

# CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

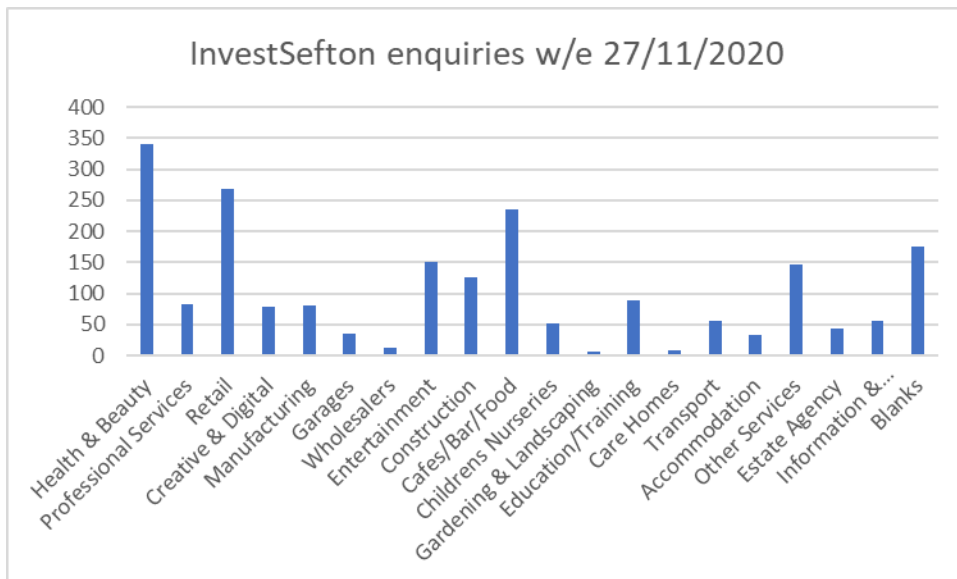
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) - January 2021

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Marion Atkinson	Cabinet Member Regeneration and Skills	January 2021

## GROWTH & INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATES

### INVESTSEFTON UPDATE

InvestSefton supported Business Rates during the first month of the delivery of the Small Business and Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grants handling over 1,740 recorded calls with a further 400 unrecorded due to the volumes of demand. The team is receiving record numbers of enquiries. InvestSefton has handled **2,075 enquiries from a wide range of businesses. Breakdown by type of business is provided below as at 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020:**



*Of these, 1,076 were in connection with Rates and business grant payments/ Furloughing staff/self- employed scheme or Discretionary Business Grants. The remaining 999 are of a general business support nature including business start-up and property searches. As can be seen in the above graph most enquiries have come from businesses services such as high street retailers, including cafe's, hair/beauty salons but other sectors are also emerging as owners seek what support will be available in the event of new restrictions.*

InvestSefton's website has a dedicated COVID 19 landing page which is updated regularly with the latest guidance and news from Government, Growth Platform, Sefton Council and other sources of help. All relevant and critical links have been synchronised with [www.investsefton.com](http://www.investsefton.com) now available with minimal clicks from Sefton Covid-19 site. **Since the site went live (Monday, 30th March) it has had a total of 21,871 unique sessions with 832 in the past week. Unique hits have more than doubled since the same period last year.**

## Case studies

The team continue to engage with businesses via one to one Teams calls. Recent case studies below:

Southport based audio equipment manufacturer required support with improving online marketing, recruitment and sourcing finance to fund attendance at an international trade exhibition. InvestSefton advised on recruitment options and introduced business to Edge Hill University for graduate recruitment support. Also brokered business into Liverpool Chamber of Commerce for international trade support and provided training through online social media sessions.

Waterloo -based specialist decorative rendering company. The business is owner-managed, and began trading in early 2020, and supplies specialist decorative render and paint products. Their main product is 'Glamrend' which they developed and is produced on site to a ready-to-use product that has glitter incorporated, for bathroom, kitchen, lounge walls etc. The business has won work with hotels and restaurants, and a new build apartment block. They also offer training courses for plasterers with almost 100 contractors from across the UK undertaking courses. The business has been assisted with Intellectual Property and Trademarks, and a digital marketing plan.

## Business Grants

### Liverpool City Region Hospitality & Leisure Grants-Round 1

The grants are for businesses in the Leisure & Hospitality industry whose activities have been significantly affected by Covid-19 restrictions. The grant supports businesses that have been able to continue trading through these difficult times, or that have been forced to close as part of the Government's Tier 3 Lockdown. Further details including scheme guidance can be viewed at <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/hospitality-fund>

The scheme went live on 16<sup>th</sup> October and closed on 30<sup>th</sup> October. A team led by InvestSefton and Tourism has been established including appraisers from Corporate Resources, Regeneration, Planning and Sefton@work. The current position in Sefton (3<sup>rd</sup> December ) is as follows:

<b>Total budget</b>	<b>£1,707,100</b>
Number of applications received	296
Total amount sought	£1.7m <i>Based on an average of £6,800/ application – paying a total of 250 applicants</i>
No of applicants providing supporting evidence	96%
No of applications currently being reviewed <i>(including those requiring further evidence/follow up)</i>	70
No of applications remaining	9
No of businesses paid	167
<b>Total grants paid</b>	<b>£1,162,500</b>
No of applications rejected	47 <i>Taxi Driver, Event Company, Supply Chain,</i>

	<i>Printers, takeaways</i>
Balance of funding remaining if all current applications paid	<b>£544,600</b>



## Liverpool City Region Hospitality Leisure & Retail grants (Expanded)-Round 2

The team is also delivering the Hospitality, Leisure and Retail Grants (Expanded Scheme which opened on Monday 30 November and will close at 5.00 pm on Friday 11 December 2020

The following businesses can apply:

- