheme Expenditure

The following table shows the Council Tax Reduction Scheme expenditure reported in the Revenue Outturn Return compared to the mid-year estimate for 2019/20:

Year	Source	Pensioners £000	Working Age £000	Total £000	Change £000
2013/14	RO Return	13,305	9,907	23,212	n/a
2014/15	RO Return	12,152	10,364	22,516	-696
2015/16	RO Return	11,895	9,760	21,655	-861
2016/17	RO Return	11,540	10,559	22,099	+444
2017/18	RO Return	11,378	10,948	22,326	+227
2018/19	RO Return	11,695	11,069	22,764	+438
2019/20	Estimate	11,862	11,776	23,638	+864

Notes:

1. 2013/14: The split of Pensioner and working age costs included an estimate

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based on ceased cases so may not provide an accurate basis for comparison.

2. 2016/17: The increase in the total cost included the impact of the reduction in claimant contribution, from 20% in 2015/16 to 16% in 2016/17 and the Council Tax increase of 3.69% in year.
3. 2019/20 Estimate: Pensioner & working age cost have been split based on the weekly average recorded on the monthly CTR304 reports up to 30 September 2019.

## 2.5 Council Tax Base Return Data

The following table provides a view of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme expenditure based on weekly payments recorded in early October as reported in the Council Tax Base Return:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Pensioners £000</b>	<b>Working Age £000</b>	<b>Total £000</b>	<b>Change £000</b>
2013	CTB Return	12,602	10,214	22,816	n/a
2014	CTB Return	12,491	10,260	22,751	-65
2015	CTB Return	11,991	10,033	22,024	-727
2016	CTB Return	12,503	9,918	22,421	+397
2017	CTB Return	12,579	9,816	22,395	-26
2018	CTB Return	12,634	9,742	22,376	-19
2019	CTB Return	11,995	11,780	23,775	+1,399

## 2.6 Impact on the most vulnerable claimants

The Scheme implemented in 2018/19 continues to address the Council's priorities to minimise the impact on the most vulnerable, by seeking to strike a balance between dealing with Council priorities whilst supporting the financially vulnerable. The Council, having recognised the impact on communities, has introduced a range of mitigating actions, including:

- Provision of an Exceptional Hardship Fund (see Section 2.11)
- Allowing a Universal Credit notification, received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to be treated as a claim for local Council Tax Reduction, thus removing the need for those in receipt of Universal Credit to have to make a separate claim for support towards their Council Tax.
- Making provision in the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for awards to be backdated for up to 6-months for working-age vulnerable claimants.
- Deciding that the Council's local Council Tax Reduction scheme for working-age families should not to replicate the rules that are in place in the national Housing Benefit scheme and the Council Tax Reduction Pensioner scheme whereby the removal of the family premium and the "2-child" rule restrict the level of award.



- Offering 12-month (rather than 10-month) instalment payments to Council Tax payers.
- Adopting a sensitive approach to enforcement action to consider the potential vulnerability of Council Tax Reduction claimants. Before cases are referred to Enforcement Agents a vetting stage has been introduced and cases are dealt with under a separate debt recovery process to minimise potential increases in debt.
- Facilitating a meeting between the Council's contracted Enforcement Agents and Citizens Advice Sefton to establish closer working arrangements to support people in debt. Citizens Advice Sefton now have direct lines of communication with the Enforcement Agents and can arrange for recovery action to be placed on hold whilst discussing and agreeing affordable payment arrangements.
- Implementing processes for Council staff to refer claimants to Citizens Advice Sefton for help and support with debt/budgeting advice, or making/maintaining their Universal Credit claim.
- Putting an escalation process in place for the debt advisor based at South Sefton foodbank to contact nominated Council Tax staff to request a hold on recovery action or discuss affordable payment arrangements.
- Participating in Sefton's Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty Partner's Group – staff from the Council's Council Tax and Benefit team, work with partner organisations and other Council services to support residents suffering financial vulnerability and to provide practical support such as signposting claimants for winter coats, school uniforms.

## 2.7 Welfare Reform Changes

The Government has implemented a series of welfare reform changes aimed at cutting the cost of welfare payments and providing more incentives to work. These changes have had an impact on many claimants and on the level of Council Tax Reduction awarded.

Because of the Government making alterations to the Housing Benefit scheme and other welfare reform changes, specifically relating to the introduction and gradual phasing in of Universal Credit, there was a need to make some technical changes to the Council's local Council Tax Reduction scheme, for non-pensioner claimants only, so that both schemes are more aligned. Council therefore approved changes to the local Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2018/19 to take effect from 1st April 2018.

The Council continues to monitor and evaluate the impact that the changes are having on claimants. The table below provides a summary of the changes implemented since 2018, as at 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019:

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Description of the change	Comment (as at 4 <sup>th</sup> November 2019)
Fixed Income Period for six months	<p>There are 1,420 Council Tax Reduction claims with a Fixed Income Period applied.</p> <p>By setting a Fixed Income Period, Council Tax Reduction does not need to be recalculated each month when earnings fluctuate. The Council's Benefits service continue to review the claims to identify what the change is and decide if it requires reassessment.</p> <p>There are some administrative savings as Council Tax Reduction cases will not be recalculated each month where earnings fluctuate. Notification letters are not produced when there is no recalculation, revised Council Tax bills are not issued, and customers do not have a need to contact the Council to ask why their Council Tax bill has changed etc.</p>
Apply a minimum income floor for all Council Tax Reduction new claimants where they have been self-employed for more than 12 months.	<p>There are 25 Council Tax Reduction claims where the minimum income floor has been applied. All but 4 of the cases resulted in the customer not qualifying for Council Tax Reduction as a result. The low number affected is not surprising as the provision only applies to new claims.</p> <p>This change mirrors the rules used in Universal Credit</p>
Temporary absence rules for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction for those who leave the country for more than four weeks.	<p>No claims have been identified that are affected by this change.</p> <p>The four-week absence period can be extended by a further four-weeks if absence is linked to the death of a close relative or up to 26-weeks in certain other specified circumstances.</p>
Reform of Bereavement benefits: Bereavement support payment is disregarded for all other DWP benefits, including Housing Benefit	<p>Currently there are 5 claims where there is BSP (Bereavement Support Payment) recorded on the claim.</p>
Replicate Income / Capital disregard rules for payments received from We Love Manchester Emergency fund and London Emergencies fund	<p>No claims have been identified that are affected by this change.</p>

## 2.8 Council Tax Collection

The table below shows the amount of Council Tax billed and collected during 2018/19:

Recorded at 31st March 2019	Liability Raised £000	Received In Year £000	Collection Rate %
CTRS Cases - Working Age	3,953	2,781	70.3
CTRS Cases - Pensioner Age	1,715	1,736	101.2
Other Council Tax Payers	146,787	141,845	96.6
<b>Total (in-year collection)</b>	<b>152,455</b>	<b>146,362</b>	<b>96.0</b>

The in-year Council Tax collection rate reduced from 97.2 % in 2012/13 under the Council Tax Benefit system to 96.2% in 2013/14 when local Council Tax Reduction was introduced. Since then the overall collection rate has remained within a narrow range from 96.0% to 96.3%. The in-year collection rate for Sefton Council for 2018/19 was 96.0%, which is 0.7% higher than the average for Metropolitan Districts.

### Council Tax Collection 2019/20

As at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019, the in-year Council Tax collection figure was 64.11%. This is a drop of 0.14% on the equivalent comparison in 2018/19. However, throughout the year to date collection performance has varied from approximately +/- 0.1% compared to 2018/19.

There are several factors that continue to contribute to the difficulties in improving collection performance in year-on-year:

- The roll out of Universal Credit has resulted in delays in customers receiving their payments and this has had a knock-on effect regarding their ability to pay Council Tax.
- Delays in receiving Attachment of Benefits (AOB) monies – when a customer already subject to an AOB order moves onto Universal Credit their existing AOB order with the DWP is cancelled and must be resubmitted to the Universal Credit Team. This can lead to a period when no deductions are made.
- The number of customers advising the Council that they are seeking insolvency or debt advice has increased. In these instances, customers tend not to make required Council Tax payments.
- A greater awareness of vulnerability has meant that as soon as an issue is identified in most cases recovery action is placed on hold whilst the vulnerability aspect is assessed. It may also result in the Council entering into payment arrangements which take slightly longer to repay because of a genuine financial vulnerability being identified.

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## 2.9 Attachment of Benefits

Since the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in April 2013 the number of working age claimants falling into arrears continues to grow. One recovery option open to the Council in respect of benefit claimants is to apply for an AOB via the courts. Under this option the Court can require a payment of up to £3.70 per week to be made by the DWP directly from the claimant's benefits to meet Council Tax arrears.

Payments by AOB do provide some certainty to both the Council and the debtor. For the Council, the payments do guarantee regular income from the debtor. For the debtor, there is the security of knowing that a debt is being paid by a deduction from their benefit.

However, AOB is not a perfect solution to the problem of growing debt for the following reasons: -

- An AOB cannot be applied without first having taken the debtor to court to obtain a Liability Order. Due to the need to follow the correct legislative timeline for obtaining a Liability Order, payment by AOB cannot commence until part way through the year. Typically for a bill issued in March the first payments would not be made by the DWP until August of the same year.
- Many debtors have arrears outstanding for multiple years Council Tax. An AOB can only be used to collect one debt at a time. In addition, current legislation does not allow the Council to take any other form of debt recovery (e.g. use of Enforcement Agents) whilst an AOB is in place. To mitigate this, people on AOB have been issued letters asking them to contact the Council for advice, to make alternate payment arrangements or seek financial advice from Citizens Advice Sefton. However, this initiative met with only a few people contacting the Council to make arrangements to pay.
- Collection of Council Tax debt by way of AOB is not the highest priority of debt administered by the DWP. Therefore, the level of recovery will be affected when people have multiple debts e.g. rent and energy debts are given a higher priority.
- Many new claimants for Council Tax Reduction have already accrued debts before an AOB can be considered.
- At the commencement of the scheme in 2013 the maximum deduction of £3.70 was lower than the minimum weekly Council Tax charge for all property bands. The minimum contribution of 20% towards the Council Tax was greater than the amount that could be collected within the year by AOB. This created a problem of debt being carried forward to the following year. Therefore, whilst debt payments are being collected regularly the amount of debt at the end of each year kept growing.
- To try and break the cycle of debt the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was amended with effect from 1st April 2016 to reduce the minimum contribution rate to 16%. This rate was calculated so that the AOB payment of £3.70 per week was more than would be due from Council Tax for many of the claimants. The table below provides a snapshot of the amount of debt being recovered under AOB and the amount of debt still waiting recovery by AOB:

	<b>01.04.18</b>	<b>01.04.19</b>	<b>31.10.19</b>
AOB in Payment	£916,181	£1,121,179	£1,268,727
No. of Cases	5,200	6,276	6,642
AOB Pending	£3,216,978	£3,987,625	£4,801,112
No. Of Cases	14,083	16,919	19,602

- A significant number of customers have arrears for more than one financial year. As only one AOB order may be deducted at a time there has been a significant increase in the number of pending cases. These cases are effectively stacked up until an earlier order is paid. No recovery action may be taken in the interim and the value of such cases is increasing year on year.

## 2.10 Review of Scheme Principles

The local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is based on five principles and the review is summarised below:

<b>Principle</b>	<b>CTRS working for non-pensioner claimants?</b>
The Council will continue to support work incentives	<p><b>Yes</b> – The Council continues to operate a system which disregards certain amounts of money from customers earnings through employment (and self-employment) when calculating entitlement.</p> <p>This results in some additional support to those customers receiving Universal Credit who are in low paid work, following the removal of UC work allowances from April 2016</p>
The Council will continue to recognise the additional needs of our most vulnerable residents.	<p><b>Yes</b> – The Council continues to make additional allowances and give additional support to those receiving certain DWP sickness benefits, disability benefits and benefits for Carers when calculating entitlement.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council continues to disregard certain disability benefits as income when calculating entitlement</p> <p>Procedures were reviewed for the collection of non-payment of Council Tax to ensure non-disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable households. Also budgeting support and advice is made available to all claimants.</p> <p>The Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund – is available to those in the greatest financial need with fair and transparent criteria for awards.</p>

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<p>The Council will continue to recognise the additional needs of families with children</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – Child Benefit and Child Maintenance payments are not considered as income when calculating entitlement to CTRS.</p> <p>Additional allowances are given when calculating entitlement for where there is a disabled child in the family.</p> <p>The CTRS also mirrors provisions in the Housing Benefit scheme by taking child care costs into account for low income working families</p> <p>The Council will continue to include the Family Premium when calculating the Council Tax Reduction. This was removed for all new Housing Benefit claims from May 2016. The Council has also chosen not to mirror the changes made to Housing Benefit which restrict the amount of support given to families with more than two children within its CTRS;</p>
<p>The Council supports households staying together to make better use of housing in Sefton and reduce homelessness.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> - The amount of Council Tax Reduction taken away from a customer when other adults live in the household (known as a non-dependant deduction), was reduced in 2013 and remains at those lower levels.</p>
<p>The Council will continue to have due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – War Disablement and War Widows pensions in calculating CTRS, including any Armed Forces compensation in accordance with the covenant is disregarded. This also includes the service attributable element of the armed forces pension could also be disregarded as income when calculating entitlement.</p>

## 2.11 Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)

A key feature of the local Council Tax Reduction scheme was the creation of an exceptional hardship fund with an annual budget of £150,000 to help mitigate hardship issues for vulnerable working age claimants. The fund is used to reduce Council Tax bills when an individual is judged to be facing severe financial hardship. The fund is administrated within an agreed policy approved by Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

For the purposes of administration, the decision to grant any reduction in liability is considered under any one of three categories, which includes “Exceptional Financial Hardship - for Council Tax payers who have qualified for support under the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme but who are still experiencing severe financial hardship”.

The Discretionary Reduction in liability Policy replaced the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Scheme that has been in place since April 2013. That scheme was introduced by the Council to mitigate against potential issues that may have arisen because of the

abolition of Council Tax Benefit and the introduction of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The following breakdown shows EHF awards for period 1st April – 31st October 2019:

- 889 claimants received an award
- Total amount awarded = £100,687.51
- Average award £113.25
- Average length of award = 6 months
- 430 claimants receiving an award have received an award previously
- 254 claimants have received an award on 3 or more occasions
- 155 claimants have received an award on 5 or more occasions
- Highest number of awards = 12
- 446 claims have been refused
- 36 Claimants received an award for the first time having previously applied and been refused.

The Council set the current EHF budget of £150,000 in 2013/14. Over the past six years the average Band D council tax charge in Sefton has increased by 25.6%. To keep pace with the increases in council tax the fund would have had to be increased by £38,500 in 2019/20. The fund has also been utilised to meet the cost of discretionary discounts awarded to care leavers since 2018/19. In 2018/19 the Council awarded exceptional hardship discounts of £132,112 and care leavers discounts of £16,579, giving total of £148,690 charged against the budget. Care leavers discounts have increased to £19,200 in 2019/20 leaving only £130,800 to meet the cost of exceptional hardship discounts awarded in 2019/20. Steps have been taken to contain the amount of EHF discounts awarded in the year, however, the current EHF budget is likely to be overspent in 2020/21 if further rationing of discounts is not applied.

## 2.12 Summary of local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2019/20

The total number of claimants eligible for support has reduced in each year since 2013/14. The number of claimants has continued to reduce in 2019/20. In the first 6 months of the year the total number of claimants had reduced by 191 (0.7%) to 25,363 (11,183 pensioner age and 14,190 working age).

The forecast cost of the scheme has increased by £0.864m (3.8%) in 2019/20 to £23.638m as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019. This is due to the impact of an average Council Tax increase of 5.1% and the offsetting impact of a reduction in claimant numbers.

Welfare Reform changes introduced since 1 April 2018 are expected to continue to increase the cost of providing Council Tax support in 2020/21. The financial impact will depend on the number of claimants affected.

Council Tax in year collection rates fell by 1.0% to 96.2% in 2013/14 after the replacement of Council Tax Benefit with the local Council Tax Reduction scheme. The collection rate has remained at a similar level since, with a collection rate of 96.0% being achieved in 2018/19. This was 0.7% higher than the average collection rate for all Metropolitan Districts.

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## **3. Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Consultation**

The statutory provisions are silent on the consultation required when a council is not proposing to change its Council Tax reduction scheme.

Letters will be issued to the precepting authorities – Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service notifying them that no change is being proposed. The combined Authority will also be notified of no change.

## **4. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Equality Impact Assessment**

Department for Communities and Local Government issued a report in February 2014 reminding local authorities of their key duties when deciding on local Council Tax Reduction Schemes:

- Public Sector Equality Duty (The Equality Act 2010)
- Duty to mitigate the effects of child poverty (The Child Poverty Act 2010)
- The Armed Forces Covenant
- Duty to prevent Homelessness (The Housing Act 1996)

A detailed equality assessment was undertaken and published as part of the design and implementation of CTRS for 2013/14. This assessment had been reviewed in the context of the proposed options for 2016/17 and found there was no disproportionate impacts as the mitigating actions put in place for the 2013/14 scheme remained. The assessment can be found at Annex D: Council Report dated 24 January 2013.

## **5. Proposal to make Changes to Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts**

5.1 Prior to 1 April 2013, the Government prescribed that certain classes of empty properties were exempt from paying Council Tax for a certain period set out in legislation. This included the following exemptions:

<b>Description</b>	<b>Exemption</b>
<b><u>Empty Property Exemption</u></b> For properties which are “unoccupied and substantially unfurnished”	100% for a maximum period of six months
<b><u>Uninhabitable Property Exemption</u></b> For vacant properties undergoing “major repair work” or “structural alteration”	100% for a maximum period of twelve months

5.2 In October 2011, the Government published proposals to abolish these mandatory exemptions and instead give billing authorities discretion to provide local Council Tax discounts on empty homes should they chose to do so. The proposals were intended to help local authorities keep the overall level of Council Tax down and to allow them to adjust the level of tax relief in respect of empty properties when local authorities judged that they do not merit special treatment.



5.3 Following a period of consultation the Government published its final proposals in May 2012. Legislation was then enacted in December 2012 that abolished the existing exemptions and allowed local authorities to set the level of Council Tax discounts that would apply to certain categories of empty homes from 1 April 2013.

5.4 For 'empty properties' the period of discount was limited to a maximum of six months. However, local authorities could choose to offer a discount for a shorter period or vary the level of discount offered within the period. For example, it would be possible to (a) offer no discount at all, (b) offer a discount of between 0% and 100% for six months or less, or (c) offer a larger initial discount for say one month, followed by a lower discount for up to 5 months or less.

5.5 For 'uninhabitable properties' the period of discount was fixed at 12 months (provided the property continued to meet the criteria). Local authorities could choose to (a) offer no discount, or (b) offer a discount of between 0% and 100% for 12 months.

5.6 On 24 January 2013, the Council approved the level of local empty homes discounts that would apply in Sefton from 1 April 2013 as follows:

<b>Description</b>	<b>Discount</b>
Empty Property Discount	100% for one month followed by 50% for the following five months
Uninhabitable Property Discount	50% for up to a maximum period of twelve months

5.7 On the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014, the Council decided to remove the 50% empty property discount that had applied from month two to month five. So, the revised discounts available from 1 April 2014 were as follows:

<b>Description</b>	<b>Discount</b>
Empty Property Discount	100% for a period of one month.
Uninhabitable Property Discount	50% for up to a maximum period of twelve months

5.8 The new local discretionary discounts offered a lower level of support compared to the previous mandatory exemptions. This resulted in an increase in Council Tax income in 2013/14, which was forecast at £1.010 million. A further increase of £0.780 million was forecast for 2014/15. This additional income was used to offset the impact of funding reductions that accompanied the abolition of Council Tax Benefit and its replacement with a local Council Tax Support Scheme in 2013/14, and to offset further grant cuts in 2014/15.

5.9 The level of both empty property and uninhabitable property discounts offered by Sefton Council has not changed since 2014/15. Other local authorities have reduced or removed their empty homes discounts in that time to increase Council Tax income in response to further significant cuts in Government grant funding.

5.10 The Council is required to formally approve any change to local Council Tax discounts.

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## Empty Homes Discounts offered by other local authorities in the Liverpool City Region

5.11 There are five other billing authorities within the Liverpool City Region (LCR). Some continue to offer empty homes discounts, whilst others have removed the discounts altogether.

5.12 The table below provides a summary of empty homes discounts offered by all the billing authorities in the Liverpool City Region in 2018/19:

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Empty Property Discount</b>	<b>Uninhabitable Property Discount</b>
Halton	No discount	No discount
Knowsley	100% for up to one month	No discount
Liverpool	No discount	20% for up to 12-months
St Helens	100% for up to one month	25% for up to 12-months
Sefton	100% for up to one month	50% for up to 12-months
Wirral	No discount	No discount

## The cost of providing empty property discounts

5.13 The table below shows the cost of providing the existing empty homes discounts since 2013/14:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Empty Property Discount</b>	<b>Uninhabitable Property Discount</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£ million</b>	<b>£ million</b>	<b>£ million</b>
2013/14*	0.671	0.239	0.910
2014/15	0.664	0.330	0.994
2015/16	0.668	0.319	0.987
2016/17	0.698	0.348	1.046
2017/18	0.731	0.310	1.041
2018/19	0.775	0.260	1.035

\* The cost shown for 2013/14 is for the first month only. The additional relief given in months 2 to 5 has been excluded for the purpose of this comparison.

5.14 The Council's tax base is calculated in Band D equivalents. Converting the level of discounts given in previous years into Band D equivalents can help to calculate the cost of the providing these discounts at the council tax charge in 2019/20. The average level of discounts given since 2013/14 expressed in band D equivalents along with their current value expressed as council tax foregone is shown in the table below:

Discount	2019/20 Band D Charge	Band D Equivalents	Council Tax Foregone
	£		£ million
Empty Property Discount	1,882.87	435	0.818
Uninhabitable Property Discount	1,882.87	178	0.336
<b>Total</b>	1,882.87	<b>613</b>	<b>1.154</b>

5.15 Council Tax income collected in the Sefton area is shared between the Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Combined Authority, and Parish Areas based on their annual precepts. The table below shows each authority's share of the average cost of the empty property discounts:

	Empty Property Discounts	Uninhabitable Property Discounts	Total
	£ million	£ million	£ million
Sefton	0.682	0.280	0.962
Parish Areas	0.006	0.002	0.008
Police & CC	0.088	0.036	0.124
Fire & Rescue	0.034	0.014	0.048
Combined Authority	0.008	0.004	0.012
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.818</b>	<b>0.336</b>	<b>1.154</b>

### Proposal to reduce the level of support for Council Tax discounts on empty homes

5.16 It is proposed that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 the Council agrees: -

- To reduce the level of discount on empty homes from 100% to 50% for up to one month, and
- To remove the uninhabitable property discount.

This proposal will increase Council Tax income, remove the current more favourable treatment of empty homes, encourage better use of local housing stock, and bring the Council's approach more into line with other local authorities in the Liverpool City Region.

Description	Proposed Discount for 2020/21
Empty Property Discount	50% for up to one month
Uninhabitable Property Discount	0%

### Impact of the proposed changes

5.17 Reducing the discounts may encourage owners of empty dwellings to bring them into use more quickly. It will also remove the advantage currently provided to empty property owners bringing them more into line with occupiers of other domestic dwellings who must pay their Council Tax in full.

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5.18 Reducing the discounts will provide additional Council Tax income that can be used to support services provided for all local residents such as highways maintenance, parks, and refuse collection, as well as those services provided only to the most vulnerable members of the community such as children's and adult social care.

5.19 The discounts currently offered allow empty property owners with a period of relief from Council Tax charges. In some cases, this can encourage owners to undertake structural repairs to their properties to bring them back into use and in others it allows landlords with a short period between lets to undertake repairs. The discounts are also provided to owners moving between homes who leave their property empty perhaps because they are unable to sell or are undertaking minor renovations or redecoration prior to occupation.

5.20 Removing the 'Uninhabitable Property Discount' could discourage owners of these properties from making improvements to their properties.

5.21 Reducing the 'Empty Property discount' from 100% to 50% will affect landlords and owner occupiers who will be required to pay half the amount of council tax whilst they bring their properties into occupation.

5.22 Owners of empty homes will still be able to gain exemption from paying Council Tax if they qualify for one of the following remaining statutory exemptions:

<b>Exemption</b>	<b>Description</b>
Class B	a dwelling that has been unoccupied for up to 6 months and is owned by a charity.
Class D	an unoccupied dwelling left empty by a person who has gone to prison.
Class E	an unoccupied dwelling left empty by a person who is now resident in a hospital or nursing home.
Class F	an unoccupied dwelling forming part of the estate of a deceased person and the personal representative is waiting for grant of probate or letters of administration or less than 6 months have elapsed since such a grant was made.
Class G	a dwelling where the occupation is prohibited by law.
Class H	an unoccupied dwelling held for a minister of religion as a residence from which to perform his duties.
Class I	an unoccupied dwelling where a person has moved to receive personal care.
Class J	an unoccupied dwelling where a person has moved to provide personal care to another person.
Class K	a dwelling which has been left empty by students.
Class L	an unoccupied dwelling which has been repossessed by a mortgagee.
Class Q	an unoccupied dwelling which is the responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee.
Class R	an unoccupied caravan pitch or boat mooring.
Class T	an unoccupied dwelling that forms part of, or is situated within the curtilage of another dwelling and is difficult to let separately without a breach of planning control within the meaning of the Town and County Planning Act 1990(d).

## 5.23 Consultation

A public consultation in respect of proposed changes to Council Tax Empty Homes discounts with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 has been conducted for a 7-week period from 16th September – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019. Cabinet is recommended to consider the outcome of consultation before deciding to recommend to Council the proposed changes to Council Tax Empty Homes discounts from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

Consultation findings and Equality Impact Assessment can be found at **Annex B**.

## **6. Proposal to Increase the Long-Term Empty Homes Premium to 200% on dwellings that have been left empty for 5 Years or more**

### 6.1 Background

Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, Councils have been able to charge a Council Tax premium on unfurnished properties that have been left empty for more than two-years as a means of incentivising owners of these properties to bring them back into use. The maximum allowable premium percentage was set at 50% between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2019.

The premium cannot be applied to homes that are empty due to the occupant living in armed forces accommodation for job-related purposes, or to annexes being used as part of a main property. Furthermore, the Council Tax system provides statutory exemptions for properties left empty for a specific purpose – for example, when a person goes into care. However, there is no statutory exemption from the premium for properties that are genuinely on the market for sale or letting. Councils also have powers to apply discretionary discounts in cases where homes are empty due to special circumstances – for example, financial hardship, fire or flooding.

The premium may be applied when a property has been empty for two years, irrespective of how long its current owner has owned it. Therefore, it is possible for an individual to buy a property which has already been empty for two years and be liable for the premium immediately. This scenario may occur if, for instance, the individual does not occupy the property immediately because they wish to extend or renovate the property. If the long term empty property is occupied for a period of 6 weeks or less it is regarded as not having been occupied for the purposes of the two-year period. Occupancy of a long-term empty property for more than 6 weeks “resets the clock” for this purpose.

### 6.2 Legislative Changes from 2019/20 onward

On 1 November 2018, the Government introduced legislation that would allow local authorities to increase the empty homes premium from 50% up to 300% over a three-year period with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. The Rating (property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018, allows local authorities to charge the following maximum amounts of Council Tax empty homes premium:

- 100% premium from 1st April 2019 on properties empty for 2 years or more;
- 200% premium from 1st April 2020 on properties empty for 5 years or more;
- 300% premium from 1st April 2021 on properties empty for 10 years or more.

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These are the maximum allowable empty homes premium charges.

The Government introduced this change because there is a serious shortage of decent, affordable housing, and tackling the issue of empty homes, while also seeking to ensure that we respect the rights of property-owners, is part of the solution. There are currently more than 200,000 properties standing empty in England. As well as being a blight on the local community and attracting squatters, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, long-term empty properties are a wasted resource when 1.16 million households are on social housing waiting lists. Increasing the premium will allow local authorities to strengthen the incentive for owners of empty homes to bring them back into use.

The Government recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate, given that different areas will have different housing needs and different numbers of long-term empty homes. That is why they are keeping the premium as a discretionary discount, allowing local authorities to decide whether it is appropriate for their areas, and what level of premium should be charged.

## 6.3 Long-term Empty Homes in Sefton

At 31 October 2019, there were 681 long-term empty properties paying the premium in Sefton.

The application of the premium has been successful in encouraging owners to bring long-term empty properties back into use. The number of accounts paying the premium has reduced by 105 (13%) from 786 in April 2013.

Following a public consultation, Sefton Council approved an increase in the premium from 50% to 100% with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. The aim of this increase was to encourage more empty properties to be brought back into use.

As well as charging the empty homes premium, there are other Council initiatives to help bring empty homes back into use, this includes offering advice to owners through sending regular letters and the Council's property accreditation scheme that helps empty home owners find tenants for their property. The Council's Housing Standards Team will also work with owners to bring their properties back into use. However, in some cases enforcement action is required when the property is causing a statutory nuisance and the owner is uncooperative or untraceable.

## 6.4 Proposed Changes from 1 April 2020

It is proposed that the Council further increase the premium charge from 100% to 200% for properties empty for 5 years or more in-line with the maximum allowable under the new legislation from 1 April 2020.

The aim of this increase would be to further incentivise owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use. This will increase the stock of available housing in the borough, which would assist in achieving the aims of the local development plan. It will also increase the amount of Council Tax income raised from those that continue to leave their properties empty.

## 6.5 Revenue Implications

The proposed change in the long-term empty homes premium from 100% to 200%, on dwellings left empty for 5 years or more is forecast to increase the 2020/21 tax base by 113.2 Band D equivalents.

This would give the following increase in Council Tax income in 2020/21:

	2019/20 Band D Charge £	Additional Band D Equivalents	2020/21 Additional Income £000
Sefton Council	1,570.30	113.2	178,000
Police & Crime Commissioner	201.97	113.2	23,000
Fire & Rescue Authority	78.84	113.2	9,000
Combined Authority	19.00	113.2	2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,870.11</b>	<b>113.2</b>	<b>212,000</b>

The forecast assumes a 25% reduction in the number of homes that have been empty from longer than 5 years is achieved in 2020/21. The actual number of properties brought back into use could be higher or lower than this and will be reflected in future tax base calculations.

Any additional income raised from the increased premium will be used to fund statutory services or to keep Council Tax levels down.

## 6.6 Further Potential increases in future years

It is proposed that a decision on future options to increase the premium charged on properties that have been empty for longer than 10 years or more to 300% from 1 April 2021, be deferred until a future year pending a review of the impact of the increase proposed in Section 6.4

## 6.7 Consultation

The Cabinet is recommended to consider the outcome of the consultation before deciding whether to recommend to Council the proposed further increase in the long-term empty homes premium from 1st April 2020.

Consultation findings and Equality Impact Assessment can be found at **Annex C**.

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## ANNEX A

### SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2020/21

#### 1. Setting the Council Tax Base

- 1.1 The Council Tax Base is the link between the Council's budget and the level of Council Tax. The tax base will be used to calculate the Council Tax in Sefton, once the Council's budget has been agreed. The Council is required to calculate its own tax base as well as the tax base for each parish council within its boundary and have them approved by the 31 January 2020.
- 1.2 The calculation of the Council Tax Base takes into account many factors such as the rate of new building and the trends in people living on their own (Sole Occupier Discount).
- 1.3 The tax base calculation assumes a collection rate of 98.25% in 2020/21, which is unchanged from 2019/20. This reflects long-term collection rates.

#### 2. Council Tax Base for Sefton Council in 2020/21

- 2.1 An analysis of the changes between the 2019/20 and the 2020/21 tax base before any of the proposed changes to discounts and premium is provided in the table below:

Tax Base for Sefton Council		Band D Equivalents		
		2019/20	2020/21	Change
H	<u>Chargeable Dwellings</u>			
	Dwellings on the Banding List	110,567.1	111,059.3	492.1
	Exempt Dwellings	-1,886.3	-2,134.1	-247.8
	Disabled Persons Reductions	-148.3	-149.6	-1.3
		108,532.5	108,775.6	243.1
Q	<u>Discounts</u>			
	Sole Occupier & Status Discounts	-9,937.1	-10,092.1	-161.1
	Empty Property Discounts	-194.0	-229.0	35.0
	Total	-10,125.0	-10,321.1	196.1
E	Empty Homes Premium (50%)	513.8	515.6	1.8
J	<u>Adjustments</u>			
	New Dwellings on the Banding List	199.8	309.7	109.9
	Banding Reductions	-221.0	-166.6	54.4
	Exemptions, Discounts, & Premium	-820.9	-654.8	166.1
		-842.1	-511.7	330.4
Z	Council Tax Support Scheme	-12,512.5	-12,567.8	-55.3
B	Collection Rate Adjustment	-1,497.4	-1,503.1	-5.7
	MOD Properties	8.0	8.0	1.0
	<b>Council Tax Base (Option 1)</b>	<b>84,077.3</b>	<b>84,395.5</b>	<b>318.2</b>



2.2 The main reason for the changes in the tax base under Option 1 are:

Dwellings on the Banding List: The number of properties on Banding List has increased by 519 (0.4%) in the year.

Exempt Dwellings: The number of dwellings subject to a specific exemption (Class A to W) have increased by 250 (10.9%). The largest increases were in the number 'dwellings left empty by deceased persons' (Class F), 'dwellings where occupation is prohibited by law' (Class G), and 'dwellings occupied only by a severely mentally ill person or persons' (Class U).

Discounts: The number of dwellings receiving a single occupancy discount has increased by 709 (1.5%).

Adjustments: A higher level of growth has been forecast in 2020/21. A lower level of changes to exemptions, discounts and premiums is forecast in 2020/21.

Council Tax Support Scheme (CTRS): The reductions in claimant numbers in 2019/20 has been lower than forecast. The value of CTRS discounts used in the 2020/21 tax base calculation reflects the value recorded on 31 October 2019. No further reductions have been assumed.

2.3 Proposed changes to empty homes discounts and premium.

Elsewhere in this report, Council are asked to consider three changes to (1) empty homes discounts, (2) uninhabitable property discounts, and (3) long-term empty homes premium. The forecast impact of these changes is shown in the table below along with the revised tax base if all three are approved.

Impact of Proposed Changes		Band D Equivalents		
		2019/20	2020/21	Change
(i)	<u>Empty Homes Discount</u> Reducing the discount from 100% for 1 month to 50% for 1 month.	n/a	217.6	217.6
(ii)	<u>Uninhabitable Discount</u> Removing the current 50% discount.	n/a	178.1	178.1
(iii)	<u>Empty Homes Premium</u> Increasing the premium from 100% to 200% on homes left empty for 5 years or more	n/a	113.2	113.2
<b>Council Tax Base (Option 8)</b>		<b>84,077.3</b>	<b>84,904.4</b>	<b>827.1</b>

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## 2.4 Alternative tax base options

The three proposed changes give rise to eight possible tax base options depending on which of the proposed changes (if any) are approved. The potential tax base options are summarised below:

	Change Approved?		
	(i) Empty Homes Discount	(ii) Uninhabitable Discount	(iii) Empty Homes Premium
Option 1	No	No	No
Option 2	Yes	No	No
Option 3	No	Yes	No
Option 4	No	No	Yes
Option 5	Yes	Yes	No
Option 6	Yes	No	Yes
Option 7	No	Yes	Yes
Option 8	Yes	Yes	Yes

The relevant tax base calculated under each of these options is shown below:

Option	Tax Base (Band D Equivalents)	Option	Tax Base (Band D Equivalents)
Option 1	84,395.5	Option 5	84,791.3
Option 2	84,613.1	Option 6	84,726.3
Option 3	84,573.6	Option 7	84,686.8
Option 4	84,508.6	Option 8	84,904.4

## 3. **Council Tax Base in Parish Areas for 2020/21**

3.1 There are also new tax base figures for each parish area in 2020/21. The following table provides details of the new tax base for each parish under all 8 options:

Parish	Tax Base (Band D Equivalents)				
	Aintree Village	Formby	Hightown	Ince Blundell	Little Altcar
Option 1	2,063.0	9,163.1	870.6	169.5	332.1
Option 2	2,067.7	9,180.5	872.1	169.7	332.6
Option 3	2,069.5	9,182.4	871.6	170.3	332.7
Option 4	2,066.1	9,169.0	870.6	169.5	332.1
Option 5	2,074.2	9,199.8	873.1	170.5	333.3
Option 6	2,070.8	9,186.4	872.1	169.7	332.6
Option 7	2,072.6	9,188.3	871.6	170.3	332.7
Option 8	2,077.3	9,205.7	873.1	170.5	333.3

	Tax Base (Band D Equivalents)				
Parish	Lydiate	Maghull	Melling	Sefton	Thornton
Option 1	2,063.5	6,721.8	1,007.7	234.6	785.5
Option 2	2,067.7	6,737.3	1,009.6	236.0	787.4
Option 3	2,067.8	6,736.1	1,009.5	235.8	786.9
Option 4	2,063.5	6,736.7	1,010.9	234.6	785.5
Option 5	2,072.0	6,751.6	1,011.4	237.2	788.8
Option 6	2,067.7	6,752.2	1,012.8	236.0	787.4
Option 7	2,067.8	6,751.0	1,012.8	235.8	786.9
Option 8	2,072.0	6,766.5	1,014.7	237.2	788.8

- 3.2 The tax base calculation for each of the parish areas is based on the same assumptions made in the calculation for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.

## Changes to Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts Consultation Findings

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 A public consultation ran for 7 weeks from 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019 to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.
- 1.2 The consultation requested views on two proposals: -
  - A proposal to reduce the discount on uninhabitable properties for a period of 12 months from 50% to 0% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020
  - A proposal to reduce the discount for the first month a property is empty from 100% to 50% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.
- 1.3 The consultation was available online and by paper form to download where required. Direct mailing was used to contact all Council Tax payers currently in receipt of the discounts, landlords of properties in Sefton and the consultation was promoted internally through the service, including the Council's Empty Homes Team.
- 1.4 Letters about the consultation were also sent to various stakeholders including private and registered social landlords, owners of properties registered as uninhabitable and the major preceptors Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.
- 1.5 Information about the survey was also available at Sefton Council libraries and One Stop Shops. The Council also promoted the consultation on its website, intranet, via a press release and its social media.
- 1.6 The aim of the survey was to ensure that the views of those Council Tax payers affected, other stakeholders and members of the public are considered before the decision is made to implement the proposed changes to discounts from 1st April 2020 and that any exceptions to the premium be considered.

### **2. Consultation Options**

- 2.1 The options consulted on were as follows,

**Survey Question 2** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the Council Tax discount on uninhabitable properties for a period of up to 12 months from 50% to 0% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Survey Question 3** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the Council Tax discount for the first month a property is empty from 100% to 50% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Survey Question 4** Do you have any additional comments relating to these proposals?

### 3. Analysis of survey results

3.1 In total, there were 216 responses to the on-line consultation and 2 were received via e-mail. The overall response is relatively substantial for proposals that only affected 613 properties at the time of the survey.

3.2 Survey Question 1 asked respondents to identify the capacity in which they were responding to the survey. A summary of the responses is listed in the table below:

A member of the public	182
A landlord of a property in Sefton that is empty	16
A landlord of a property in Sefton that isn't empty	26
The owner of a property in Sefton that has been declared uninhabitable	18
An elected Member	0
A local business owner	8
No response provided	0

### 3.3 Responses to questions

**Survey Question 2** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the Council Tax discount on uninhabitable properties for a period of up to 12 months from 50% to 0% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020?

Option	Responses	Percent
Strongly agree	92	42.20%
Agree	29	13.30%
Neither agree nor disagree	5	2.29%
Disagree	20	9.18%
Strongly disagree	72	33.03%
No response provided	0	0.00%

A summary of responses to this question is as follows:

Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither agree / disagree	Disagree / Strongly disagree
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121	5	92
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**Survey Question 3** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the Council Tax discount for the first month a property is empty from 100% to 50% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020?

Option	Responses	Percent
Strongly agree	66	30.28%
Agree	30	13.76%
Neither agree nor disagree	12	5.50%
Disagree	18	8.26%
Strongly disagree	92	42.20%
No response provided	0	0.00%

A summary of responses to this question is as follows:

Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither agree / disagree	Disagree / Strongly disagree
96	12	110

### 3.4 Respondents Additional Comments

**Survey Question 4** asked respondents ‘Do you have any additional comments relating to these proposals. 117 respondents to the survey made additional comments.

3.4.1 In response to **Survey Question 2** on the proposal to reduce the discount on uninhabitable properties for up to 12 months from 50% to 0%, responses were analysed for recurring themes that are summarised in the following tables.

Response	Affordability for bills or renovation	Discounts no longer affordable for Council	Empty homes do not receive Council Services	Other Comments
Strongly Agree	5	2	0	13
Agree	1	0	0	6
Neither Agree /Disagree	1	0	0	1
Disagree	5	0	1	7
Strongly Disagree	24	0	9	14

Response	Will encourage sale or rent	Will encourage renovation	Will discourage renovation
Strongly Agree	7	14	7
Agree	1	0	1
Neither Agree /Disagree	1	1	0
Disagree	0	0	1
Strongly Disagree	0	0	6

3.4.2 In response to **Survey Question 3** on the proposal to reduce the discount on empty properties empty for up to one month from 100% to 50%, responses were analysed for recurring themes that are summarised in the following tables.

Response	Affordability for bills or renovation	Discounts no longer affordable for Council	Empty homes do not receive Council Services	Other Comments
Strongly Agree	3	2	0	5
Agree	0	0	0	1
Neither Agree /Disagree	2	0	0	3
Disagree	4	0	0	3
Strongly Disagree	27	0	10	29

Response	Will encourage sale or rent	Will encourage renovation	Will discourage renovation
Strongly Agree	16	10	5
Agree	2	3	2
Neither Agree /Disagree	2	1	1
Disagree	0	0	6
Strongly Disagree	0	0	6

3.4.3 Full responses from those who Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the proposals are shown below.

- I think this will encourage people to sell long term homes.
- Other councils such as in the Blackburn area have a 100% discount for the first 3 months, after this time is it should go to 50% for the rest of the year. If a property becomes empty it is impossible to do repair work, assess new tenants and get it rented to a new a new tenant in one month, Liverpool council are ripping off good intention Landlords. If a property is empty for more than a year then the Landlord may have no intention of renting and is ripping off the system and Liverpool council, possibly waiting for property prices to increase before selling, so after a year there should be no discount and full rates should be paid. The present system is just not fair on good Landlords,
- discount at 0% for the first month would possibly encourage remedial work to be carried out asap
- As an accredited landlord of two flats that I rent out very quickly due to my high standards it is very difficult to let within one month as I only advertise and allow viewings once tenants have moved out and often there is maintenance and refurbishment required. Therefore I feel one month at a discount of 100% is fair in allowing landlords to find new tenants as quickly as possible

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- As a landlord, the one month grace period ensures you redecorate and refurbish for the next tenant, thus improving quality.
- If the council tax discount is not available landlords will be forced to rent out immediately and at to the decline of the housing stock.
- Landlords who allow property to fall into disrepair is a blight on local communities and they should not receive any benefits for allowing good property to fall into disrepair
- As someone who lives next door to an uninhabited property I feel very strongly about this. The house and garden is an eye-sore which affects my house. But it could be a lovely family home for someone who really needs it and be proud to take care of it. The owners just don't care and there's no incentive for them to sell or repair especially with current council tax rules.
- This is a fantastic was for building owners to get there buildings back up and rented or sold on, I do believe if a retail unit is empty the rates should be hired to ensure the owners get the units rented out again ASAP. If a new store is to open in a unit above 10k annual rates they should get 3months free rates to help encourage company to the town.
- Reducing the empty property discount for the first month will cause distress and hardship for relatives of people who have just died. My father lived alone and died unexpectedly. It was hard enough dealing with the funeral arrangements without having had to worry about finding the money for Council Tax. The initial grace period was welcome and gave breathing space to sort out financial arrangements.
- We have had the benefit of these discounts but it was while we planned a refurbishment which is different than a property that is just abandoned. If someone can prove they are planning a refurb, or in the process of moving in, I think a discount is reasonable. Otherwise no discounts should be given. Properties should not be allowed to deteriorate or remain empty unless there are extreme circumstances. It can impact the quality of life of the neighbours & bring an area down.
- What about business premises? Land left i.e. Crown Buildings
- In response to Q3. I think you should reduce the empty property discount to 0%. It seems contradictory to charge a premium on long-term empty properties and at the same time offer a discount on short-term empty properties. There is a housing shortage in this country so it makes no sense to offer a discount that encourage owners to leave their properties empty, even for 1 month. The owners will still expect their bins to be emptied and the roads to be maintained so they should make a full contribution to the cost of local services. In my experience empty homes are a magnet for antisocial and criminal behaviour, all home owners should pay the full council tax to encourage them to occupy as soon as possible.
- Empty properties are not well maintained and bring the area down. They should be sold or rented - there is plenty of demand in most areas!



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- Stop people saying they are not living while renovating. Try 35 pr98na. Noisy get, working gone midnight!
- Q2) Reduction in Council Tax discount should surely remain in place until the property is either disposed of or until it becomes habitable and occupied.
- Q3 My definitive response to this would depend on what happens after the first month that the property is empty. Reductions in CT discount should be progressive until the property becomes occupied.
- All measures should be considered to get empty properties back into use to help with the shortage of houses.
- Past generosity cannot be sustained in the face of Central Government policy.
- Properties may be empty for family reasons...such as Caring for a family member who has a terminal illness or change of work circumstances or personal illness can mean that people cannot take up or resume residence. The home is temporarily but indefinitely empty. To add a further financial burden would be unfair and unkind. Better ways to raise revenue which is presumably what this about. Uninhabitable properties need a different approach depending on the reason for the decay. It has to be case by case policy and not a blanket rule.
- I recognise as a landlord this increase may affect me in the future should my property become empty BUT I believe that this change is needed to support our communities living near empty uncared-for properties.
- If you can afford to be lucky to have 2 or more properties you should be able to afford the Council Tax in every property.
- I think people who have left property to go to rack and ruin and have not made any efforts to renovate etc should have to pay full council tax. However I was a one property landlord. My tenant (a Sefton council early help worker) wrecked the place and left with 9 months still on the tenancy. Cost me thousands to fix. I had the property on the market within 6 weeks but still had to pay the council tax even when the sale was going through. I think it's unfair if a property is on the market and discount should be based on circumstances especially when a landlord has been left seriously out of pocket.
- Need to penalise owners financially to incentivise them to progress actions to use house for purpose intended
- I think this is a great idea that will encourage landlords to actually take care of their properties & keep houses that could be used to home people, to a better standard
- Council tax reduction should not be applied to any empty property full stop. Homes that are looking for a tenant should also be subject this to prevent landlords demanding higher rents. All homes should increase 100% year on year if left empty homes are for living not an asset to accumulation of wealth.
- I feel the current fees do not allow people to up these homes to live in due to the high costs

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- There will be cases where paying the whole Council tax will not be appropriate so there needs to be some flexibility
- Near me there are 2 empty houses, one is an eyesore & is inhabitable & the other has been empty for about 20 years & could easily be lived in again. The owners should be encouraged to act & get them sold so other families could live in this attractive area. Cutting council tax subsidies might influence the owners to offload their properties.
- People who own empty properties in state of disrepair should be forced to maintain them or give them up too many ruining neighbourhoods owned by individuals at other side of country who can't be bothered with or care about them
- Start charging rates on Charity shops - they're the ones that can afford it !!!
- I Think people who own a house should pay council tax. People should not pay council tax only in exceptional circumstance.
- If a landlord is doing major redevelopment work to the property (in order to significantly improve it for prospective tenants), then the property could be inspected by council officials (as has been done in the past) and a date given when the property MUST be brought back into use and the discount will stop (if longer than 1 month). Without this as an option landlords could be forced to house tenants in unfit properties.
- I strongly agree that criteria would need to be met and landlords leaving empty properties for lengthy periods should pay the full council tax.
- 1 month is long enough to fill a house once previous tenants leave.
- There are far more empty homes than are suggested in your discount figures. Some in PR9 have been empty for at least five years, you should be bringing these back into use before building new
- residents should be given at least one month's grace in respect of a deceased member of the family , resulting in an empty property
- There are so many reasons that a property may be empty that I think a month of 100% discount is reasonable. In general I am in favour of helping owners to get their properties back in use but would like to see some discretion being applied. e.g. if the owner is unwilling to upgrade or is mothballing a property until property prices rise they should not have a discount, but if there has been some serious damage to a property it may well take a year to get it habitable again. Would this loss of discount apply to a property that has been flooded out, for instance?
- As a landlord with 200 units in Southport, I'm appalled by the proposal that properties empty for up to a month will have to pay CTAX. The month is important to us between tenancies in order to do maintenance and upgrading to our properties. This proposal could well lead to a rush to fill and consequent lowering of housing standards. It gives us no time to properly check on applicants and is therefore a further back door tax on landlords. We already have had substantial national tax rises brought in by George Osborne,

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followed by additional licensing locally. Most private landlords I know are desperate to get out, this proposal could be the final straw. There would be consequences for Southport in that there is already a shortage of decent accommodation especially at entry level, we currently operate at 94 per cent occupancy. We need capacity in order to attract young people to live and work in the town. I fully expect widespread non reporting of vacancies with large increase in Council staff to police and enforce the new regulation.

- 1 month @ 100% is fair and not period of grace would be unreasonable. Given that the property owner has fairly paid CT previously its fair to give this period of grace, one of the ever dwindling reliefs that hard working tax payers receive.
- For empty houses consider keeping the 100% discount for 1st month if it is empty because it has recently been sold to be inhabited by the owner. (Possibly empty if work needs to be carried out or awaiting refurbishment)
- Any property left empty for more than 12 months should be compulsory purchased and sold for refurbishment.
- Paying 100% council tax myself, I find it difficult to stomach that people are being allowed to 'hold on to' property, receive a discount and not do anything to bring the property into use. I'd go further and take the property off them if empty for more than 12 months. South Sefton is becoming derelict because of this
- This action will open the way for more houses available to be sold to ease the lack of housings
- First one I absolutely agree with. Second one I think the landlord perhaps needs a month to prepare a property and source another tenant in. The landlord will only pass any charges onto the next tenant. Unless you can prevent this why penalise tenants?
- Should give people 3 months at no charge to sort their affairs out. six months at 50% then no discount.
- Hopefully this will help move owners of empty properties into a position to sell properties on which can be redeveloped which in the long term will help reduce the housing waiting list.
- We have ended up with 2 properties due to house sale falling through and having to pay 2 lots of council tax and it is crippling me been paying over 300 a month and on low income
- House opposite me in Bootle empty for at least 10yrs + almost derelict. Shouldn't be any incentive to leave houses empty when councils are using B&B accommodation. I'd double the charge.
- I don't think there should be any empty property discounts. Gives the wrong signal
- Make landlords responsible by reducing the discounts

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- Ensure that these developers that buy old houses cheaply to do up and sell on for a large profit should be given a reasonable completion date and if not sold or completed by that date charge them full council tax.
- There should be a maximum time limit on properties which are left empty awaiting probate There are cases where houses are empty for over 30 years and have still not been probated despite their owner passing away in the mid 1980's
- This will encourage those that have an empty property to take some responsibility for the upkeep. As someone who has lived next door to an empty property for 4 years, it is awful
- If you own a property you should still pay Council Tax on it.
- If people have purchased uninhabitable properties with the intention of doing them up to move in to they do not need additional cost of council tax. They are likely paying council tax elsewhere whilst they do up the property. I believe reducing council tax on uninhabitable or empty properties is a way of helping property owners bring their property into a habitable state quicker.
- I think that they disproportionately affect the owners because they would pay a great amount when others who cost the community so much more aren't made to pay . It is very wrong. The burden of cost will bring worry and hardship to many. You take choice from such people who may have personal reasons for not selling a property.

## 3.4.4 Full responses from respondents who Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with the proposals are shown below.

- The one month discount should be removed completely.
- The uninhabitable discount should not be removed. How can you charge for a property that has no roof, no wall or is unsafe and undergoing structural works to return the property to a safe standard for habitation?
- Strongly disagree with removal of uninhabitable discount.
- Morally questionable to charge for an unsafe property.
- This penny pinching money grabbing action may force people to occupy an unsafe dwelling with dangerous consequences.
- We have taken on a property that cannot be bought by a mortgage which takes a lot of money to transform to be habitable again no council tax can be obtained till property back in circulation so would be harsh to charge full rate agree with 50% feel that is fair
- People moving into empty properties already have a lot of expenses and reducing discount would not help them at all.
- You say you want to create an incentive to property owners to occupy/tenant their properties but if no uninhabited discount whilst the work is done is available, what incentive is there in that? May as well just not rush at getting

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the work done, leave it empty for 2yrs and then furnish it. Unless you're a landlord wanting rent.....

- The discounts are a helpful financial support for those renovating properties that are not in a liveable state and therefore should remain.
- Landlords are already being penalised as the property is empty, with no income. This will make it worse. Also, services used are very few, so landlords would simply be subsidising others.
- Flooding and uninsurable risk can render properties uninhabitable. Who can afford insurance and who can afford Council Tax? Perhaps the Waspi women would have something to say about money grabbing officials. Pay the pensions due then let's discuss further.
- Owning a property that I let out, I find it very frustrating that I have to pay council tax on the property if it is uninhabited. Fair enough if I was just allowing the property to sit empty, but once empty it gets renovated and goes back on the market immediately, this period should be discounted at 50% or more, as this inhabited state is out of my hands.
- I strongly disagree as my home has been uninhabitable for the last 12 months and so I'm living with my parents still I'm not using all local services e.g. rubbish collections.
- Properties are empty for various reasons. It should not be an automatic process. Feel this would probably impact lower income families rather than those on higher incomes.
- From personal experience, when a loved one dies and subsequently leaves a property empty, there are many things to pay for like funeral expenses. At least having 100% council tax reduction gives some release of pressure.
- The council should offer a longer discount to homeowners who leave their home empty for a period of time if there are certainly circumstances e.g. the house is for sale or rent, or are undergoing significant renovations or building works that prevent the owners living there.
- For owners with properties that have been empty for a long period they should receive support to encourage them to take the next steps to move towards sale, renovation or rental.
- I think there are differing sets of circumstances. My own experience of this was when my mum died in 2014 – it took me several weeks to clean out her home and eventually put it up for sale, and another 8 months to sell it. I'm glad I didn't have the additional burden of council tax during this time and feel sorry for anyone in future in this position if this proposal goes ahead. That said, there may be instances of profiteering landlords who take advantage on the system. I don't know how you could differentiate.
- Councils are going too far with these measures No welfare considerations of situations difficulties people may have regarding homes whether uninhabitable or unoccupied. Far too many crass unloving assumptions being made. Councils are now seen as greedy and behaving in authoritative uncontrolled

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way without any consideration for those that employ you. This will in the end lead to a demise of control and loss of funds,

- Hello, Its simple. If you want the rental housing stock to be kept in good condition then don't penalise the people trying to do it. Find a way to give Council tax relief to Landlords who refurbish property between tenants either as a simple repair and redecorate, or a substantial refit.
- We are in the process of renovating a property and have to wait to put our house up for sale until it is virtually habitable, as we are paying full council tax at our existing property within the same council area this has helped us greatly only having to pay 50% , we cannot claim back our stamp duty funds until we sell our existing property and begin to live in the renovated property.
- I think it is unfair to have no discount on properties that can't be lived in. Usually there will be a reason that is only temporary so offering some discount for a short period seems fair (as I'm sure money is having to be spent to get the property back to a living state) rather than nothing at all!
- I buy houses that are in need of total renovation and make them into lovely family homes. I have used the 50% discount on Ctax twice in 2 years and the property goes from the ugliest house in the road to the best. I usually turn them around in 6-7 months, never need the full 12 months discounts. But with legal fees, estate agents' fees, and the big one stamp duty it is becoming almost not worth developing the properties anymore. adding more and more expense will put off improving homes and NOT do what you are trying to achieve by improving vacant homes.
- As a Private Landlord we are seen as an endless source of revenue for the council. New legislation has been introduced which entails most of our properties have to be licenced. Not only do I have to pay for the privilege of having a licence, the works that have to be carried out in order to comply run into thousands with no hint of grants to carry out these works. It is now prevalent for Tenants to leave the properties in such disorder it takes at least a month to make them habitable again. This is another expense we are having to deal with as I am sure are Housing Associations and your own Housing Stock. As Landlords we provide vital housing but it is becoming more and more difficult with the added costs which just keep coming with no increase of Housing Benefit to meet the rents.
- I fully understand what the Council is trying to do. But it is very important that the Council is firstly satisfied that the discount is GENUINE if not then NO discount simple!
- This is penalising everyone with the poorer being hit the hardest. Struggling landlords are hit badly but even those with homes that are trying to renovate and make a nice home for themselves, it is not acceptable to reduce discounts so heavily when the costs would shoot up so much higher. It's not even a slight increase in costs, it's huge. Not all landlords have lots of cash and definitely not all home owners. Properties can be empty or uninhabitable for many reasons. Particularly if cash runs out for renovation etc on a home or rental flat. Or a sale has fallen through of an empty property. I have lost

thousands in council tax costs for the reasons above and I'm not wealthy at all. It's a very damaging new law to bring in and hits everyone not just the rich.

- Have you seen the carnage in the high streets? Recession looms. Private landlords are underpinning housing need. Between the local authority charging full rate for an empty property (do not insult our intelligence by arguing it benefits from the same LA services, it does not, because it is empty) and the government stealing what was a genuine tax relief on mortgage interest payments, you are killing the viability of renting for many small private landlords and also driving rents up. I suggest you take a stroll down Lord Street, Southport. Once a jewel in Sefton's crown. And hang your heads in collective shame.
- It is not always easy to find a suitable tenant straight away after one tenant moved out - people have to give notice on their current properties before taking on another! When the property is empty none of the services are being used and therefore the property owner is being charged twice for council tax and this is unfair! If anything a longer discount should be given than just one month on an empty property!
- If you have no idea of the circumstances as to why the property is uninhabitable then this is just blindly punishing genuine people
- Have to be careful not to make it desirable to leave properties empty so people can use this as an effective tax loophole
- In my opinion if a property is suffering from structural issues and/or needs a full refurbishment then these should be given the 12 months free. The person involved in purchasing this property whether it be a new purchaser or landlord is taking all the financial risk and won't be living in the premises. It is outrageous to charge them council tax whilst they are renovating a rundown building and it stinks of greed from the council once again.
- What services are you actually providing to an empty property where you need to charge?? I do agree with charging if a property is long term empty say 6 months or more but not whilst someone is making an effort to breathe life into a property and community.
- The current discount supports landlords to find new tenants, repair properties after poor tenants or to have time to sell a house. I was forced to rent my property as it is negative equity. I do not make a profit on it. The area the house is in is poorly maintained by the council and surrounded by anti-social behaviour, therefore unattractive to a buyer. I rely on the discount during transitional times.
- If a tenant leaves the process of finding a new one and referencing (especially if there is a problem) can take 8 weeks. Renovations are required to meet safety regs and provide nice places to live - you may have to wait for trades or decide not to bother. If you buy somewhere to renovate and bring back into use, planning and trades can take ages. So it's another in a series of landlord bashing taxes. Another rental property likely to be lost from the market. Or of course I increase the rent. I cannot absorb anymore.

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- I never got any discount after the first month of my flat being empty even though it was uninhabitable. The officer that came to look at it smugly said he could have it ready to use in a few weeks. No allowance for the fact that I had not received any rent for 6 months because of Universal tax credits then tenant died so I didn't get a penny and now I am struggling to find the money to make it habitable. How does charging full tax help a landlord get a flat ready to use again ????
- Inherited a flat. We are pensioners and have difficulty selling due to housing association part owner.
- Previous owner paid no council tax. We have difficulty making payments through no fault of ours
- Think it unfair that someone has to pay Council Tax if no one is living in a property and are therefore not using many of the services the Council Tax pays for.
- I am part owner of a property that is inherited from my parents, it has just been put into our names 22 months after the death, it has now been put up for sale but the agents are having little response. The problem with empty properties is Solicitors dragging their feet for little work to try to justify their fees, similarly with Estate Agents.
- Most good landlords will endeavour to fill their properties to gain the rent. This usually takes about 3 months on average due to property maintenance following a tenant's departure and the usual security and credit checks etc. Pay 50% council tax is not large burden in the short term.
- However is the property required a lot of repairs following a tenant's departure as some are not very house proud it could take up to 6 months to get the property straight again so while the property is undergoing those repairs then reducing it to 0% would be a welcome benefit. After 6 months most landlords will have endeavoured to get the property filled again.
- We own a 'Listed' Thatched cottage that requires a complete new roof and other essential work. Sefton's Planning Department has taken over six months to grant permission to do the repairs, thus losing half of the 12 months discount! Due to the 'Listing' requirements, the roof has to be re-thatched, and there are only two Master Thatcher's in the North-West of England. The Thatcher we have engaged to do the work, Wayne Halfpenny from Manchester, has a long waiting list of up to three years, and we are now caught up in a lengthy situation through no fault of our own. **THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHY YOUR NEW PROPOSALS MUST INCLUDE PROVISION FOR EXCEPTIONAL SITUATIONS SURROUNDING RARE PROPERTIES OF THIS KIND.**
- Once the cottage becomes habitable, our daughter will be moving in, thus releasing her own family home to be sold and provide additional accommodation in Sefton.
- Surely this is discriminatory against landlords and could be challenged in the courts?!! Landlords don't need additional "incentivising". This is just a cynical



attack on landlords who are a group that do not usually get any sympathy from the general public who perceive them as fat cats raking in the cash (which just isn't true in 99.9% of cases, most landlords only have one property and are often accidental landlords at that).

- Landlords provide a valued service and should be supported and not targeted or discriminated against by the authorities. If the government funded housing properly there wouldn't be much of a need for landlords! The authorities (both central and local) should be supporting landlords, not continuing to make their lives ever more difficult and unsustainable. What make you think people can afford to extensively renovate and fix up a property which is otherwise uninhabitable?
- Having the uninhabitable discount allows owners to invest the money in making the property habitable sooner, rather than paying full council tax
- The circumstances as to why properties are uninhabitable are not always straightforward. What about fire or accidental damage, flooding etc.? Charging Council tax immediately would add to the burden. What about landlords where tenants vandalise properties when they leave? Properties that are proving difficult to sell. Charging Council tax immediately in these instances is unfair. It's fine to charge 200%+ where someone is deliberately keeping a property empty, but this would surely be the exception, not the normal. Each case should be decided on its own merit, not an inflexible 'one rule for everything'
- Any residential purchaser will suffer here whether it is making a property habitable to move in to or awaiting a purchaser after a house move. First time buyers will suffer as will anyone else trying to better themselves. It took me 6 months to make my house habitable.
- no 3 when a tenant gives months' notice to leave I advertise the property and hopefully get a new tenant however I cannot get a new tenancy agreement signed until the old tenant has actually vacated because if they don't I have nowhere to house the new tenant. the new tenant may have to give his current landlord a months' notice and therefore my property is "empty " for that month. reducing c/tax to 50% in those situations is rather unfair. with regards no 2 if the property is being advertised for let some discount should be allowed
- I am trying to sell my late mother's flat. It's not sold for over one year and shortly I will have to pay 200% Council Tax on it if it doesn't sell. Doesn't seem fair
- Only in the event of fire on family home rebuilds should discounts be applied. Landlords should not benefit from reductions. Single occupant should receive more discounts due to reduced demand on services
- After a tenant leaves it is not always possible to re let a property or sell a property to get it back on the housing stock within 3 months. The old rule of 3 months discount was much fairer particularly now that it so prolonged to get an eviction through the courts if needed.
- Empty council properties are they costing the tax payer in higher council tax fees.

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- Removing the discount will force landlords to put properties back up for rent straight away when tenants leave at the end of tenancies. Not allowing them to opportunity to carry out upgrades & refurbishments, this in turn will reduce the quality of the rental housing stock in the borough. At a time when there is lack of rental housing in Sefton you should be offering the PRS tax breaks not removing them. this will ultimately end up with landlords to selling up. This will increase the burden on the council who will have to pay for more hotels and B&Bs for temporary accommodation for residents who have no alternates to social housing.
- As a landlord of 5 properties I obviously want my properties occupied, BUT, when a tenant leaves I think it's unfair to make a landlord pay council tax immediately as obviously I need to do repairs, redecorating and find a new tenant.
- This can sometimes take a few months to do properly. I think 3 months is fairer. But I think properly that are left empty for more than 12 months should be charged double council tax.
- I have personally experienced having an uninhabitable property after suffering a burst pipe in the loft right down to the ground floor of my property. I had to vacate my home whilst works were carried out which took a lot longer than originally predicted. I think it would be unfair to cancel the uninhabitable discount.
- I do not think that the uninhabitable discount should be reduced to 0%, as this would not encourage a prospective owner to buy a dilapidated property to do up and bring back in use. Perhaps consideration could be given to reducing the length of time from 12 to 6 months.
- Council Tax is expensive enough.
- If a property is uninhabitable, not just vacant, I can't see the rationale in charging Council Tax on it. No services would be provided to the property so what would the charge be for? I know of at least one person whose home was flooded and had to be gutted and dried out before renovation was possible. In this scenario would Council Tax be charged in future? It would not improve the speed of repair or encourage quicker occupation of the property. On the second point, if a rented property becomes vacant it surely isn't always possible to find a new tenant within just a few days? I think the existing arrangement is already too punitive. It seems the Council are looking for ways to make easy money rather than encouraging occupancy of vacant properties.
- As an independent landlord I feel it is wrong to suggest there would not be a reduction if a home is undergoing major repairs making the property uninhabitable. As a landlord we have a duty to ensure any property is upkept to a good standard yet if we choose to invest in doing so we would be further penalised by charges for council tax services we would not be utilising due to the property being empty.
- Charging for services that would not be used in an empty property is unfair when you choose to act in good faith and invest in a property for somebody

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else to make a comfortable home in. It would encourage unscrupulous landlords to delay carrying out essential repairs knowing they would be penalised in such a way with further charges.

- I have been a landlord in the past and understand how difficult it can be to organise a new tenant to go straight in following the vacation of the previous tenant.
- It needs to be considered that not all tenants leave a property in a fit state to re let immediately.
- it also needs to be considered that RSL's are often not for profit and charging for empty properties will make it an increasing cost that will reduce the available money for repair, and the ability to keep rents low.
- Private landlords will just pass the cost on to tenants, who are already struggling in an increasingly expensive market.
- People should be given a reduction to help them fund renovation projects, the property would become habitable quicker. Landlords usually have to redecorate after a tenant leaves.
- These proposals will be highly detrimental to disadvantaged/low income people. Example: family on low income who inherited an empty uninhabitable house (no usable kitchen or bathroom facilities for a start) when the father of one of them passed away, moved into the property (freeing up their previously rented accommodation and no longer needing to claim housing benefit), but could only do so after major works were carried out to make it habitable (it took about a year to get it all sorted). They didn't have the funds to make this happen quickly and wouldn't have been able to do it at all if they'd had to pay full council tax during this period.
- Owners may not have funds to repair uninhabitable properties. An additional financial burden makes it more likely they will walk away. (An empty property doesn't cost the council anything as no services are provided).
- A month isn't very long, and a property can easily be empty for that time between owners. Again an empty property isn't costing the council anything as no services are provided.
- We have recently been unfortunate enough to have been "had over" by a very unscrupulous tenant who abandoned the property in a distressing state after failing to pay her rent and causing us to regain possession via the courts. We are significantly out of pocket, despite only ever acting in good faith, and on top of the loss of rent and legal fees we have had to invest heavily in the property to make in habitable again. Whilst the tenant is not directly to blame for the fact that the kitchen and bathroom were a bit dated and the house was in need of some upgrading, she was certainly the catalyst that made all the work essential at this time rather than in stages, over time and in a planned and budgeted for manner. We gained the property back in mid-May and have undertaken significant work since then, the bathroom and kitchen are still not refitted but hopefully in another month or so it should be back to something like a complete house again. All the time we have still had to pay the

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mortgage and insurance for the property as well as, of course, our own family household costs. We have two children who also require our time and financial investment so all in all the last 12 months have been extremely stressful and financially crippling. One small concession we have had in our favour during the time since we gained possession of the property back was the initial free month and subsequent 50% discount on the council tax. It is a relatively small amount in the scheme of things, compared to what we have/are having to pay out but it is still a relief to get that concession which is only fair due to the property being empty. We have invested in the property as necessary to ensure that when it is available to future tenants is it clean and comfortable and to a standard that anyone deserves to live in so if we were to be penalised by having to pay full Council Tax on a property that is not utilising any of the amenities/services funded by the Council Tax then it would be completely unfair and unjust. We would strongly urge you not to make the proposed changes and continue to offer what is fair and decent and right to any person acting in good faith and investing in their property. What is the alternative? Unscrupulous landlords will delay carrying out essential work because of unfair changes that they will have to pay? Privately rented property standards will decrease. I don't see that it is beneficial to anyone. Your letter states that any funds raised from the proposed changes will be used to fund statutory services and to keep council tax levels down but it is completely unfair, why should someone who is not utilising the statutory services at a specific property pay for other people's benefit, surely all charges and taxes should be fair and just and charging someone for something they are not using is neither. With regards to the current 100% discount for the first month a property is empty that is also fair and should not be changed. If a tenant moves out there is always work to be done by way of cleaning and clearing and at least minor decoration. It also takes considerable time to market the property, have relevant checks carried out on potential tenants and assume they will need to give 1 months' notice on their current property therefore even 1 month discounted never covers the length of time it takes for someone new to move in but it is a fair reduction to start with. Reducing the discount just adds further financial burden on private landlords acting in good faith who are already in a situation of having to invest in a property and pay fees for finding a new tenant.

- If you buy a property which is uninhabitable you would still be paying council tax where you were living. It would be unfair to have to pay 2 full charges. This would put people off buying run down properties and make the empty homes issue worse. Rather than change the discount amount maybe consider just reducing the time from 12 to 6 months to give new owners time to get the essential work scheduled.
- This is just another example of all landlords being demonised and used as a cash cow by government instead of addressing the real issues. Sefton Council should understand that no reasonable landlord wants to leave a rental property empty for longer than they need to when it could be earning rent. The proposed change of the 100% discount on council tax relief to 50% for properties vacant for less than a month is particularly troubling. A good

landlord may need that month at the end of a tenancy to carry out any necessary work (which may include repairing damage caused by the tenant) ready for the next tenant.

- I have had an empty property previously when a leak caused major damage in my home and I was forced to move out. It took me months to rectify and I didn't have money to hurry it up. Not all empty properties are rich landlords who can't be bothered
- Southport has a large proportion of older property that badly need updating and improvement. If a family inherits a house after a bereavement, a month is too short a period for families to adjust to decide their next step. Landlords could be left with empty properties if tenants leave. Which will deter landlords from providing an essential service as lots of younger people are not able to get on to the property ladder.

## **4. Equality Impact Assessment**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Any change to function, provision or policy that may have an effect on people is automatically subject of the Equality Act 2010. As such the 'decision makers' have a statutory duty to pay 'due regard' to equality legislation and the potential discriminatory impact that changes have on service users. To inform decision makers, an 'equality analysis report' is submitted to them at the time of decision making for them to consider equality implications as part of their final decision making.

To meet equality legislation public bodies have to consider Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: -

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and person who do not share it.

### **4.2 Protected Characteristics**

Equality Law (Equality Act 2010) is clear that there are characteristics intrinsic to an individual against which it would be easy to discriminate. Section 149 (the Public-Sector Equality Duty) cites the goals of the Act and the characteristics, known as 'protected characteristics' against which we have to test for discrimination. These characteristics are gender, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and disability.

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## 4.3 Consultation

Sefton Council is considering reducing the Council Tax discounts on properties deemed uninhabitable for a period of up to 12 months, and for empty properties empty for up to 1 month.

The changes will help to reduce the number of empty homes and bring them back into use through sale or renting and align the level of discounts available to those offered across the Liverpool City Region. Additional income raised from the changes to the discounts will help support the provision of Council services.

As part of the consultation, equalities questions were asked in connection to gender, age, disability and ethnicity. The main issues that the Council has to consider in relation to the proposed changes to the scheme in relation to equality and diversity are:

- Disabled people, on very low income, who are unable to carry out the necessary renovations to properties themselves or pay someone to do it for them.
- Where owners are struggling to cope with managing the property they own.

## 4.4 Impacts

The tables below highlight what evidence we have on how the proposed changes will affect different groups and communities in relation to equalities and human rights. Where numbers are presented which refer to the survey, this relates to the number of people who responded to the equality questions in the survey and aligned to the question on impacts. People who responded to the survey and reported any impacts, whether this was a lot of impact or no impact, did so from an individual perspective. The table recognises the responses to the survey but also considers any detrimental impact on the protected characteristic as a whole and includes the mitigations the Council has in place.

### Breakdown of respondents by Gender

In terms of the 218 respondents to the survey 106 identified as a woman, 90 as a man, 17 preferred not to say and 5 did not answer.

185 respondents identified as being the same gender as at birth, 1 identified as being a different gender to birth and 32 did not answer or preferred not to say.

### Breakdown of respondents by Age ranges

In terms of the 218 respondents to the survey, 211 gave the following age ranges:

Age	Total
18-29	8
30-39	27
40-49	48

50-59	64
60-69	47
70-79	15
80-84	1
85+	1
Not answered	7

## **Breakdown of respondents by Postcode**

Of the 218 respondents to the survey, the following postcodes were submitted.

L10	L20	L20	L22	L23	L30
3	18	15	8	25	8
L31	L37	PR8	PR9	Outside Sefton	No Response
8	17	52	49	7	8

## **Disability**

15 respondents identified as being disabled when asked that if they have HIV, cancer or diabetes they would be classed as 'disabled' under the Equality Act 2010.

## **Other Disabilities**

When asked 'do you have any disabilities?' 4 indicated mental health problems, 1 indicated being on the Autistic Spectrum/Asperger's Syndrome, 5 indicated problems with hearing, 1 indicated problems seeing, 9 indicated they have difficulty walking or moving about or use a wheelchair. 38 did not answer, or preferred not to say.

## **Ethnicity**

Respondents were asked to identify their ethnicity.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Total</b>
White British	109
White English	67
White Irish	4
White Scottish	2
White Polish	1
Mixed Background Other	3
Mixed Background – Asian & White	2
Other White background	4
Chinese	1
Prefer not to say / no response	25

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## **Religion or Belief**

88 Respondents indicated a religion or belief. 86 identified as Christian, 1 as other religion and 1 did not specify the religion.

## **Relationships (Sexual Orientation)**

164 Respondents indicated their relationships. 158 identified as heterosexual, 2 identified as bisexual, 1 identified as lesbian and 3 identified as gay.

### 4.5 **Impacts**

<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	
Gender	No inadvertent bias on the basis of gender is indicated. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
Race/Ethnicity	No inadvertent bias on the basis of race/ethnicity is indicated. The proposals do not treat people of different race/ethnicity groups any differently and we have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
Religion and Belief	No inadvertent bias on the basis of religion or belief. The proposals do not treat persons of different religions or beliefs any differently and we have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
Sexual Orientation	No inadvertent bias on the basis of sexual orientation is indicated. The proposals do not treat persons of different sexual orientation any differently. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
Age	No inadvertent bias on the basis of age is indicated. Young people looking to join the property ladder or rent an affordable property may be affected as more empty properties are made available. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
Gender Reassignment	No inadvertent bias on the basis of gender reassignment age is indicated in the proposals. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
Pregnancy and Maternity	No inadvertent bias on the basis of pregnancy and maternity is indicated. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
Disability	No inadvertent bias on the basis of disability is indicated. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.

### 4.6 **Mitigations**

#### **Key measures in place**

- Any short term financial hardship or other exceptional circumstances affecting a person's ability to pay will be addressed by the Council's Discretionary Reduction



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in Liability Policy, and the promotion of that policy, so additional support can be provided for those in exceptional need.

- Sefton Council will continue to provide proactive and tailored support for those Council Tax payers who struggle to make payments and will continue to ensure that recovery procedures identify cases where additional support might be required.
- A proactive approach will be taken to identify persons meeting the severe mental impairment conditions set out in the Council Tax Regulations with a view to exempting them from paying Council Tax.
- The Council will continue working with and supporting customers whose first language is not English.
- Customers affected by the proposals will be contacted directly and provided with clear explanation and offers of advice and support.
- The Council's website information will be updated to reflect the key changes and any issues identified

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## Annex C

### Increase in Long-Term Empty Homes Premium Consultation Findings

#### 1. Background

A public consultation ran for 5 weeks from 29th October 2018 to 3rd December 2018.

The consultation requested views on the proposal to increase the premium charge from 50% to 100% from 1 April 2019.

It also asked for views on further options to increase the premium charged on properties that have been empty for longer than 5 years to 200% from 1 April 2020 and those empty for 10 years or more to 300% from 1 April 2021.

The consultation was available online and by paper form to download where required. Direct mailing was used to contact all Council Tax payers currently liable to pay the Empty Homes Premium, and the consultation was promoted internally through the service, including the Council's Empty Homes Team.

Letters about the consultation were also sent to various stakeholders including private and registered social landlords and our major preceptors Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Information about the survey was also available at Council libraries and the One Stop Shops. The Council also promoted the consultation on its website, intranet, via a press release and the Council's social media.

The aim of the survey is to ensure that the views of those Council Tax payers affected, other stakeholders and members of the public are considered before the decision is made to implement the premium and that any exceptions to the premium be considered.

#### 2. Consultation Options

The options consulted on were as follows,

**Question 1** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposals to double the Council tax premium on properties that have been left empty for more than 2 years from 50 per cent to 100 per cent.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Question 2** Do you have any comments relating to this proposal? You may wish to highlight any circumstances where this premium should not apply other than those examples mentioned earlier that are already exempt from Council Tax.

**Question 3** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the potential future changes to increase the premium to 200 per cent on homes left empty from 5 to 10 years from April 2020 and to 300 per cent on those empty for more than 10 years from 1 April 2021?

- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

**Question 4** Do you have any comments relating to the potential future changes to increase the premium to 200 per cent on homes left empty from 5 to 10 years from April 2020 and to 300 per cent on those empty for more than 10 years from 1 April 2021? You may wish to highlight any circumstances where this premium should not apply other than those examples mentioned earlier that are already exempt from Council Tax.

### 3. Analysis of survey results

- o In total, there were 129 responses to the on-line consultation, which is relatively substantial for a premium affecting only 645 properties.
- o Details of the capacity in which those who responded to the on-line survey are listed in the table below: -

(a)	A Member of the public	78
(b)	A Local business owner	2
(c)	A landlord of a property in Sefton that isn't empty	24
(d)	A landlord of a property that is empty	17
(e)	An elected Member	0
(f)	A local charity, voluntary or community organisation	0
(g)	Other (please specify) Executor	4
	No response provided	4

- 3.1 Of the 129 respondents to the online Questionnaire, the following postcodes were submitted

Postcode breakdown					
Outside Sefton	L20	L21	L22	L23	L30
<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>
L31	L37	L38	PR8	PR9	Not Completed
<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36</b>

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## 3.2 Responses to questions

**Question 1** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposals to double the Council tax premium on properties that have been left empty for more than 2 years from 50 per cent to 100 per cent.

Strongly agree	51
Agree	15
Neither agree nor disagree	7
Disagree	12
Strongly disagree	43
No response provided	1

**Question 2** Do you have any comments relating to this proposal? You may wish to highlight any circumstances where this premium should not apply other than those examples mentioned earlier that are already exempt from Council Tax.

	<b>Comment</b>
L20	<p>Most Landlords don't deliberately leave property's empty for more than a year.</p> <p>As a property owner, I'm trying to find a tenant. Increased council tax penalises me for this.</p> <p>I agree that increasing the council tax on long term empty properties is a fair approach as long as constructive advice is available from the council. I feel that the initial exemption of one month for vacant unfurnished properties should be extended to two months.</p> <p>There may also be economic reasons for the property being empty. Only if the owner does not cooperate with the Council to change this should the premium may be in place.</p> <p>Monies raised should be put towards social housing care.</p> <p>Why should anyone have to be "incentivised", or to put it another way, bullied and forced into occupying, or putting their property up for rent, or even for sale, just because it has been empty for a certain length of time? It is THEIR house, NOT a COUNCIL house, and therefore it is the OWNER's right to choose what they do with their property, as long as it is not illegal or anti-social, and all the bills are paid. It is irrelevant how long a private house stays empty, as long as it is kept in a reasonable state of repair and is not causing any problems to the neighbours, so therefore, the owner should only have to pay the standard rate of Council Tax like other property owners, NOT an inflated rate. It is not up to private property owners to solve the Council's housing problem, nor is it up to them to be an easy target to solve Sefton Council's financial problems. The Council should be targeting those who deliberately evade paying Council tax, not ripping off those who do pay - this</p>

	<p>proposal is just wrong. Just because somebody owns a property does not mean that they are rich. I inherited my house from my parents who worked extremely hard to buy a house which they would eventually leave to me; they were very proud of being able to do this for me. As well as having a strong emotional attachment to the house, I am disabled, on a very low income, and therefore unable to renovate the house myself, or pay for a builder to do it. Why should I be penalised by having to pay a huge premium? I have done nothing wrong, I am not a scrounger who expects something for nothing; I pay all the bills on the property. Likewise, somebody who is working and on a low income cannot afford to pay a builder to renovate their property and so would have to do it themselves at weekends and after work - a long job. Why should they be penalised with a huge premium?</p> <p>An excellent proposal. The Council needs to generate revenue in any way possible.</p> <p>The refurbishment of this property is progressing well &amp; being done to a high standard. This is taking longer &amp; costing more than we anticipated, but the property is in good repair &amp; not causing any nuisance or issue for neighbours (with whom we are on very good terms) or Sefton Council. The additional imposition of Council Tax costs would inevitably lead to financial pressures which could offset completion of refurbishment works. We are retired people who are doing our best to look after a house that has been in our family since 1941.</p> <p>My property was seriously vandalised by last council tax tenant and I just haven't got the funds (in excess of £3000) required for repair and replacement.</p> <p>As a private landlord with one property, our former home, the additional financial burden of having an empty property was not one i was expecting. Unfortunately, tenants are not perfect and i have suffered through non-payment of rent, eviction costs and extensive repairs of damage caused by the tenant. So, despite having to meet the mortgage on the property while it is empty, and pay for repairs the recent changes in council tax cause further burden. Originally a 6 month exemption period applied to empty properties. That has now reduced to one month. The increase in premiums adds further to my financial issues.</p> <p>It is not my intention that the property remains empty, why would it? But additional council tax premiums simply prevent or delay the necessary work required to get the property in rental condition.</p>
L21	<p>If a property is up for sale they should not have to pay the charges.</p> <p>Your proposal would punish people who are already punished and will do nothing to improve the poor housing situation. There are many reasons for houses to be left unoccupied for a length of time and none of these are to benefit the owner. Your proposal, and</p>

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	<p>indeed your current policy, merely compounds the financial hardship. It would be far more effective to offer help to the owners of long term occupied homes to get them ready for sale/rental. Loans and grants should be available. Compulsory purchase could also be an option should the owners keep a property empty for two years or, perhaps, a commandeering of the property to re rented to deserving people with the equivalent of social rent only going to the owners. There are many solutions to the housing shortage and the number of unoccupied homes and none of them involve imposing what amounts to monthly fines.</p> <p>Sometimes people own properties that have fallen into disrepair and they do not have the funds to renovate it.</p> <p>I think this possibly to apply to landlords, however I wouldn't agree with it for our circumstances. My mother passed away and we have been trying to sell her bungalow. Naturally it's in our interests to get rid as soon as possible but it's not been as easy as it sounds. The property has sold 6 times, but the sale has been withdrawn for one reason or another (not due to anything wrong with the property) so here we are over 12 months down the line. We are constantly worried about the property being broken into because there are no police to deal with that. I have emailed many times about recruiting more police but she doesn't reply. The fact is that your council probably owns many of the empty properties anyway.</p>
L22	<p>If someone can afford to leave a property empty for that length of time they're clearly able to afford it, so the charges are an entirely appropriate incentive to correct the commercial priorities.</p> <p>Unfortunately, I am unaware of all the reasons that people have for not paying their council tax on an empty property but the existing exclusions should remain.</p> <p>For small landlords, this is a crippling double penalty when added to the already lost the rental income. Landlords with large portfolios (exceeding £1 million) who might have property for investment purposes can afford to pay 100%.</p> <p>No one should be expected to pay more than 100% charge. The services for the property are the same for everyone whether the property is empty or occupied. In fact, empty properties are not impacting on Sefton Council services for a property.</p> <p>The property needs work and this further expense would further delay the work going ahead If the owner is living on a pension may be some assistance could be provided.</p>
L23	<p>As a landlord in Sefton I have previously been impacted by the 50% additional charge. I have purchased empty properties which have required full renovations before I could find tenants. As one property had already exceeded the 2 years of being empty when I</p>

purchased it I was liable for the additional council tax charges. This I felt was unfair. Surely taking a property which is not liveable and has been empty for some time and doing the necessary renovations to provide additional affordable homes in the area is a good thing and should be rewarded and not punished. That said I agree that properties should not be kept empty and a penalty should be in place for those who sit on empty properties. I am aware that this can be a problem in some areas I think a fair addition to the new rules would be to reset the clock on these properties when newly purchased to provide landlords like myself the opportunity and incentive to improve living standards within Sefton.

There are a number of unused/ derelict buildings and it would be a positive result if an increased council tax payment forced the owners into letting or selling them, to bring vibrancy to the area. However, those with legitimate reasons for leaving the property empty should not be penalised.

I think the 100% charge should be applied after 6 months of being empty. It is inappropriate to leave a property empty while so many people need a home and councils are having financial difficulties.

It might make the owner make more of an effort to get the property occupied.

It is crucial that people do not continue to have incentives to leave houses empty by the current lower council tax rate, given the numbers of homeless people and others who may be living in cramped conditions. This increase would hopefully be some deterrent.

I think you should look at the finances of the owners of these properties. If they live elsewhere it's possible that they can't afford more council tax and by taking them to court you would waste even more money. I don't think it should be a complete ban on the exemption of the 50% tax as it is now. I even think that is too much - isn't the tax for facilities used and if no-one lives there they don't use any facilities!

I would suggest the increase should be even larger, say to 200%, to have a greater effect on the situation.

It is immoral for people to have unused living accommodation while there are so many families without a home.

I feel that a lot of people for good reasons could have a property for 2 or 3 years empty so 50% seems fairer

Where probate has been granted and the property is for sale

My parents are stuck living next door to an empty property that has

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been that way in excess of 10 years. Owners refuse to sell yet put solar shades on a roof that is in a bad state of repair? My elderly parents are petrified that squatters will move in and we have no way of contacting these selfish owners. My parents and their neighbours try to keep the front of the house tidy so it isn't obvious what the situation is but are too elderly to continue to keep that up. It is a disgrace the place is left to rot. Hit the owners where it hurts - in their pocket and this will hopefully make them do something about the property.

The government and local authorities are taking a totally simplistic view and failing to understand the complex series of factors that can cause properties to remain empty, including for example, simple lack of market demand, or lack of financial resource on the part of the owner to bring dilapidated properties back from the brink back into use.....even just these two example factors can have a complex inter-relationship, with one interacting on the other. The proper and productive approach to this problem would be to abandon the stick (or at least not make it any bigger) and throw a carrot or two at it.

I understand why the proposal would be implemented for empty properties that could be brought back into use. However, this should not apply to circumstances such as the one that I am in. I am executor to my mother's will - she died in January 2015 and probate was obtained in May 2015, since when the property has been up for sale. It is a one bedroomed retirement shared ownership flat in XX. It went on the market at £65,000 and has been reduced over time to its current asking price of £44,950 and has been on the market with two estate agents. The shared ownership is with a Housing Association and they are difficult to deal with and I have lost one buyer due to their incompetence. In the meantime, not only do I have to pay council tax at an additional 50% rate, but I shall have to pay monthly service charges and a sinking fund charge if ever it is sold. There will be very little money left by the time this all happens. I feel very strongly that I should not be having to pay any council tax, as I receive no services whatsoever, never mind an additional premium. Due to myself spending lots of my time caring for my mother, I managed to keep her out of Sefton's Social Services system, and she never needed any additional support from the Council. Also, the Council itself does nothing to help me sell the flat - sale boards are not allowed outside the listed building. I am unable to bring the flat into use unless it is sold, one of the conditions of the lease is that I am unable to rent it out. I am extremely concerned whether there will be sufficient funds if the council tax charge is further increased. In circumstances where an executor to a will is unable to sell or rent a property and can prove that they have done everything possible to sell it, there should be an exemption.

For someone who is already paying nearly £250.00 a month taking it to nearly £400.00 a month is just too much.



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L30	<p>If a property is up for sale, I can't see how you can penalise people who want to sell the property but it is taking longer than they wanted.</p> <p>Property's that are up for sale should be exempt from the increase.</p> <p>We have had the house up for sale for 2 years but can't sell it. Properties that are on the market and empty should be exempt from this.</p> <p>When properties are left empty when owners have gone into care the council should check that they are indeed empty and should take the waived council tax payments from the estate when the property is sold.</p> <p>I strongly disagree with this proposal for the following reasons. I realise that everyone's circumstances are different but mine are as follows. I inherited the house when my father passed away. After being unable to find a buyer for the house I realised that I would have to complete some work on the house in order to bring it up to a standard to allow me to either sell or rent the property. As I have a home, wife and a young family which I need to support finances are quite tight. I agree that as I own the empty property I should contribute towards the council but asking for double or treble the council tax will not only make the payments impossible to afford and so just cause stress and anxiety and the possibility of court action for not being able to pay and also make it more difficult to pay to renovate the house</p>
L31	<p>I believe the premium should rise due to the current housing shortage and this increase may persuade private landlords to sell properties that they cannot rent.</p>
L37	<p>I think owners should have an opportunity to make a case to the Council to use its discretion to waive the premium where they have been unable to sell or bring their properties back into use due to other circumstances out of their control. The Council should also take the opportunity to provide help and support to owners of long-term empty homes to assist them in bringing these properties back into use. The Council should not waive the premium where owners are marketing their property at an inflated price as this will not help to increase the supply of affordable homes.</p> <p>Without room for discretion this is a very unfair tax to increase to 100%. not all property is just kept empty sometimes there are issues which mean you cannot get a new tenant and therefore are being unfairly penalised.</p> <p>Maybe it will force a few sales and reduce pressure on the precious B Green Belt you seem so keen to destroy</p> <p>Council tax should be paid by all if empty or not.</p>

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	<p>Sheer extortion! An ill-considered 'blanket' approach. Appalling because you seem to want to penalise the very people who are trying to do the right thing. Our property is vacant again and we (3 beneficiaries) want to sell the retirement flat and that has been our desire since 2004. It has been marketed for sale continuously, through estate agents. For a period of about 5 years we rented it to a tenant (who has died). The flat is empty again and it is being marketed for sale, yet again. Try as we might we cannot sell the property which is in a block of retirement flats where other flats are regularly up for sale. We are competing with other flat owners (sellers) on the same site. The residents are all elderly so any would-be buyers have to be over 60 thereby creating a 'niche' market.</p> <p>It should be imposed after 1 year. 2 years is far too generous.</p> <p>I believe that a 50% initial increase is sufficient.</p> <p>When a property has genuinely been on the market with local estate agents the extra premium should not apply. When you are paying over £200 a month in management fees there is absolutely no reason to keep a property empty, which has been my personal experience. "Largely unfurnished" is too open to personal interpretation by council staff.</p>
PR8	<p>Awaiting planning permission (this process can sometimes be protracted and out of the control of the property owner)</p> <p>If somebody can afford to have an empty house they should be able to afford to contribute to the council tax fund also. There are too many vacant properties in the Borough, I also think if a property has been vacant for 5 years or more, the owners should lose the right to ownership and it automatically transfers to the Council, this if obviously where the owner can't be bothered to deal with any issues with the property</p> <p>Instead of increasing to 100% make it 150 - 200% This will force owners to get tenants or sell. Why does Sefton Council not Compulsory Purchase empty homes to use for homeless?</p> <p>This proposal, and the current 50% premium does NOT incentivise home owners of empty properties to "bring them back into use" as: You are charging more tax, therefore the owner has LESS money to sort their house out and 'bring it back into use'. Therefore, prolonging the period of time that the house will be empty. I believe that if the owner of the property is renovating it BEFORE they live in it or consequently sell the property, they should be exempt as the long-term plan is to "bring the property back into use". To ensure that this is true, council inspectors or a written council policy to state that all work undertaken on the property has to be evidenced and sent to the council.</p>

Strongly object as purchased with intent to downsize but having to wait to move as husband became ill and would not be suitable, will move to property on husband's death. Your proposal is just a punishment for anyone trying to plan responsibly.

What about an empty property that is up for sale but is not selling? They should not be penalised because of stagnant housing market.

We would not have properties standing empty for no reason, it would be either because there was work needed doing to it or we were unable to find a tenant, the fact that we have to pay council tax from day 1 is already crippling without increasing it further

As a Expat visiting my own fully furnished property for family visits as well as family members using it , If the council puts up the taxes I shall have to let it out for shorts lets which benefits neither I nor the Council. As someone using less public services the extra surcharge is unfair. This is our only home in the UK. Mine is not empty but is taxed as if it was.

I can accept that an empty property may warrant a 100% tax as the council is losing income on empty properties.

I (together with my brother) purchased an apartment on Lord Street for my mother to live in when she was in her 80s. She died, aged 101, 18 months ago and the property has been for sale since that time. The lease prevents us from letting it, or from selling it to someone under 55, or from selling it to a third party (eg the Council). We have offered it to the ground landlord without success. Each month it is unsold we have to pay approx. £500 Service Charge plus 100% Council Tax even though we receive no services from either RSL or the Council. I am a resident of Sefton and also pay full Council tax on the house I share with my wife. We have had the apartment redecorated to a high standard and we do use it whilst we are overnighing in Southport but we wish to sell. The purpose of the legislation is presumably to bring unused property to the market. We have been trying to sell for 18 months; it is currently listed at a price lower than others in the building. You should either target the ground landlords who enforce the restrictive conditions in the lease or make an exception for "very sheltered accommodation".

I just need to know if I can no longer manage the property will you take it off me. I have no other income but my husbands and disability pips. I have mental health issues, at the moment my husband is my carer. I do not come under the heading without capacity though if I am sick I would come under that category. I own no other property. The flat I own is not occupied but I would say it is my second home should I become homeless for whatever reason. I did approach your offices for help but they told me if no one was living there it was empty (however, it is furnished) so I would just have to carry on paying council tax. I don't really know

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	<p>what to do. I can't sell it the lady in the flat below has a life threatening illness. They have told me so over a period of several years. I find it difficult to cope.</p> <p>I always considered that a tax or rate had to be fair. If you are using the facilities you should pay for them. I already pay rates to Sefton as I live in their Borough. I have another property that I purchased to house my elderly mother who was a war widow. She died late last year and I put the flat up for sale. It will not sell because there are a number for sale and the service charge is so high. I don't use the council's facilities and I am desperately trying to sell but nobody wants to buy. I am currently paying 50% rates for a flat that nobody lives in nor uses any of the services that the Council provide. To increase the empty rate from 50% to 100% (and subsequently 200% and 300%) on a property that I am desperately trying to sell is patently unfair. The proposed increase was to target landlords who are deliberately leaving properties empty and not renting them out to tenants. This isn't the case with my circumstances. I know that Councils are strapped for cash and they will simply introduce this measure to increase revenue. I have the feeling that anything I write will eventually be ignored as raising money is paramount. I simply reiterate that the tax/rates must be fair.</p> <p>I cannot afford the mortgage I have on the property let alone increased council tax.!</p>
PR9	<p>I would love you to raise it to 100% considering the empty flat I am trying to sell is costing me 150% of the rateable value into the second year of being on the market.</p> <p>Authorities should be allowed to take all necessary steps to bring empty properties back into use. This should include compulsory purchase rather than increased Council Tax where property has been empty for 5 years or more.</p> <p>The whole point of council tax is to charge an occupant for using council services. If the property is empty there should actually be a nil charge never mind a 100% charge because there are no costs to the council.</p> <p>I am becoming elderly with an elderly husband and mobility problems and increasingly struggle to manage the only flat I own that is attached to and accessed via my own flat entrance. I have had really bad tenants and am reaching the point of not feeling able to go on renting emotionally and physically. If these council tax changes come into effect I will have to choose between bills I would struggle to pay, continuing to rent regardless of my health or selling the whole property.</p> <p>Great care must be taken to ensure the owner is not vulnerable. Penalties should be in place for any council staff member who fails to exercise due diligence.</p>

I have been trying to sell my house for 3 yrs over this period I have reduced the price by 80k in a desperate effort to sell. Some understanding from the council for those actively trying to sell would help enormously. I do agree those empty houses not for sale should have incentives to bring them back into homes. But this blunt instrument without some consideration for those of us already stressed about when will this house stop eating into my pension may just be seen as yet another way of bleed the tax payer.

Empty properties often fall into disrepair and neglect, and are not nice to see.

If not exempt and unwilling to sell or rent out, then the premium seems fair. Perhaps consideration should be given for discretion to waive the premium in genuine cases of inability to sell or rent out a property.

This is daylight robbery ! Sefton council still get paid the council tax whether the building is empty or not ? It should infect be reduced for empty properties as none of the services are being used if the property is empty ! Just sheer greed!

I think this is an excellent proposal as homes left empty for that long will tend to be neglected damaging the neighbourhood

There is a housing crisis whilst some of the wealthiest people are leaving properties to lay empty and unused, accumulating personal wealth at the expense of the majority. I fully support increasing the council tax levied. The only slight disagreement I have is the suggestion that this is a doubling of the council tax levied. What it is is a removal of a discount in council tax that has previously been applied.

Three years would be fairer than two. My property is empty because I cannot sell it at a reasonable price due to Brexit uncertainty. It remains on the market, but I have had few viewings and fewer offers, all well below comparable prices.

As an owner of a Residential Care Home we have a Cottage in the grounds. We cannot just rent this property out to anyone. The tenant has to have an enhanced DBS check, related someway to the business i.e. a member of staff. This significantly reduces the chance of renting out this property. CQC would not allow us to rent the property out to anyone due to the Vulnerability of the elderly people living in the Care Home. The cottage is also connected with all Fire related incidents. We test the Fire alarm weekly at the Care Home which is also sounded in the Cottage. If the Fire alarm went off it would also go off in the cottage. There are lots of issues associated with the suitability of the Tenant. We manage a retirement complex of 37 rental properties which have on average five or six empty at any one time. These properties are advertised

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	<p>weekly but it does not result in the properties all being let. We pay out enough in council tax already and to increase this further would be being penalised for a lack of suitable tenants that fit the criteria.</p> <p>My mother owns a flat in XX. Mum is 86 years old and she lives in a care home as she has dementia. I have an Order from the Court of Protection which allows me to act for Mum and part of that regime is that I need to show that I have acted in Mum's best interest and taken advice where necessary. Father passed away in 2007. Both Mum and Dad worked hard and saved in order that they would be reasonably if modestly provided in their later years. Part of the planning was the purchase of the flat. Over the past year I consulted with a financial adviser and Mum's solicitor. As a result, I concluded that there is little point as in selling the flat as interest rates are so low. The flat needs major improvements, particularly in the bathroom and the kitchen. If Mum funded these improvements and let the flat, it would time quite a while to recover the outlay. In addition, the cost of the works would deplete the pool of money Mum has to pay for her care. Currently Mum pays the standard levy plus 50%. The proposal is that she now pay even more council tax. Mum is basically confined to her care home and uses very little of the services provided by the local authority, but the proposal is for Mum to pay a further increased penalty simply because she has poor health.</p> <p>This must rank as the most ill thought out proposal since the bedroom tax. If you have a property to sell with a registered estate agent, why should you be penalised, because the market is suppressed and is difficult to sell. Unless you sell under market value, which I did, after trying to sell for two and a half years, paying 50% extra tax, just to get rid.</p> <p>The Empty Homes premium should be 100% only and should be for properties of £100,000 or over, not for property less than that amount as you are punishing poor people.</p>
<p>Outside Sefton</p>	<p>If the home is being advertised for rent, then this should not apply. I have a house that is in very good condition (newly refurbished), but still we are having trouble finding a tenant.</p> <p>Empty retirement flat belonging to my deceased father has been on market for 2 years - have reduced price but still no sale - I am paying maintenance charges and council tax outside my own area out of my savings - whilst I understand basic council tax has to be paid I think it is unfair to expect executors to pay an additional premium when there is nothing more they can do to sell the property.</p> <p>As a landlord if we had an empty property we would still have a mortgage to pay, and I feel it would be unfair to punish us further.</p> <p>Fully in agreement if no effort is being made to have the property occupied. However, I have had the property in Sefton on the</p>

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	<p>market for sale ever since my mother passed away in May 2017. The lease does not allow me to let the apartment, and it can only be occupied by someone over 50. To charge 200% of the Council Tax seems totally unfair when I am doing everything I can to sell it. Surely in these circumstances, empty properties should also be exempt.</p> <p>I most certainly agree considering that Sefton is at present charging me 150% rates for an empty flat that I am desperately trying to sell. A 100% rate would be a relief to this pensioner.</p> <p>Depends on the circumstances as to why a property is unoccupied. An increase is unfair to those who intend to live in the property but can't at present due to extensive renovations to make a property habitable (council tax deductions with his regard are currently not sufficient with respect to the period of availability). Therefore, this only extends the period the property is uninhabitable and vacant due to unavailable cashflow to do the work.</p>
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**Question 3** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the potential future changes to increase the premium to 200 per cent on homes left empty from 5 to 10 years from April 2020 and to 300 per cent on those empty for more than 10 years from 1 April 2021?

Strongly agree	48
Agree	15
Neither agree nor disagree	9
Disagree	10
Strongly disagree	46
No response provided	1

**Question 4** Do you have any comments relating to the potential future changes to increase the premium to 200 per cent on homes left empty from 5 to 10 years from April 2020 and to 300 per cent on those empty for more than 10 years from 1 April 2021? You may wish to highlight any circumstances where this premium should not apply other than those examples mentioned earlier that are already exempt from Council Tax.

	<b>Comment</b>
L20	<p>how many council houses are empty.</p> <p>There is no reason for properties to be left empty for extended periods.</p> <p>Positive proposals work better than simply "fine". I suppose landlords/owners have no real reason to have property empty.</p> <p>How can you charge for a property that isn't using any services?</p> <p>All the points that I have made in the previous question apply equally to this question. Also, the proposal to charge such inflated premiums</p>

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	<p>is not only morally wrong, but will not work anyway: On one hand, you say that you are trying to encourage property owners to put more homes back into use. On the other hand, you say that you want to raise more money from the owners of empty properties- you are contradicting yourselves! If more properties get put back into use, you will get LESS money as the occupiers will only be paying Council Tax at the standard rate; not at the ridiculously inflated premiums that you are proposing if the properties were to remain empty - it doesn't work both ways!!</p> <p>An excellent proposal. The Council needs to generate revenue in any way possible.</p> <p>We think it would be helpful to consider properties on a case by case basis. It should be used to target those properties which are in poor repair and/or causing issues for neighbouring properties, the local community or the Council. We do not think that these costs should go over 150% for properties like ours which are in good repair &amp; undergoing further renovations as we are doing our very best to carry out improvements as effectively &amp; efficiently as possible.</p> <p>If council tax is paid I can see no justification to double or treble that.</p>
L21	<p>If a property is up for sale they should not have to pay the charges. It is unfair for people who are actively trying to sell their empty property to impose these high charges when they may already be paying a mortgage and council tax on the empty property AND the property they live in.</p> <p>Your proposal would punish people who are already punished and will do nothing to improve the poor housing situation. There are many reasons for houses to be left unoccupied for a length of time and none of these are to benefit the owner. Your proposal, and indeed your current policy, merely compounds the financial hardship. It would be far more effective to offer help to the owners of long term occupied homes to get them ready for sale/rental. Loans and grants should be available. Compulsory purchase could also be an option should the owners keep a property empty for two years or, perhaps, a commandeering of the property to re rented to deserving people with the equivalent of social rent only going to the owners. There are many solutions to the housing shortage and the number of unoccupied homes and none of them involve imposing what amounts to monthly fines</p> <p>I feel that increasing the premium would result in landlords creating fake tenancies in order to avoid making payment.</p>
L22	<p>If someone can afford to leave a property empty for that length of time they're clearly able to afford it, so the charges are an entirely appropriate incentive to correct the commercial priorities.</p>



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	<p>Unfortunately, I am unaware of all the reasons that people have for not paying their council tax on an empty property but the existing exclusions should remain.</p> <p>The increase in costs will mean rents for everyone will have to go up.</p>
L23	<p>As a landlord in Sefton I have previously been impacted by the 50% additional charge. I have purchased empty properties which have required full renovations before I could find tenants. As one property had already exceeded the 2years of being empty when I purchased it I was liable for the additional council tax charges. This I felt was unfair. Surely taking a property which is not liveable and has been empty for some time and doing the necessary renovations to provide additional affordable homes in the area is a good thing and should be rewarded and not punished. That said I agree that properties should not be kept empty and a penalty should be in place for those who sit on empty properties. I am aware that this can be a problem in some areas I think a fair addition to the new rules would be to reset the clock on these properties when newly purchased to provide landlords like myself the opportunity and incentive to improve living standards within Sefton.</p> <p>There are a number of unused/ derelict buildings and it would be a positive result if an increased council tax payment forced the owners into letting or selling them, to bring vibrancy to the area. However, those with legitimate reasons for leaving the property empty should not be penalised.</p> <p>I think the 100%charge should be applied after 6 months of being empty. It is inappropriate to leave a property empty while so many people need a home and councils are having financial difficulties.</p> <p>It might make the owner make more of an effort to get the property occupied.</p> <p>It is crucial that people do not continue to have incentives to leave houses empty by the current lower council tax rate, given the numbers of homeless people and others who may be living in cramped conditions. This increase would hopefully be some deterrent.</p> <p>I think you should look at the finances of the owners of these properties. If they live elsewhere it's possible that they can't afford more council tax and by taking them to court you would waste even more money. I don't think it should be a complete ban on the exemption of the 50% tax as it is now. I even think that is too much - isn't the tax for facilities used and if no-one lives there they don't use any facilities!</p> <p>I would suggest the increase should be even larger, say to 200%, to have a greater effect on the situation.</p>

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It is immoral for people to have unused living accommodation while there are so many families without a home.

I feel that a lot of people for good reasons could have a property for 2 or 3 years empty so 50% seems fairer.

Where probate has been granted and the property is for sale

My parents are stuck living next door to an empty property that has been that way in excess of 10 years. Owners refuse to sell yet put solar shades on a roof that is in a bad state of affair? My elderly parents are petrified that squatters will move in and we have no way of contacting these selfish owners. My parents and their neighbours try to keep the front of the house tidy so it isn't obvious what the situation is but are too elderly to continue to keep that up. It is a disgrace the place is left to rot. Hit the owners where it hurts - in their pocket and this will hopefully make them do something about the property.

The government and local authorities are taking a totally simplistic view and failing to understand the complex series of factors that can cause properties to remain empty, including for example, simple lack of market demand, or lack of financial resource on the part of the owner to bring dilapidated properties back from the brink back into use.....even just these two example factors can have a complex inter-relationship, with one interacting on the other. The proper and productive approach to this problem would be to abandon the stick (or at least not make it any bigger) and throw a carrot or two at it.

I understand why the proposal would be implemented for empty properties that could be brought back into use. However, this should not apply to circumstances such as the one that I am in. I am executor to my mother's will - she died in January 2015 and probate was obtained in May 2015, since when the property has been up for sale. It is a one bedroomed retirement shared ownership flat in XX. It went on the market at £65,000 and has been reduced over time to its current asking price of £44,950 and has been on the market with two estate agents. The shared ownership is with a Housing Association and they are difficult to deal with and I have lost one buyer due to their incompetence. In the meantime, not only do I have to pay council tax at an additional 50% rate, but I shall have to pay monthly service charges and a sinking fund charge if ever it is sold. There will be very little money left by the time this all happens. I feel very strongly that I should not be having to pay any council tax, as I receive no services whatsoever, never mind an additional premium. Due to myself spending lots of my time caring for my mother, I managed to keep her out of Sefton's Social Services system, and she never needed any additional support from the Council. Also, the Council itself does nothing to help me sell the flat - sale boards are not allowed outside the listed building. I am unable to bring the flat into use unless it is sold, one of the conditions of the lease is that I am unable to rent it out. I am extremely concerned

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	<p>whether there will be sufficient funds if the council tax charge is further increased. In circumstances where an executor to a will is unable to sell or rent a property and can prove that they have done everything possible to sell it, there should be an exemption.</p>
L30	<p>If a property is up for sale, I can't see how you can penalise people who want to sell the property but it is taking longer than they wanted.</p> <p>Property's that are up for sale should be exempt from the increase.</p> <p>We have had the house up for sale for 2 years but can't sell it. Properties that are on the market and empty should be exempt from this.</p> <p>When properties are left empty when owners have gone into care the council should check that they are indeed empty and should take the waived council tax payments from the estate when the property is sold.</p>
L31	<p>I believe the premium should rise the current housing shortage and this increase may persuade private landlords to sell properties that they cannot rent</p>
L37	<p>I think owners should have an opportunity to make a case to the Council to use its discretion to waive the premium where they have been unable to sell or bring their properties back into use due to other circumstances out of their control. The Council should also take the opportunity to provide help and support to owners of long-term empty homes to assist them in bringing these properties back into use. The Council should not waive the premium where owners are marketing their property at an inflated price as this will not help to increase the supply of affordable homes.</p> <p>Without room for discretion this is a very unfair tax to increase to 100%. not all property is just kept empty sometimes there are issues which mean you cannot get a new tenant and therefore are being unfairly penalised.</p> <p>Maybe it will force a few sales and reduce pressure on the precious B Green Belt you seem so keen to destroy</p> <p>Council tax should be paid by all if empty or not</p> <p>Sheer extortion! An ill-considered 'blanket' approach. Appalling because you seem to want to penalise the very people who are trying to do the right thing. Our property is vacant again and we (3 beneficiaries) want to sell the retirement flat and that has been our desire since 2004. It has been marketed for sale continuously, through estate agents. For a period of about 5 years we rented it to a tenant (who has died). The flat is empty again and it is being marketed for sale, yet again. Try as we might we cannot sell the</p>

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	<p>property which is in a block of retirement flats where other flats are regularly up for sale. We are competing with other flat owners (sellers) on the same site. The residents are all elderly so any would-be buyers have to be over 60 thereby creating a 'niche' market.</p> <p>Make it 200% after 2 years</p> <p>Other measures should be put into place to bring the properties back into use, looking at the reasons why the properties remain empty rather than just applying a financial penalty.</p>
PR8	<p>Awaiting planning permission (this process can sometimes be protracted and out of the control of the property owner)</p> <p>If somebody can afford to have an empty house they should be able to afford to contribute to the council tax fund also.</p> <p>There are too many vacant properties in the Borough, I also think if a property has been vacant for 5 years or more, the owners should lose the right to ownership and it automatically transfers to the Council, this if obviously where the owner can't be bothered to deal with any issues with the property</p> <p>Instead of increasing to 100% make it 150 - 200% This will force owners to get tenants or sell. Why does Sefton Council not Compulsory Purchase empty homes to use for homeless?</p> <p>This proposal, and the current 50% premium does NOT incentivise home owners of empty properties to "bring them back into use" as: You are charging more tax, therefore the owner has LESS money to sort their house out and 'bring it back into use'. Therefore, prolonging the period of time that the house will be empty. I believe that if the owner of the property is renovating it BEFORE they live in it or consequently sell the property, they should be exempt as the long-term plan is to "bring the property back into use". To ensure that this is true, council inspectors or a written council policy to state that all work undertaken on the property has to be evidenced and sent to the council.</p> <p>Strongly object as purchased with intent to downsize but having to wait to move as husband became ill and would not be suitable, will move to property on husband's death. Your proposal is just a punishment for anyone trying to plan responsibly.</p> <p>What about an empty property that is up for sale but is not selling? They should not be penalised because of stagnant housing market.</p> <p>I strongly disagree with both these proposals as it is exorbitant. Why should you be penalized unfairly for owning a property that you do not want to rent out because of all the problems that this may entail (watch channel 5) or sell because of the state of the current housing market where we are likely to lose money. The property in question</p>

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	<p>was purchase from our pensions and savings for one of our daughter who was going to get a mortgage and repay us. However, she has since married and purchased a property with her husband having taken out a large mortgage. All the costs of the property in question has reverted to us, her parents, who are pensioners and do not want to get into renting. Why should we be penalised further if we pay 100% Council Tax. It certainly will not win you or the government any votes. I'm totally disillusioned with you all so expect that this is just a way of telling us what you intend to do no matter what is said.</p> <p>It would be more equitable if the Council compulsorily purchased such accommodation.</p>
PR9	<p>I would love you to raise it to 100% considering the empty flat I am trying to sell is costing me 150% of the rateable value into the second year of being on the market.</p> <p>Authorities should be allowed to take all necessary steps to bring empty properties back into use. This should include compulsory purchase rather than increased Council Tax where property has been empty for 5 years or more.</p> <p>The whole point of Council Tax is to charge an occupant for using council services. If the property is empty there should actually be a nil charge never mind a 100% charge because there are no costs to the council.</p> <p>I am becoming elderly with an elderly husband and mobility problems and increasingly struggle to manage the only flat I own that is attached to and accessed via my own flat entrance. I have had really bad tenants and am reaching the point of not feeling able to go on renting emotionally and physically. If these council tax changes come into effect I will have to choose between bills I would struggle to pay, continuing to rent regardless of my health or selling the whole property.</p> <p>Great care must be taken to ensure the owner is not vulnerable. Penalties should be in place for any council staff member who fails to exercise due diligence.</p> <p>I have been trying to sell my house for 3 yrs over this period I have reduced the price by 80k in a desperate effort to sell. Some understanding from the council for those actively trying to sell would help enormously. I do agree those empty houses not for sale should have incentives to bring them back into homes. But this blunt instrument without some consideration for those of us already stressed about when will this house stop eating into my pension may just be seen as yet another way of bleed the taxpayer.</p> <p>Empty properties often fall into disrepair and neglect, and are not nice to see.</p>

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	<p>If not exempt and unwilling to sell or rent out, then the premium seems fair. Perhaps consideration should be given for discretion to waive the premium in genuine cases of inability to sell or rent out a property.</p> <p>This is daylight robbery! Sefton council still get paid the council tax whether the building is empty or not? It should in fact be reduced for empty properties as none of the services are being used if the property is empty! Just sheer greed!</p> <p>I think this is an excellent proposal as homes left empty for that long will tend to be neglected damaging the neighbourhood.</p> <p>There is a housing crisis whilst some of the wealthiest people are leaving properties to lay empty and unused, accumulating personal wealth at the expense of the majority. I fully support increasing the council tax levied. The only slight disagreement I have is the suggestion that this is a doubling of the council tax levied. What it is is a removal of a discount in council tax that has previously been applied.</p> <p>Three years would be fairer than two. My property is empty because I cannot sell it at a reasonable price due to Brexit uncertainty. It remains on the market, but I have had few viewings and fewer offers, all well below comparable prices.</p> <p>As mentioned we are very limited to whom we can rent the property to due to the exceptional circumstances related to the "ideal tenant". I think this needs to be looked into in much more detail and not just a blanket increase which suits all as this is not the case. If this did happen then the cost would be passed onto our service users which I do not think is fair.</p> <p>Most responsible landlords do their best to let properties to suitable tenants if a property has been empty as long as ten years it is most likely derelict. Taxpayers are disgruntled at paying 50% Premium Tax. Can't see collection rates rising if Premium Tax is increased excessively.</p>
Outside Sefton	<p>If the home is being advertised for rent, then this should not apply. I have a house that is in very good condition (newly refurbished), but still we are having trouble finding a tenant.</p> <p>Empty retirement flat belonging to my deceased father has been on market for 2 years - have reduced price but still no sale - I am paying maintenance charges and council tax outside my own area out of my savings - whilst I understand basic council tax has to be paid I think it is unfair to expect executors to pay an additional premium when there is nothing more they can do to sell the property.</p> <p>As a landlord if we had an empty property we would still have a mortgage to pay, and I feel it would be unfair to punish us further.</p>

	<p>Fully in agreement if no effort is being made to have the property occupied. However, I have had the property in Sefton on the market for sale ever since my mother passed away in May 2017. The lease does not allow me to let the apartment, and it can only be occupied by someone over 50. To charge 200% of the Council Tax seems totally unfair when I am doing everything I can to sell it . Surely in these circumstances, empty properties should also be exempt.</p> <p>I most certainly agree considering that Sefton is at present charging me 150% rates for an empty flat that I am desperately trying to sell. A 100% rate would be a relief to this pensioner.</p> <p>Depends on the circumstances as to why a property is unoccupied. An increase is unfair to those who intend to live in the property but can't at present due to extensive renovations to make a property habitable (council tax deductions with his regard are currently not sufficient with respect to the period of availability). Therefore, this only extends the period the property is uninhabitable and vacant due to unavailable cash flow to do the work.</p>
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### 3.3 Summary Table - Questions 1 & 3

	Agree/Agree strongly	Neither agree / disagree	Disagree / Strongly disagree	No response
Question 1	66	7	55	1
Question 3	63	9	56	1

## 4. Equality Impact Assessment

### 4.1. Introduction

Any change to function, provision or policy that may have an effect on people is automatically subject of the Equality Act 2010. As such the 'decision makers' have a statutory duty to pay 'due regard' to equality legislation and the potential discriminatory impact that changes have on service users. To inform decision makers, an 'equality analysis report' is submitted to them at the time of decision making for them to consider equality implications as part of their final decision making.

In order to meet equality legislation public bodies have to consider Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: -

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

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- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and person who do not share it.

## 4.2 Protected Characteristics

Equality Law (Equality Act 2010) is clear that there are particular characteristic intrinsic to an individual against which it would be easy to discriminate. Section 149 (the Public-Sector Equality Duty) sets the goals of the Act and the characteristics, known as 'protected characteristics' against which we have to test for discrimination. These characteristics are gender, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and disability.

## 4.3 Consultation

Sefton Council is considering increasing the Council Tax homes premium from April 2019 on homes left empty and substantially unfurnished for over 2 years. This will help to reduce the number of long term homes and bring them back into use through sale of renting. Any additional income raised from the premium will help support the provision of Council services.

As part of the consultation, equality questions were asked in connection to gender, age, disability and ethnicity.

The main issues that the Council has to consider in relation to the proposed changes to the scheme in relation to equality and diversity are:

- Disabled people, on very low income, who are unable to carry out the necessary renovations to properties themselves or pay someone to do it for them.
- Where owners are struggling to cope with managing the property they own.

## 4.4 Impacts

The tables below highlight what evidence the Council has on how the proposed changes will affect different groups and communities in relation to equalities and human rights. Where numbers are presented which refer to the survey, this relates to the number of people who responded to the equality questions in the survey, and aligned to the question on impacts. People who responded to the survey and reported any impacts, whether this was a lot of impact or no impact, did so from an individual perspective. The table recognises the responses to the survey but also considers any detrimental impact on the protected characteristic as a whole and includes the mitigations the Council has in place.

### Breakdown of respondents by Gender

In terms of the 129 respondents to the eConsult Questionnaire 52 females, 40 males, 2 preferred not to say and 35 not completed returns.



## **Breakdown of respondents by Age ranges**

In terms of the 129 respondents to the eConsult Questionnaire, 94 gave the following age ranges, cross matched against gender.

<b>Age Ranges</b>				
	Female	Male	Not declared	Total
18-29	2	0	0	2
30-39	5	2	1	8
40-49	10	6	0	16
50-59	13	13	1	27
60-69	12	11	1	24
70-79	7	7	1	15
85+	2	0	0	2

## **Breakdown of respondents by Postcode**

In terms of the 129 respondents to the eConsult Questionnaire, the following postcodes were submitted:

<b>Postcode breakdown</b>					
Outside Sefton	L20	L21	L22	L23	L30
10	10	7	4	17	1
L31	L37	L38	PR8	PR9	Not Completed
3	6	2	15	16	38

## **Breakdown of respondents by Equality Data**

Respondents were asked to indicate answers against Equality data questions, the breakdown of which is:

### ***Disability***

4 indicated a Hearing Impairment, 5 indicating a Long-Term Illness Affecting Daily Activity, followed by 4 indicating Mental Health/Distress, a further 7 indicating a Physical impairment and 2 with a visual impairment.

### ***Ethnicity/ Religion or Belief***

79 of our 129 respondents who answered indicated they were "White British" or "White English" in terms of ethnicity, with fewer numbers for the other classifications.

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<b>Ethnicity - do you identify as...</b>	<b>Total</b>
White British	55
White English	25
White Irish	2
White Polish	1
White Welsh	1
Black British	1
Asian Indian	1
Other White background	2
Other Chinese background	1
Prefer not to say / no response	40

## **Sexual Orientation**

On Sexual Orientation, 78 out of 129 respondents who answered indicated they were Heterosexual, 2 Bisexual and 49 Prefer not to say / or did not respond

Heterosexual	<b>78</b>
Bisexual	<b>2</b>
Prefer not to say / no response	<b>49</b>

## **Religion / Belief**

42 out of 129 who answered indicated they were Christian, 1 Buddhist, 86 no religion / did not respond / prefer not to say.

## **Gender at birth**

85 of the 129 respondents who answered the question indicated that they currently live in the gender given to them at birth. 1 respondent was not in the gender given at birth. 43 prefer not to say / no response.

## **4.5 Impacts table**

<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	No inadvertent bias on the basis of gender is indicated. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	No inadvertent bias on the basis of race/ethnicity is indicated. The proposals do not treat people of different race/ethnicity groups any differently and we have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
<b>Religion and Belief</b>	No inadvertent bias on the basis of religion or belief. The proposals do not treat persons of different religions or beliefs any differently and we have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	No inadvertent bias on the basis of sexual orientation is indicated. The proposals do not treat persons of different sexual orientation any differently. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
<b>Age</b>	No inadvertent bias on the basis of age is indicated. Young

	people looking to join the property ladder or rent an affordable property may be affected as more empty properties are made available. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	No inadvertent bias on the basis of gender reassignment age is indicated in the proposals. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	No inadvertent bias on the basis of pregnancy and maternity is indicated. We have not identified any impacts that need mitigation.
<b>Disability</b>	No inadvertent bias on the basis of disability is indicated. However, the consultation results indicate that disability is also relevant to the proposals as people felt that there should be mitigations in place for owners who are unable to manage their affairs or circumstances where disability prompts a need to change property and reduces the ability to carry out the work required to an empty property.

## **4.6 Mitigations**

### **Key measures in place**

- Consideration to be given to whether any additional exemptions under which the Empty Homes Premium should not apply, for example where an owner is living elsewhere to receive care or resident in a nursing home etc.
- Any short term financial hardship or other exceptional circumstances affecting a person's ability to pay will be addressed by the Council's Discretionary Reduction in Liability Policy, and the promotion of that policy, so additional support can be provided for those in exceptional need.
- Sefton Council will continue to maintain its record of providing proactive and tailored support for those Council Tax payers who struggle to make payments and will continue to ensure our recovery procedures identify cases where additional support might be required.
- A proactive approach will be taken to identify persons meeting the severe mental impairment conditions set out in the Council Tax Regulations with a view to exempting them from paying Council Tax.
- The Council will continue working with and supporting customers whose first language is not English.
- Customers affected by the proposals will be contacted directly and provided with clear explanation and offers of advice and support.
- The Council's website information will be updated to reflect the key changes and any issues identified.

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# Agenda Item 10

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet Council	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020 23 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Revenue and Capital Budget Update – Additional Capital Estimates		
<b>Report of:</b>	Executive Director and Head of Corporate Resources	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

## Summary:

The Council's Capital Investment Programme has been developed to enable the Council to continue to deliver financial sustainability, to stimulate economic growth and strategic investment. Key to the development of the investment programme is ensuring the best use of existing assets and the generation of council resources to finance upfront capital expenditure.

## Recommendations:

**Cabinet** is asked to approve:

1. The following supplementary capital estimates:

### Investment Programme

- Approve Strategic Acquisitions – Land at Bootle, funded by an external contribution of £0.998m from the Combined Authority;
  - Approve Town Centre Commission work funded by an external contribution of £0.750m from the Combined Authority;
  - Recommend to Council the redevelopment of the Cambridge Road Centre funded by an external contribution of £1.145m from the Combined Authority;
  - Recommend to Council the Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment Project to be funded by an external contribution of £3.100m from the Combined Authority (Standalone Report submitted to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019);
2. That the Cabinet be requested to commend the report and recommendations to the Council for approval.

**Council** is asked to approve:

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1. The following supplementary capital estimates:

## Investment Programme

- Approve the redevelopment of the Cambridge Road Centre funded by an external contribution of £1.145m from the Combined Authority;
- Approve the Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment Project to be funded by an external contribution of £3.100m from the Combined Authority (Standalone Report submitted to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019);

## Invest to Save Programme

- Approve the Purchase of the Winter Service Facility funded by £2.632m of prudential borrowing.

## Capital Programme Additions

- Approve additions to the Transport Programme of £2.680m funded by capital receipts;
- Approve Essential Maintenance (Victoria Baths) £0.570m funded by capital receipts;
- Approve Essential Maintenance (STCC) £1.244m funded by capital receipts;
- Approve to Council Essential Maintenance (Council wide) £2.834m funded by capital receipts.

2. Approve delegation to the Head of Corporate Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services any decision to incur short-term borrowing to bridge any funding gap the on the basis that the cost of borrowing can be contained within the Growth and Strategic Investment budget and the Council's Prudential Indicators

### **Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

The Investment Programme is an important mechanism within the Council's major change programme – the Framework for Change – through which the aims and objectives contained within the Vision for 2030 and Core Purpose, will be delivered.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:** (including any Risk Implications)  
None

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

#### **(A) Revenue Costs**

Projects that are in the design and feasibility stage of development will attract revenue costs, but all these are all contained within the approved revenue growth budget.

If short-term borrowing is required, whilst assets are in the process of being disposed, the revenue costs will be funded from within the Growth and Strategic Investment revenue budget earmarked for in-year project expenditure.

## **(B) Capital Costs**

The Investment Programme contains £15.954m of expenditure profiled across 2019/20 and 2020/21.

It is to be funded through External Contributions £5.994m, Capital Receipts £7.328m and Prudential Borrowing £2.632m.

### **Implications of the Proposals:**

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

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b>
Proposals may have an impact on physical assets and/or ongoing revenue income and expenditure and this will be assessed during the business case approval process.
<b>Legal Implications:</b>
The Council's decision-making processes resulting in the implementation of any capital programme must be transparent.
<b>Equality Implications:</b>
N/A

### **Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

<b><u>Protect the most vulnerable:</u></b>
The Investment Programme will enable the Council to continue to seek to protect the most vulnerable within available resources.
<b><u>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</u></b>
The Investment Programme demonstrates a clear commitment to early intervention and prevention and working with partners, communities and local businesses to reduce the reliance on the public sector.
<b><u>Commission, broker and provide core services:</u></b>
The Investment Programme recognises that where it is necessary to do so, the Council will continue to be a provider of those core services that the community expects to see delivered but will use new service delivery models and new forms of partnership.
<b><u>Place – leadership and influencer:</u></b>

# Agenda Item 10

The Investment Programme will see the Council continue to demonstrate strong and effective leadership building on its proven track record of engagement, consultation, listening and considering feedback in the decision-making process.

The Council continues to work with partners towards common goals, moving away from traditional ways of working focused around delivering services and is demonstrating a greater role in influencing, shaping, enabling and building community capacity.

**Drivers of change and reform:**

The Investment Programme demonstrates the Council playing a key role in leading and driving change and reform to improve outcomes for Sefton residents and continuously improve the Borough.

**Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:**

The Capital Strategy clearly articulates the Council's approach to investing in order to achieve financial sustainability and the ambitions of Sefton 2030.

**Greater income for social investment:**

The Investment Programme recognises the Council's commitment to developing a commercial nature, looking at what it can do either by itself or with others to generate income and profit that can be reinvested into delivering social purpose.

**Cleaner Greener:**

The Investment Programme recognises the Council's commitment to work with others to maintain Sefton's natural beauty and ensure that its many assets provide a contribution to Sefton's economy, people's wellbeing and the achievement of the 2030 Vision.

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

### (A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5867/19) is the author of the report and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4051/19) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

### (B) External Consultations

N/A

**Contact Officers:** Sarah Kemp / Stephan Van Arendsen  
**Tel:** 0151 934 4770/4082  
**Email:** [Sarah.Kemp@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.Kemp@sefton.gov.uk)  
[Stephan.VanArendsen@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:Stephan.VanArendsen@sefton.gov.uk)



## 1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Investment Programme is an important mechanism within the Council's major change programme – the Framework for Change – through which the aims and objectives contained within the Vision for 2030 and Core Purpose, will be delivered.
- 1.2 There are four pillars that underpin the programme and which will help the Council deliver against its stated objectives. These are:
  - Economic Growth – physical regeneration and enabling infrastructure for our economic growth priorities;
  - Public Sector Reform – Service Transformation Projects to address demand management.
  - Service Delivery Options – making efficiencies and savings to ensure a financially sustainable Council in a time of continued financial challenge; and
  - Strategic Investment – supporting investment opportunities the Council may wish to directly sponsor or support in an enabling or commissioning role where there is a sound commercial and financial justification/reason to do so.
- 1.3 One of the fundamental requirements and drivers of the investment programme is the change in the way local government is to be financed in future with a greater emphasis on locally generated income (e.g. Council Tax and Business Rates). The reliance on local income to support the delivery of frontline services means that it is important that the Council, working with its partners, optimises revenue generating opportunities.
- 1.4 The Capital Strategy 2019/20 to 2022/23, which was approved on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019, recognised that economic growth will play an important role in continued financial sustainability, that regeneration is a priority and that where it is appropriate to do so the Council should acquire strategic property for regeneration purposes where business cases provide a satisfactory payback period and profile.
- 1.5 The Capital Strategy provided the framework from which capital expenditure and investment decisions in Sefton are made. It outlines the necessary governance required for the development, management and monitoring of capital investment and the use of capital resources.
- 1.6 The investment programme decision-making process considers stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and (short and long-term) affordability. Each project's suitability and priority is tested by reviewing cost and benefit(s) against the following:

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- An overview of the governance process for prioritisation, approval and monitoring of capital expenditure;
- A longer-term view of capital expenditure plans;
- An overview of asset management planning;
- The authority's approach to commercial activities including due diligence and risk appetite;
- Expectations around debt and use of borrowing to support capital expenditure;
- The knowledge and skills in the authority in relation to capital investment activities.

1.7 This report brings forward the first phase of the Investment Programme following an extensive review against the criteria above and, where necessary, a detailed option appraisal process and the development of robust business cases.

## 2.0 Additional Capital Estimates (2019/20 and 2020/21)

2.1 This paper presents for approval a number of new schemes which will form the first phase of the Council's Investment Programme; other projects are presented as invest to save schemes; and there are budget additions to the traditional Council capital programme – all of which is summarised in Table 1 below.

2.2 Some of the proposed projects, including those that seek to deliver an ongoing revenue return to the council, are presented separately in standalone reports in order to outline business cases detail and due diligence. Other schemes, which are not commercial in nature and therefore not subject to additional scrutiny of future returns on investment, are explained in further detail in this paper.

2.3 Table 1: Additional Capital Estimates 2019/20 to 2020/21

Programme / Project	Total Capital Estimate £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	Further Information
<b>Growth and Strategic Investment Programme</b>				
Strategic Acquisitions - Land at Bootle	998,500	998,500		This report
Bootle & Southport Town Centre Commission	750,000		750,000	This report
Cambridge Road Centre	1,145,000		1,145,000	This report
Crosby Lakeside Activity Centre (CLAC)	3,100,000		3,100,000	Standalone report
<b>Total - Growth and Strategic Investment Programme</b>	<b>5,993,500</b>	<b>998,500</b>	<b>4,995,000</b>	
<b>Invest to Save</b>				
Winter Service Facility	2,632,000		2,632,000	Standalone report
<b>Total - Invest to Save</b>	<b>2,632,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,632,000</b>	

<b>Traditional Capital Programme</b>				
Transport Contributions (10%)	2,680,000	1,240,000	1,440,000	This report
Essential Maintenance - Victoria Baths essential works	570,000	242,000	328,000	This report
Essential Maintenance - STCC essential works	1,244,000	1,008,000	236,000	This report
Essential Maintenance - Council wide programme	2,834,000	112,500	2,721,500	This report
<b>Total - Traditional Capital Programme</b>	<b>7,328,000</b>	<b>2,602,500</b>	<b>4,725,500</b>	

<b>Total</b>	<b>15,953,500</b>	<b>3,601,000</b>	<b>12,352,500</b>	
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### **Land Acquisitions in Bootle (£0.998m)**

- 2.4 Redevelopment of The Strand Shopping Centre and the wider area is a key regeneration and economic development project in the Bootle Town Centre Investment Framework (2016) and links to the Sefton Local Plan. These acquisitions will help to secure vacant possession of land/buildings and is necessary to create a platform so that wider redevelopment can be delivered.
- 2.5 The cost of the acquisitions is £0.998m and is to be funded by Liverpool City Region grant from the Combined Authority Strategic Investment Fund (SIF).

### **Town Centre Commission (£0.750m)**

- 2.6 Following approval by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for the Town Centre Commission Fund on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2019, an indicative allocation of £1m SIF Funding has been made to Sefton Council for Southport and Bootle Town Centres. The grant is earmarked for Southport (£0.500m capital funding) and Bootle (£0.250k capital and £0.250m revenue).
- 2.7 Interventions under the Town Centre Fund will contribute to the sustainability of local communities and improve the environment within which people work and live through:
- I. Enhancing the sustainable vitality of local town and district centres through investment that delivers new employment opportunities and makes those employment opportunities accessible to local residents.
  - II. Place renewal projects, particularly those designed to move away from traditional retail, and broaden the town centre offer and ensure future sustainability.

### **Cambridge Road Centre (£1.145m)**

- 2.8 The project involves a transformational development project to re-develop a well utilised Council owned asset (Cambridge Road Centre), with the objective of providing a fit-for-purpose learning environment, targeting returning learners and facilitating their progression into the labour market in key sectors.

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2.9 The redevelopment will be funded from a Combined Authority grant of £1.145m with an additional leverage match funded from the Council's essential maintenance budget of £0.131m.

2.10 In total, there will be 2,537m<sup>2</sup> of new build training/learning floor space.

- Estimated 4,650 residents will take up initial learning (after three years);
- 45% of these progressing to further skills development opportunities;
- 35 newly created/safeguarded permanent FTE jobs;
- 6 apprenticeship posts created.

## **Contribution to the Transport Capital Programme (£1.240m in 2019/20 and £1.440m in 2020/21)**

2.11 In order to progress major road infrastructure works the Combined Authority has approved bids from the Council. As part of this the Council is required to identify match funding of £1.24m as a contribution to a number of highway schemes to improve connectivity around the borough, such as A59 Northway Corridor Dover Road Junction. This is to be funded from the Council's resources.

## **Victoria Baths (£0.570m)**

2.12 Urgent repairs are required to the vacant baths complex which are calculated as £0.242m which includes urgent works required to the wall structure of the subterranean vaults.

2.13 A further £0.328m of immediate works is also required in the next 12 months. In the meantime, marketing particulars will be prepared seeking Expressions of Interest for the development and regeneration of the Baths Complex as a whole or part (being the Council's vacant element). There may be additional costs associated with the requirements on the leaseholder and discussions are currently ongoing to understand the legal position on their area of work. The urgent works are predominantly structural works relating to:

- the main facade stonework to the front elevation
- rear elevation walls, including party walls
- rear elevation brick tower
- various roof areas
- subterranean brick vaults at the front of the building, which includes works to the walls and brick piers.

2.14 The above costs are for urgent and immediate works only and in considering the cost of a full programme of restoration, a figure in excess of £6m has been suggested for the whole complex.

## **Southport Theatre and Convention Centre (STCC) (1.244m)**

- 2.15 Management of the STCC asset has recently returned to the council after a long lease with the previous operator came to an end. A new contractor (Bliss) has recently been appointed on a short-term basis to manage the facility whilst a procurement process is undertaken aimed at securing a long-term lease/operator. In the intervening period Bliss are managing day to day operations, along with identified risks. The award of a long-term lease will ensure future sustainability of the theatre and conference functions.
- 2.16 When the previous operator surrendered the property in 2018 a detailed condition survey was undertaken to identify building condition and essential maintenance liabilities. This information was also used to formulate the basis of the temporary agreement with Bliss, whilst at the same time a consultant was commissioned to undertake a dilapidations survey and produce a schedule of repair. This has recently been finalised and the Council is in the process of submitting a formal dilapidations claim.
- 2.17 Following receipt of the associated surveys, Property Services have reviewed all essential maintenance items highlighted through this process and have prioritised these for action. In order to ensure safe operation of the theatre in the interim period, a range of essential works (relating to electrical systems, roof repairs and fire safety matters, at a cost of £0.235m) have been approved for implementation by the Section 151 Officer in conjunction with Cabinet Member, Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2019 as per the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, under rules for approving supplementary capital estimates. The essential works are to be funded from the forecast income due from the dilapidations claim. Additional works are also required in replacement of the main theatre ceiling, along with more wide-ranging roof repairs, forming part of a longer term and more detailed maintenance plan.
- 2.18 Given the extensive nature of this work there is a requirement to close the theatre for several weeks in order to complete replacement of the ceiling structure along with associated mechanical, electrical and roofing works. It is necessary to agree a programme for this to take place during the quietest period of operation, which is expected to be between January and April 2020. The cost of these further works is estimated to be in the region of £1m and the costs will be met from the essential maintenance budget until such time as the dilapidations claim is resolved. Any residual balance will need to be met from Council resources.

**Essential Maintenance Programme (Total five year planned investment of 11.367m – Initial approval for £2.834m)**

- 2.19 An assessment has been made of the Council's current approach to the planning and management of building maintenance works in order to ensure that it provides for the most effective utilisation of funding resources. As a result of this it has been identified that a cyclical programme of ongoing maintenance is required.
- 2.20 Therefore, as part of the first phase of the Investment programme it is proposed that a five-year maintenance strategy (circa £12.5m) aimed at arresting the deteriorating condition of the existing portfolio is approved. A detailed

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programme of works for the remainder of 2019/20 and 2020/21 has been developed. The total estimated cost of outstanding works across the corporate property portfolio, as of April 2019 is identified as £30.5 million

- 2.21 In summary, the capital schemes presented in the report need additional capital estimates of £15.954m. Of this £5.994m will be funded via external contributions from the Combined Authority. The remaining funding gap of £9.960m will need to be found from Council resources, namely capital receipts or prudential borrowing.

## **3.0 Asset Management Strategy**

- 3.1 A core part of the Council's Investment Programme is informed by the Asset Management Strategy. The schedule of capital improvement works required to the Council's operational property portfolio is derived from this strategy. The Asset Management Strategy sits alongside the Asset Disposal Policy and overarching Capital Strategy.

- 3.2 The main objectives of capital expenditure on operational assets is to ensure that they continue to be able to meet service requirements in providing services to residents and communities, they meet health and safety standards, are fit for purpose in terms of statutory guidance and legislation, as well as helping the Council to reduce costs from unnecessary revenue expenditure on poorly maintained and/or redundant stock. A key objective of the Capital Strategy is that the Investment Programme links with the Asset Management Strategy to protect current buildings and long-term assets to avoid incurring significant future costs, essentially spending now to save money in the future.

- 3.3 The asset management capital expenditure decision making process must consider the Council's Asset Disposal Policy. Therefore, a review of all Council owned assets, to identify whether assets should be held for operational or heritage purposes, should form part of the Council's future investment and/or capital programme or should be disposed of is underway and the first tranche of recommended disposals, are presented to Members within this report as they inform decision making and funding of phase 1 of the Investment Programme.

- 3.4 There are eight sites recommended for disposal which are presented in the Disposals paper elsewhere on the agenda. These will generate the funding required from Council resources for the schemes presented for inclusion in phase 1 of the Investment Programme.

## **4.0 Capital Resources (Financing)**

- 4.1 Capital Expenditure must be incurred in line with the Financial Procedure Rules. The Head of Corporate Resources (Section 151 Officer) is responsible for ensuring that an Investment Programme which contains new projects funded from Council resources is prepared for consideration by Cabinet before submission to Council for approval as appropriate.

4.2 Capital resources are held corporately and are allocated according to the priorities outlined in section 2. The Council will seek to maximise the use of external grants and contributions and to consider joint funding initiatives with partners if the benefits of doing so align with Council priorities.

4.3 Capital expenditure is typically funded from:

- Government Grants
- Section 106
- External Contributions
- Prudential Borrowing
- Capital Receipts

4.4 The additional capital estimates are shown in Table 1 (paragraph 2.3) and reproduced below alongside a financing plan to fund schemes that require Council resources.

Programme / Project	Total Capital Estimate £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £
<b>Growth and Strategic Investment Programme</b>			
Strategic Acquisitions - Land at Bootle	998,500	998,500	
Bootle & Southport Town Centre Commission	750,000		750,000
Cambridge Road Centre	1,145,000		1,145,000
Crosby Lakeside Activity Centre (CLAC)	3,100,000		3,100,000
<b>Total - Growth and Strategic Investment Programme</b>	<b>5,993,500</b>	<b>998,500</b>	<b>4,995,000</b>
<b>Invest to Save</b>			
Winter Service Facility	2,632,000		2,632,000
<b>Total - Invest to Save</b>	<b>2,632,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,632,000</b>
<b>Traditional Capital Programme</b>			
Transport Contributions (10%)	2,680,000	1,240,000	1,440,000
Essential Maintenance - Victoria Baths essential works	570,000	242,000	328,000
Essential Maintenance - STCC essential works	1,244,000	1,008,000	236,000
Essential Maintenance - Council wide programme	2,834,000	112,500	2,721,500
<b>Total - Traditional Capital Programme</b>	<b>7,328,000</b>	<b>2,602,500</b>	<b>4,725,500</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,953,500</b>	<b>3,601,000</b>	<b>12,352,500</b>

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Financed by:			
External Grants / Contributions	5,993,500	1,748,500	4,245,000
Capital Receipts	7,328,000	2,602,500	4,725,500
Prudential Borrowing	2,632,000	0	2,632,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,953,500</b>	<b>4,351,000</b>	<b>11,602,500</b>

- 4.5 A separate report is included on this agenda which provides members with detail of the proposed asset disposal process to be undertaken from the first stage of the asset review.
- 4.6 The disposals will provide sufficient funding for the Council to finance the Investment Programme schemes presented in this paper without a requirement to borrow, other than for the purchase of the Winter Service Facility for which the borrowing costs are funded from overall savings within the business case for the scheme.
- 4.7 However, if there is a delay in the generation of receipts or the profile of capital expenditure changes and there is a need to incur some short term borrowing then this will be delegated to the Head of Corporate Resources (Section 151 Officer) on the basis that the cost of borrowing can be contained within the Growth and Strategic Investment budget and the Council's Prudential Indicators.



<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Revenue and Capital Budget Update 2019/20		
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Corporate Resources	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

**Summary:**

To inform **Cabinet** of:

1. The current forecast revenue outturn position for the Council for 2019/20;
2. The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2019/20;
3. The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of October 2019:
  - The forecast expenditure to year end;
  - Variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members;
  - Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects are also presented for approval.

**Recommendation(s):**

**Cabinet** is recommended to:

**Revenue Budget**

- 1) Note the current forecast revenue outturn position for 2019/20 and the current position relating to delivery of savings included in the 2019/20 revenue budget;
- 2) Note the mitigating measures being used to partially mitigate the forecast outturn position, in paragraph 2.2, excluding a forecast deficit on Housing Benefits which will be considered at the end of the financial year if it materialises;
- 3) Acknowledge that a comprehensive review of all forecast outturn estimates and potential remedial measures is required as part of the end of December monitoring in order to inform decisions that may be required to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position can be achieved or understand a potential call of General Fund Balances;

**Capital Programme**

- 4) Review updates to spending profiles across financial years (paragraph 5.1.1);

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- 5) Review the new schemes added to the Capital Programme under delegated authority for 2019/20 (paragraph 5.1.3);
- 6) Note the latest capital expenditure position as at 30 November 2019 to date of £10.695m (paragraph 5.2.2) with the latest full year forecast being £24.734m (paragraph 5.3.1);
- 7) Note explanations of variances to project budgets (paragraph 5.3.2); and,
- 8) Acknowledge that capital resources will be managed by the Head of Corporate Resources to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council (section 5.5).

## **Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the forecast outturn position for the 2019/2020 Revenue Budget as at the end of November 2019, including delivery of agreed savings, and to provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2019/20 and agreed allocations for future years.

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

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

In March 2017 Council approved a three-year budget plan to March 2020. The final year of this plan was revised in February 2019 as part of the process of setting the 2019/20 budget. The Council is in the final year of the budget plan and remains confident its strategic approach to budget planning alongside good financial management and extensive community engagement means that the plan continues to develop on solid foundations; it remains flexible and will secure the future sustainability to 2020 and beyond. However, in year demand for social care services is currently resulting in the costs for these services significantly exceeding the budget. If further budget pressures are identified between now and the end of the year additional remedial action will be required to bring the overall budget into balance.

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

N/A

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

### **(A) Revenue Costs**

The report indicates that for 2019/20 there is currently a forecast deficit of £3.587m. Mitigating measures have been identified in order to partially meet this deficit (excluding a forecast overspend on Housing Benefits which will be considered at outturn if this materialises) and are detailed within the report. An exercise with Heads of Service has

commenced to ensure the robustness of all estimates and identify what remedial measures will be implemented to meet the current residual forecast deficit of £0.589m.

## **(B) Capital Costs**

The Council's capital budget in 2019/20 is £24.051m. As at the end of November 2019, expenditure of £10.695m has been incurred and a full year outturn of £24.734m is currently forecast.

### **Implications of the Proposals:**

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

<p><b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b></p> <p>There is currently a budget shortfall of £3.587m forecast for 2019/20 and as previously reported, mitigating actions have been identified in order to address the majority of this (with the exception of a forecast overspend on Housing Benefits which will be considered at outturn if the position doesn't improve). An exercise with Heads of Service has commenced to ensure the robustness of all estimates and identify what remedial measures will be implemented to meet the current residual forecast deficit of £0.589m. However, it should be noted that significant pressure and risk remains in four key business areas, namely Adults and Children's Social Care, Education Excellence and Locality Services. These budgets may experience further demand pressure between now and the end of the year and further mitigations and remedial actions will be required in such an eventuality, if the existing measures aren't sufficient.</p>
<p><b>Legal Implications:</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Equality Implications:</b></p> <p>None</p>

### **Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Effective Financial Management and the development and delivery of sustainable annual budgets support each theme of the Councils Core Purpose.

<p><b><u>Protect the most vulnerable:</u></b></p> <p>See comment above</p>
<p><b><u>Facilitate confident and resilient communities:</u></b></p> <p>See comment above</p>
<p><b><u>Commission, broker and provide core services:</u></b></p> <p>See comment above</p>
<p><b><u>Place – leadership and influencer:</u></b></p> <p>See comment above</p>

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<b><u>Drivers of change and reform:</u></b> See comment above
<b><u>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</u></b> See comment above
<b><u>Greater income for social investment:</u></b> See comment above
<b><u>Cleaner Greener:</u></b> See comment above

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

### (A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources is the author of the report (FD 5898/19)

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer has been consulted and has no comments on the report (LD 4082/19).

### (B) External Consultations

N/A

## Implementation Date for the Decision

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

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Paul Reilly
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 4106
Email Address:	paul.reilly@sefton.gov.uk

## Appendices:

APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2021/22

## Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2017, Council approved a three-year budget plan to March 2020. The final year of this plan was revised in February 2019 as part of the process of the Council setting the 2019/20 budget. This report updates the forecast revenue outturn position for 2019/20, including the delivery of savings included in the 2019/20 budget.
- 1.2 The report also outlines the current position regarding key income streams for the Authority, namely Council Tax and Business Rates. Variations against expected receipts in these two areas will also affect the Council's financial position in future years.
- 1.3 The capital section of the report informs members of the latest estimate of capital expenditure for 2019/20 and updates forecast expenditure for 2020/21, 2021/22 and future years. The capital budget to date is presented in section 5.1. Sections 5.2 and 5.3, and section 5.6 confirms that there are adequate levels of resources available to finance the capital programme.

## 2. Summary of the Forecast Outturn Position as at the end of November 2019

- 1.0 Members are provided with updates of the Council's forecast financial position each month during the financial year. Significant pressures have been identified in several service areas, particularly Children's Social Care, Locality Services and Home to School Transport. The latest forecast of service expenditure indicates an overspend of £3.587m, this represents a worsening of the overall position by £0.208m on the previous months and is driven primarily by additional pressure in Children Social Care. The table below highlights the variations:

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Forecast Outturn</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Previously Reported Position</b>	<b>Movement since last month</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b><u>Services</u></b>					
Strategic Management	3.187	3.144	-0.043	-0.043	0.000
Strategic Support	2.709	2.638	-0.071	0.000	-0.071
Adult Social Care	96.765	96.765	0.000	0.000	0.000
Children's Social Care	33.340	35.400	2.060	1.612	0.448
Communities	19.518	19.583	0.065	0.189	-0.124
Corporate Resources	4.874	4.813	-0.061	-0.088	0.027
Economic Growth & Housing	6.045	6.027	-0.018	-0.001	-0.017
Education Excellence	9.859	10.106	0.247	0.194	0.053
Health & Wellbeing	18.060	17.898	-0.162	-0.102	-0.060
Highways & Public Protection	11.133	11.090	-0.043	0.000	-0.043
Locality Services	13.809	13.809	0.000	0.000	0.000
<b>Total Service Net Expenditure</b>	<b>219.299</b>	<b>221.273</b>	<b>1.974</b>	<b>1.761</b>	<b>0.213</b>

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Provision relating to 2018/19 Service Pressures	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Budget Pressure Fund	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Public Sector Reform Savings not allocated to services ( <b>see para 2.3</b> )	(0.950)	0.000	0.950	0.950	0.000
Council Wide Budgets	6.613	7.276	0.663	0.668	-0.005
Levies	34.156	34.156	0.000	0.000	0.000
General Government Grants	(40.979)	(40.979)	0.000	0.000	0.000
<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>219.139</b>	<b>222.726</b>			
<b>Forecast Year-End Deficit</b>			<b>3.587</b>	<b>3.379</b>	<b>0.208</b>

1.1 The key forecast variations in the outturn position, including any significant variations from the October position, are as follows: -

- **Children’s Social Care (£2.060m net overspend)** – The Placement and Packages budget overspent within the service by £5.612m in 2018/19. As a result, this equates to a full year effect in 2019/20 of £7.220m that also reflects a further increase in the number of Looked After Children. This budget pressure was identified in the budget report of February 2019 and an allocation of £4.900m from the *Provision relating to 2018/19 Service Pressures* has reduced the forecast overspend to £2.320m, with this being offset by underspends elsewhere within the service totalling £0.260m. This current position is an increase of £0.433m compared to October and reflects the additional costs in respect of nine placements that have arisen during the month.

As has been regularly reported over the last two years, the cost of Placements and Packages is the largest risk to the Council’s budget position, and it is expected that the position will be the subject of further change between now and the year end. The Council is currently working on developing a range of options to address the inherent demand and costs of Looked After Children whilst supporting the most vulnerable residents. Any financial impact from the proposals during the current year will be built into the year end forecast and next years budget.

- **Corporate Resources (£0.061m net underspend)** – The service is currently forecast to underspend. However, one of the key budget risks facing the service this year is in respect of ICT contracts. Upon the transfer of the function in October 2018, it was unclear as to the value and number of contracts that would be taken on by the Council that were previously administered by the external provider. At November 2019, this position remains uncertain due to the availability of detail that has been provided to the Council, for example at transfer it was estimated that around 270 contracts were in place however it is now estimated that nearly 300 support the Council’s ICT operations. Work continues to work through this and any material variation will be reported in the next cycle.
- **Education Excellence (£0.247m overspend)** - Home to School transport external provision has a projected overspend of £2.150m. This budget overspent by £1.817m in 2018/19 but is forecast to overspend by a further £0.333m due to the full year effect of the increased costs of new external transport contract, an

allocation of £1.800m from the *Provision relating to 2018/19 Service Pressures* has reduced the forecast overspend to £0.350m. In addition, there are net underspends across other areas of the service totalling £0.103m.

- **Health and Wellbeing (£0.162m underspend)** – There is a net underspending on the service as a result of vacancy savings and underspends on specific contracts.
- **Locality Services (£0.109m overspend before mitigating actions)** – The service pressures experienced in 2018/19 have continued into 2019/20.
  - Security Service (£0.200m overspend) – The forecast deficit is a reflection of an under recovery of income to support the cost base. The forecast deficit has improved since 2018/19 (from £0.486m overspend) due to additional internal works being undertaken by the service. Despite this improvement in income, the certainty of future income is not assured although efforts are being made to secure new contracts.
  - Green Sefton (£0.088m overspend) - The service was expected to achieve savings of £0.330m in 2019/20. Plans to increase income within the Golf courses will not be achieved in the current year as improvements to the courses to encourage customers are not expected until 2020/21.
  - Burial and Cremation Service (£0.100m underspend) – The service is forecast to achieve additional income in the year.
  - These overspends have been reduced by a net underspend of £0.079m elsewhere within the service.

Mitigating actions have been identified which will bring the forecast outturn within the service budget. These include generating additional income through increased use of assistive technology and external security services as well as temporarily reducing expenditure on supplies and services.

- **Public Sector Reform Savings not allocated to services (£0.950m overspend)** – see paragraph 2.3 below.
- **Council Wide Budgets (£0.663m)** – the increase in pay budgets due to pay awards and pension increases, after allowing for fees and charges increases for traded services, is £0.418m greater than the provision built into the 2019/20 budget. In addition, Housing Benefits is forecast to overspend by £0.248m due to reductions in subsidy relating to certain types of expenditure. However, this budget is difficult to forecast given the complexities of the subsidy claim and as such there is extreme volatility in this budget with the final position not being able to be predicted until year end.

## **Savings Delivery**

- 1.2 The 2019/20 Budget included £9.803m of savings from Public Sector Reform (PSR) projects. Current forecasts are that £8.853m of savings will be deliverable in the year (90%). An analysis of the overall savings for 2019/20 are shown in the summary below:

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	<b>Total Saving 2019/20</b>	<b>Forecast - Achieved In 2019/20</b>	<b>Forecast – Not Achieved 2019/20</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
PSR1 - Acute Wrap Around	0.230	0.000	0.230
PSR2 – Locality Teams	4.408	4.408	0.000
PSR4 - All Age Pathway	0.089	0.089	0.000
PSR6 - Commercialisation	0.405	0.405	0.000
PSR8 – Asset Maximisation	0.512	0.512	0.000
PSR9 – ICT & Digital Inclusion	3.439	3.439	0.000
PSR10 - Commissioning	0.720	0.000	0.720
<b>Total PSR Projects</b>	<b>9.803</b>	<b>8.853</b>	<b>0.950</b>

- 1.3 The shortfall on the achievement of savings shown in the table is included in the forecast outturn position shown in paragraph 2.1.
- 1.4 In addition, service budget options of £2.269m were approved for 2019/20. These have been built into service budgets and any shortfall in achievement of these savings is included in the forecast outturn position for each service.

## **Measures to close the residual gap in 2019/20**

- 1.5 The forecast budget deficit as at November 2019 is **£3.587m**. This reflects the risks that were inherent in the Council's financial position, particularly around demand for Children's Social Care and other demand led services. Major Services Reviews have commenced for Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Education Excellence and Locality Services with a view to reduce this budget pressure where possible.
- 1.6 The budget for 2019/20 includes a Budget Pressures Fund of £1.000m. Council gave delegated authority to the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Resources, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council, to allocate this Fund. Cabinet, at their meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019, have noted the allocation of the £1.000m to support the budget pressure identified and contribute to balancing the forecast outturn position.
- 1.7 The net forecast outturn position for 2019/20 is therefore:

	<b>£m</b>
Forecast Year-End Deficit (Paragraph 2.1)	3.587
Business Rates Reserve increase (previously noted by Cabinet on 5 September 2019)	-1.750
Budget Pressures Fund	-1.000
Forecast Year-End Deficit	<b>0.837</b>



- 1.8 As mentioned in paragraph 2.2, the forecast outturn position includes an overspend of £0.248m relating to Housing Benefits. This budget is difficult to forecast given the complexities of the Subsidy claim. The position will be monitored during the remainder of the year with any overspend at the end of the year considered as part of the Council's overall outturn position.
- 1.9 The above table shows a deficit forecast outturn position (excluding the Housing Benefits forecast) of **£0.589m**. As previously reported, there are risks still inherent in this position, particularly relating to Looked After Children, meaning the position may worsen further during the year. Looked After Children numbers increased by an average of 4 per month this financial year between June and October, adding £0.850m to the forecast. In November numbers increased by a further nine cases, adding £0.400m to the forecast. If this trend continues for the remainder of the financial year at least £0.500m will be added to the 2019/20 forecast, translating into a full year pressure of over £1.000m for 2020/21.
- 1.10 As the October position forecast a deficit, further mitigating actions were implemented, following approval by Cabinet on 5 December 2019:
- To not fill current vacant posts or posts as they become vacant (excluding essential posts in Children's Social Care); and,
  - A freeze on all but essential expenditure between now and the end of the financial year.
- 1.11 The estimated impact of these measures, excluding the effect of not filling posts as they become vacant, have now been built into the forecast in paragraph 2.1. As there is still a forecast deficit position of £0.589m, which may worsen if current trends on numbers of Looked After Children continue, other appropriate measures are required to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position will be achieved. An exercise with Heads of Service has commenced to ensure the robustness of all estimates and identify what remedial measures will be implemented. The outcome of this review will be reported to Cabinet in February 2020 as part of the December budget monitoring position. In the event that these measures cannot be identified, or the forecast outturn position worsens, a balanced outturn position may not be deliverable. This would lead to a call on the Council's low level of General Fund Balances. As such, this exercise is critical to support financial sustainability within the Council and difficult decisions may be required between now and the end of the financial year and could have a material impact on next year's budget.

## **2 Council Tax Income – Update**

- 3.1 Council Tax income is shared between the billing authority (Sefton Council) and the three major precepting authorities (the Fire and Rescue Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Combined Authority – Mayoral Precept) pro-rata to their demand on the Collection Fund. The Council's Budget included a Council Tax Requirement of £133.099m for 2019/20 (including Parish Precepts), which represents 84.1% of the net Council Tax income of £158.306m.
- 3.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of November 2019 is a surplus of +£0.032m. This variation is primarily due to: -

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- The surplus on the fund at the end of 2018/19 being lower than estimated (+£0.151m);
  - Gross Council Tax Charges in 2019/20 being higher than estimated (-£0.351m);
  - Exemptions and Discounts (including a forecasting adjustment) being higher than estimated (+£0.168m).
- 3.3 Due to Collection Fund regulations, the Council Tax deficit will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2019/20 but will be carried forward to be recovered in future years.
- 3.4 A forecast surplus of £1.160m was declared on the 15 January 2019 of which Sefton's share is £0.996m (85.8%). This is the amount that will be distributed from the Collection Fund in 2019/20. Any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in 2020/21.

## **4 Business Rates Income – Update**

- 4.1 Since 1 April 2017, Business Rates income has been shared between the Council (99%) and the Fire and Rescue Authority (1%). The Council's Budget included retained Business Rates income of £64.739m for 2019/20, which represents 99% of the net Business Rates income of £65.393m. Business Rates income has historically been very volatile making it difficult to forecast accurately.
- 4.2 The forecast outturn for the Council at the end of November 2019 is a surplus of -£0.814m on Business Rates income. This is due to:
- The surplus on the fund at the end of 2018/19 being higher than estimated (-£0.092m);
  - Increase in the gross charge on rateable properties (-£0.466m)
  - Other reliefs (including a forecasting adjustment) being lower than estimated in 2019/20 (-£0.256m).
- 4.3 Due to Collection Fund regulations, the Business Rates surplus will not be transferred to the General Fund in 2019/20 but will be carried forward to be distributed in future years. However, £0.284m of the surplus forecast in paragraph 4.2 will be required to offset the shortfall in Section 31 grants due to certain reliefs being lower than estimated in 2019/20.
- 4.4 A forecast surplus of £1.768m was declared in January 2019. Sefton's share of this is -£1.750m which is made up of an amount brought forward from 2017/18 (-£2.169m) and the impact of variations in 2018/19 (+£0.419m). This is the amount that will be distributed from the Collection Fund in 2019/20 and any additional surplus or deficit will be distributed in 2020/21.

## 5 Capital Programme 2019/20 – 2021/22 & Future Years

### 5.1 Capital Budget

1.1.1. The Capital Budget and profile of expenditure for the three years 2019/20 to 2021/22 is:

<b>2019/20</b>	<b>£24.051m</b>
<b>2020/21</b>	<b>£12.178m</b>
<b>2021/22</b>	<b>£0.730m</b>

1.1.2. The following new schemes funded from Council resources have been added to the Capital Programme in November and are shown in the budget figures above:

- Merton House Dilapidation (£0.460m, see paragraph 5.4)
- Southport Theatre Sound and Lighting Equipment (£0.081m).

1.1.3. The following new Section 106 funded schemes have been added to the programme in November and are shown in the budget figures above:

- Abbeyfield Park Play Area Redevelopment (£0.027m)
- South Park Hut (£0.035m)
- Hesketh Park Improvement Works (£0.035m)
- Ainsdale Village CCTV (£0.018m).

1.1.4. Amendments to the 2019/20 capital budgets have been made in November due to re-phasing of schemes between 2019/20 and future years as follows:

- Bridges Structural Maintenance and Strengthening – all 2019/20 schemes have been completed and a balance of £0.065m has been re-phased to fund 2020/21 projects
- A59 Maghull Route Management – forecast underspend of £0.500m. Surplus ring-fenced funding from the Combined Authority has been phased from 2019/20 to 2020/21 to fund future eligible schemes on the A59
- Lydiate Primary General Refurbishment – scheme to be completed earlier than anticipated (£0.060m from 2019/20 to 2020/21)
- Southport Pier Project - £0.141m phased to 2020/21 for completion of Phase 4 of the project.
- St John Stone Infrastructure Works which form part of the Sandway Homes Ltd development is being re-phased from 2019/20 to 2020/21 (£0.623m).

### 1.2. Budget Monitoring Position to November 2019

1.2.1. The current position of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of November 2019 is shown in the table below. It should be noted that budgets are profiled over the financial year which skews expenditure over quarters three to four.

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- 1.2.2. As would be expected Education Excellence carries out most of its capital works during key school's holiday periods such as the summer recess (quarter 2), whilst Highways and Public Protection completes most of its programmed works during quarters 2 and 4. The Adult Social Care expenditure excluding core Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) expenditure is profiled to quarters three and four.

Service Area	Budget to Nov-19	Actual Expenditure to Nov-19	Variance to Nov-19
	£m	£m	£m
<b>Adult Social Care</b>	1.616	1.574	-0.042
<b>Communities</b>	0.093	0.100	0.007
<b>Corporate Resources</b>	0.764	0.746	-0.018
<b>Economic Growth &amp; Housing</b>	0.054	0.084	0.030
<b>Education Excellence</b>	1.946	1.915	-0.031
<b>Highways &amp; Public Protection</b>	5.608	5.479	-0.129
<b>Locality Services</b>	0.792	0.797	0.005
<b>Total Programme</b>	<b>10.873</b>	<b>10.695</b>	<b>-0.178</b>

- 1.2.3. Analysis of significant spend variations over (+) / under (-) budget profile:

## Economic Growth and Housing

Scheme	Variation	Reason	Action Plan
<b>Southport Pier Project</b>	<b>£27,669</b>	Works to North Promenade railings have been completed earlier than anticipated.	None required. Expenditure on the scheme has not been affected by the earlier completion of work.

## Education Excellence

Scheme	Variation	Reason	Action Plan
<b>Hudson Primary Heating Ducts</b>	<b>-£53,463</b>	Due to the complexities of the scheme work is being done in the evenings over a longer time period.	Budget to be reprofiled to reflect the change in the way the scheme is being delivered.

## Highways and Public Protection

Scheme	Variation	Reason	Action Plan
<b>Healthy Lifestyles</b>	<b>£105,193</b>	Work on the Kirkby to Maghull cycle route has been brought forward to coincide with M58 works.	None required. Completing this work ahead of schedule is the most efficient option.
<b>Street Lighting</b>	<b>-£98,439</b>	Outstanding invoices.	Invoices are now in the system to be processed.

<b>M58 J1 Improvements</b>	<b>-£73,775</b>	Works on site and proceeding as planned but costs need to be revised.	A revised outturn schedule is currently being prepared. (see paragraph 4.2 for further detail).
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1.2.4. In the October report a number of schemes that reported variances to budget contained action plans to address the variance. Progress on these is as follows:

### Highways & Public Protection

Scheme	Variation	Action Plan	Progress to Date
<b>Highway Maintenance</b>	<b>-£400,404</b>	The outstanding invoices will be settled asap and the remaining budget reprofiled to later in the financial year.	Outstanding issues settled and remaining budget has been reprofiled to February / March 2020.

### 1.3. Capital Programme Forecast Outturn 2019/20

1.3.1. The current forecast of expenditure against the budget profile to the end of 2019/20 and the profile of budgets for future years is shown in the table below:

Service Area	Full Year Budget 2019/20	Forecast Out-turn	Variance to Budget	Full Year Budget 2020/21	Full Year Budget 2021/22
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
<b>Adult Social Care</b>	<b>3.644</b>	<b>3.641</b>	-0.003	0.000	0.000
<b>Communities</b>	<b>0.450</b>	<b>0.448</b>	-0.002	0.314	0.000
<b>Corporate Resources</b>	<b>1.096</b>	<b>1.098</b>	0.002	0.835	0.000
<b>Economic Growth &amp; Housing</b>	<b>0.197</b>	<b>0.197</b>	0.000	0.268	0.000
<b>Education Excellence</b>	<b>3.257</b>	<b>3.254</b>	-0.003	8.821	0.191
<b>Highways &amp; Public Protection</b>	<b>12.482</b>	<b>13.171</b>	0.689	0.940	0.000
<b>Locality Services</b>	<b>2.925</b>	<b>2.925</b>	0.00	1.000	0.539
<b>Total Programme</b>	<b>24.051</b>	<b>24.734</b>	<b>0.683</b>	<b>12.178</b>	<b>0.730</b>

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

1.3.2. Analysis of significant spend variations over budget profile in 2019/20:

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## Highways & Public Protection

Scheme	Variation	Reason	Action Plan
<b>M58 Junction 1 Improvements</b>	<b>£688,540</b>	Delays to the project due to longer than anticipated time to secure the land. Contractual payments had to be made to the contractor in the interim. Additional redesign costs have also been incurred. The total forecast overspend is £930k over 2019/20 and 2020/21.	An application has been made to the Combined Authority for further grant funding of £500k. The remaining shortfall of £430k to the projected overspend of £930k will require a review of the transport programme to identify resources that can be redirected to the M58 scheme.

### 1.4. PSR8 Asset Maximisation - Merton House Dilapidation Costs

- 1.4.1. Budget Council on 2nd March 2017 approved the development of a Cost of Change budget to deliver an overall three-year budget package for Asset Maximisation (PSR8). The report stated that in order to access this funding the Chief Executive and Section 151 officer would evaluate any proposed expenditure. The Chief Executive is then required to consult the Leader prior to any spend being authorised.
- 1.4.2. On 17th October 2019, the Executive Leadership Team considered and agreed the recommendations of the Project Sponsor for PSR 8 with regard to the payment of dilapidation costs relating to the move from Merton House.
- 1.4.3. This cost of change request approved £0.460m of capital funding in order to fund the agreed dilapidations claim settlement. This proposal is directly attributable to the delivery of the £0.962m PSR8 saving from vacating Merton House.
- 1.4.4. Having considered the need, the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, has approved that this cost is met from the Cost of Change budget.

### 1.5. Programme Funding

- 1.5.1. The table below shows a how the capital programme will be funding in 2019/20:

Source	£m
<b>Grants</b>	<b>20.340</b>
<b>Contributions (incl. Section 106)</b>	<b>1.388</b>
<b>Capital Receipts</b>	<b>0.321</b>
<b>Prudential Borrowing</b>	<b>2.002</b>
<b>Total Programme Funding</b>	<b>24.051</b>

- 1.5.2. The programme is reviewed on an ongoing basis to confirm the capital resources required to finance capital expenditure are in place, the future years programme

is fully funded and the level of prudential borrowing remains affordable subject to the issue raised in paragraph 5.3.2.

- 1.5.3. The Head of Corporate Resources will continue to manage the financing of the programme to ensure the final capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council.

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## APPENDIX A – Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2021/22

Capital Project	Budget		
	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £
<b>Adult Social Care</b>			
Adult Social Care IT Infrastructure	44,020	-	-
South Hub	11,257	-	-
Primary Care Integration	39,500	-	-
Core DFG Programme	1,824,000	-	-
Wider Social Care Programme	1,724,722	-	-
<b>Communities</b>			
Atkinson Studio Stage	11,929	-	-
Dunes All Weather Pitches - Invest to Save	13,083	-	-
Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre Water Sports	75,157	-	-
Formby Library Improvements	-	6,620	-
Libraries - Centres of Excellence	80,000	265,237	-
Bootle Library	-	42,372	-
S106 - Molyneux Ward - Rainbow Park Improvement Works	26,211	-	-
S106 - Litherland Ward - Caged Tipper	44,640	-	-
S106 - Linacre Ward - Mobile CCTV	18,000	-	-
S106 – Derby – South Park Hut Extension	34,518		
S106 - St Oswald's - Marian Gardens Redevelopment	66,466	-	-
S106 – Netherton & Orrell – Abbeyfield Park Play Area	27,327		
S106 – Cambridge – Hesketh Park Improvement Works	35,050		
S106 – Ainsdale – Ainsdale Village CCTV	18,000		
<b>Corporate Resources</b>			
Corporate Maintenance	113,022	-	-
STCC Essential Maintenance	219,718	-	-
STCC Sound & Lighting Equipment	80,500		
St John Stone Site – Infrastructure Works	-	623,210	-
Merton House Dilapidation	460,000		
Magdalen House Alterations	61,587	83,392	-
Meadows Community Base	3,645	2,683	-
Aintree Community Base	5,815	1,968	-
NAC Community Base	2,511	18,499	-
Southport Town Hall Community Base	26,477	5,373	-
Family Wellbeing Centres	122,816	100,000	-
<b>Economic Growth &amp; Housing</b>			
Marian Square, Netherton CCTV	-	40,405	-
REECH Project	37,162	-	-



Southport Commerce Park - 3rd Phase Development	13,173	-	-
Housing Investment (HMRI)	34,800	56,980	-
Southport Pier Project	111,515	170,688	-
<b>Education Excellence</b>			
Healthy Pupils Fund	178,000	-	-
Schools Programme	2,573,863	3,472,999	190,569
Planned Maintenance	352,776	4,294,000	-
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities	152,322	1,054,178	-
<b>Highways and Public Protection</b>			
Accessibility	265,000	-	-
Completing Schemes/Retentions	32,250	-	-
Healthy Lifestyles	1,590,000	-	-
Road Safety	120,000	-	-
A565 Route Management and Parking	710,000	-	-
Strategic Planning	303,822	220,168	-
Traffic Management and Parking	1,917,500	500,000	-
Highway Maintenance	2,039,446	-	-
Bridges & Structures	178,397	64,713	-
Drainage	225,000	-	-
Street Lighting Maintenance	300,000	-	-
UTC Maintenance	100,000	-	-
Major Transport Schemes	4,700,589	154,836	-
<b>Locality Services</b>			
Thornton Garden of Rest Improvements	3,692	-	-
Burials & Cremation Insourcing - Vehicles & Equipment	-	200,000	-
Formby Strategic Flood Risk Management Programme	-	44,141	-
Merseyside Groundwater Study	5,000	26,508	-
Four Acres Multi Agency Flood Options	3,352	-	-
CERMS	919,759	149,407	-
Natural Flood Risk Management	10,000	-	-
The Pool & Nile Watercourses	58,602	-	-
Crosby Flood & Coastal Scheme	358,947	306,190	500,000
Seaforth & Litherland Strategic Flood Risk	-	30,000	-
Hall Road & Alt Training Bank - Rock Armour	50,000	-	-
Ainsdale & Birkdale Land Drainage Scheme	30,000	-	-
Surface Water Management Plan	170,000	-	-
Parks Schemes	108,213	204,375	-
Tree Planting Programme	77,185	39,174	38,600
Vehicle Replacement Programme	1,130,614	-	-
<b>TOTAL PROGRAMME</b>	<b>24,050,950</b>	<b>12,178,116</b>	<b>729,169</b>

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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# Agenda Item 15

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 January 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Revenue and Capital Budget Update: Asset Maximisation - Disposals Strategy – Phase 1		
<b>Report of:</b>	Executive Director/ Head of Corporate Resources	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Boroughwide
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	<p><b>No the figures appearing in Appendix B of the Report are NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours the information in Appendix B being treated as exempt.</b></p>		

## Summary:

Budget Council in March 2017 approved a three-year Budget that covered the financial years 2017/18 to 2019/20. Within this, the Council's Framework for Change programme was outlined. This included details of Public Sector Reform projects that would be undertaken during the three years. One of these projects was Asset Maximisation.

This project was wide ranging in scope and has already delivered significant revenue savings to the three-year budget package. In addition to this, the project scope also detailed that a comprehensive review of all the Council's assets would take place. This would ensure that the Council aligns its asset base to the delivery of its objectives.

As such, the review of the Council's asset base will be undertaken in phases, with assets defined as either supporting operational activity, having heritage or other value, being required to support the Growth and Investment Programme or available for disposal.

This report provides Cabinet with details of those assets that have been identified as being available for disposal and the proposed approach to this exercise. As would be expected, the disposal programme will aim to support the Council's objectives e.g. delivery of the Local Plan and to maximise the capital sums available in order to contribute to both the Framework for Change, 'Cost of Change Budget' and the

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first phase of projects within the Growth and Investment programme (which are reported elsewhere on this Agenda).

## **Recommendations:**

That Cabinet:

- (i) Approve the disposal of the assets detailed within the report with a view to generating capital receipts to support the Growth and Investment Programme and the Council's Framework for Change Programme;
- (ii) Provide the authority for Officers to negotiate terms and conditions for each disposal in line with normal delegations set out in the Council's Asset Disposal Policy;
- (iii) Note that a progress update will be provided to Cabinet in April 2020.

## **Reasons for the Recommendations:**

- (i) Disposals will provide capital funding in support of the Growth and Investment Programme, which forms an ambitious strand of the Council's Framework for Change programme. It will also support the Cost of Change budget that was agreed by Council in March 2017 to support the delivery of the three year budget package.
- (ii) Assets have been identified for disposal where they adhere to two criteria: that each capital receipt forecasted represents financial "best consideration" and where the loss of other opportunities is quantifiable and does not undermine wider service delivery and economic development/ regeneration priorities.

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

- (i) In the event that the Council do not progress the disposals as set out in this report, the Growth and Investment Programme would either need to be reduced in scale and ambition, or the timing of project delivery is delayed. Alternatively, the Council would need to borrow capital funding from the Public Works Loans Board and this will increase the financial pressure on the revenue budget. Some of the projects in the Growth and Investment Programme will deliver new financial revenue streams to the Council which might not otherwise be realised.

- (ii) Similarly, Council approved a Cost of Change Budget as part of the three year budget approved in March 2017. This included details of capital expenditure that would be required to support the delivery of the Framework for Change programme with approval that this would be funded by asset disposals. If these recommendations are not approved, the Council will need to borrow funding from the Public Works Loan Board and this will amount to a revenue cost of approximately £0.700m over five years.

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

### (A) Revenue Costs

Upon approval, further technical surveys and due diligence investigations will be required to 'de-risk' sites identified for disposal and maximise the capital receipts available. The costs of these works will be off-set against the capital receipts due.

### (B) Capital Costs

Not applicable.

## Implications of the Proposals:

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

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b> Property and Facilities Management will work alongside Legal and Democratic Services to complete the work.
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<b>Legal Implications:</b> The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer will complete legal documentation for each disposal.
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<b>Equality Implications:</b> There are no Equality implications.
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## Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable.
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Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Disposal of sites will in some instances facilitate redevelopment to provide new housing in the Borough, including forms of affordable housing to benefit local communities.
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Commission, broker and provide core services: Progressing the disposals will support a number of Council service priorities including economic regeneration and the provision of Housing (including Affordable Housing)
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Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable.
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The draft disposal strategy is phased over a threeyear period and is critical to facilitating the delivery of the wider Growth Programme and individual economic development projects.
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener: Not applicable

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

### (A) Internal Consultations include:

- The Head of Corporate Resources has been consulted and his comments incorporated into the report (FD/5899/19)
- The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer has been consulted and his comments incorporated into the report (LD/4083/19)

### (B) External Consultations

- N/A

## Implementation Date for the Decision

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

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Sarah Kemp/ Dominic Ellis
Telephone Number:	0151 934 4269/ 2751
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:Sarah.kemp@sefton.gov.uk">Sarah.kemp@sefton.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:dominic.ellis@sefton.gov.uk">dominic.ellis@sefton.gov.uk</a>

## Appendices:

Appendix A- Summary of the Council’s agreed disposal/approval process

Appendix B – Summary detail of Disposal Programme

## Background Papers:

N/A



## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Due to significant reductions in central government grant allocations, the Council no longer has available capital resources to support the delivery of its Capital Programme or maintain its current asset base. This means that it can either borrow capital funding which would lead to a corresponding financial cost that would need to be met via the Medium Term Financial Plan or it can seek to secure funding from external partners or through the disposal of assets and generation of capital receipts.
- 1.2 As part of the Framework for Change Programme set out and agreed by Council in March 2017, the Asset Maximisation project was identified as part of the Public Sector Reform list of projects that would help the Council meet its stated objectives and deliver financial sustainability.
- 1.3 A key feature of the Asset Maximisation project was that assets would be identified as supporting operational activity, having heritage value, being required for economic growth purposes or would be considered for disposal.

This work has begun and the first phase has now been completed. The list of prospective disposal assets has been assessed, which includes a range of sites identified in the Local Plan for housing development, vacant and under-utilised assets, and assets that have been previously been allocated to the Council's Housing Development Company, Sandway Homes Limited. This initial list of sites for disposal to be included in the first phase of the council's disposal programme is shown in paragraph 1.4 below.

### **1.4 Phase 1 Disposal Assets**

1. Brooklea House Hostel and ATC, Pendle Drive Litherland
2. Land at Isle of Wight Farm, Bentham's Way, Southport
3. Grange Land, Lunt
4. Ainsdale Hope, Sandringham Road, Ainsdale Southport
5. 25 Crosby Road North, Crosby
6. 18 Great Georges Road, Waterloo
7. 255/257 Knowsley Road, Bootle
8. Pavilion Buildings, Lord Street, Southport
9. Holgate Phase 2, Thornton
10. Bootle High School Copy Lane, Netherton
11. Holy Trinity School, Lonsdale Road, Formby
12. Ainsdale ATC and Meadows, Sandbrook Road, Ainsdale, Southport
13. Vine House, Kepler Street, Seaforth
14. Meadow Lane, Ainsdale (Sandway Homes)
15. Barton's Close, Crossens (Sandway Homes)
16. Z Blocks, Buckley Hill Lane, Netherton (Sandway Homes)

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## **2.0 Disposal Approaches**

2.1 For each asset listed in Paragraph 1.4, the Council has identified the key actions required to bring forward each disposal and the estimated timing of any capital receipt. In some instances, the timing of the capital receipt is more difficult to accurately forecast due to a range of factors including:

- the need to decant existing occupiers to secure vacant possession;
- the need to progress pre-planning/ technical due diligence work to de-risk the offers for sites and maximise return (ensure best consideration);
- accounting for time required for marketing/ sale negotiations and;
- other unknowns that may emerge as part of the disposal process – i.e. discovery of significant contamination or other site issues.

2.2 These issues will then determine the route to market for each site with the following options existing for disposal:

- Sale via auction: in this case work would be required in order to obtain outline planning (to maximise value) and to prepare a title information pack. This is a relatively short process and will enable assets to be disposed of within the first year of the programme;
- Sale of land open market (informal tender) conditional upon full planning (where appropriate): In this case a range of de-risking work would need to be completed early in the process including technical due diligence, obtaining a full title report, and the commissioning of ecological and topographical studies, a transport assessment and a ground contamination report.
- Opportunistic: There will be times when the Council is approached to determine if it is prepared to dispose of one of its sites. In such circumstances, this would require a comprehensive review to ensure that best consideration is obtained and the principles set out in the Council's Asset Disposal Policy and governance procedures are adhered to.

2.3 Phase One sites being taking forward by Sandway Homes are also included in this first phase of disposals. The anticipated land receipts for the three sites have been factored into year three (2021/22) of the programme to account for deferred land payments. These sites are Barton's Close, Z Blocks and Meadow Lane.

2.4 This programme is significant in both the contribution to the delivery of the Council's Framework for Change programme and the financial contribution to the Councils proposed Growth and Investment Programme that is reported elsewhere on this Agenda. Many of the projects within this Programme relate to the development of an existing Council asset. In this way, capital receipts will be recycled from assets which do not deliver a return to the Council, into assets that will both deliver a financial return to the Council and increase the value of Council owned assets on the Council's balance sheet. The Council's in-house Property Management team will be responsible for working up a defined

programme of works for the disposal of each asset and implementation will be led by an in-house delivery team, supported by external advisors as necessary to complete individual packages of work required to inform planning applications and marketing Particulars to prospective purchasers.

### **3.0 Best Consideration and Capital Receipt Forecasting**

- 3.1 The Council is under an obligation to ensure that any offers received for its assets' represents "best consideration" in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). As such, all work and subsequent negotiations and offers must be undertaken and considered in this context.
- 3.2 Based upon this principle and the work undertaken to date it is estimated for those sites identified within Appendix B, that significant capital receipts could be generated by the Council over the next three years. As discussed earlier in this report the final sums due for each site will depend on a range of factors including national economic conditions, liquidity in the market (especially the Housing market), site/ ground conditions and the cost of any enabling works. The Council has attempted at this early stage to factor these into its estimates however they will inevitably be the subject of change. As the disposal programme progresses such issues will be reported back to Cabinet, with the first such report being in April 2020.
- 3.3 It is noted that a number of sites in this first phase are sites that have been identified for housing provision in the Local Plan. As soon as these are sold and then subsequently developed, the Council will also receive a revenue stream through the Council Tax that will be levied on each property.
- 3.4 Appendix B provides Members with the estimated capital receipt that could be generated for each site, potential year of disposal and method that will be adopted and potential use. As has been outlined in this report, these factors may be the subject of change as the disposal process progresses.

### **4.0 Summary**

- 4.1 This report provides the outcome from the first phase of the Asset Review that is an integral part of the Public Sector Reform project Asset Maximisation. The disposal programme will enable the Council to support development on these sites, particularly in respect of delivering housing in accordance with the Local Plan and the generation of capital receipts in order to support the Council's Growth and Investment programme and the Cost of Change budget within the Framework for Change programme
- 4.2 Although this is the first stage of the programme, the number of sites, complexity and financial value will require a dedicated internal team to support this over the next three years and to regularly report progress to members. This

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will be important as the ultimate receipts that will be generated will be dependent on a number of factors many of which are outside of the Council's control, therefore while the Council will always demonstrate how it is meeting its requirement with regard to 'best consideration' it will be important that Members are appraised of progress at regular intervals.

## **Appendix A**

### **Summary of the Council's Agreed Disposal/Approval process**

#### ***Pre-delivery stage.***

1. The Council's Property Management Team undertake the asset review and classify sites as being required for operational, heritage, economic growth or disposal purposes.
2. Initial work presented for feedback on potential disposals and options around who to be engaged, this will include consideration of sites that may be suitable for Sandway Homes Limited.
3. Pre-delivery desktop work undertaken to understand potential value and key issues along with informal engagement.
4. Present initial findings
5. Preferred disposal route and next steps prior to formal process/delivery to be identified.

#### ***Formal Disposal Process.***

The main stages in the disposal process are as follows;

- Operational property closed, declared surplus to operational requirements and available for disposal by relevant Cabinet Member
- Non-operational property declared available for disposal by Cabinet Member Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.
- Pre-disposal actions and activity (planning briefs or outline planning consent, disposal terms, method of disposal, etc) agreed by relevant Officers and implemented.
- The disposal will usually be handled by the Council's Property Management Team unless it is of a specialist nature that requires external expertise or resource
- In the case of open market disposals, the asset will be fully marketed using the Internet and more traditional advertising methods.
- The disposal process will take into account any moratorium periods under the Localism Act 2011 and the Community Right to Bid
- All offers will be considered for compliance with tender conditions and undergo a value for money assessment, initially by the relevant Council officials, before being reported as follows
  - Value: < £100,000 – Decision delegated to Head of Corporate Resources
  - Value: £100,001 to £500,000 – Decision made by Cabinet Member Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services
  - Value: > £500,001 – Decision made by Cabinet.
- After publication of the decision and progression through the call-in process (if instigated) the decision will be implemented and Chief Legal and Democratic Officer instructed to deal with the requisite legal documentation and Conveyance.
- Progress of disposal activity monitored by the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services

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Formal route – to be undertaken in line with the Asset Disposal Strategy (post Pre-delivery stage).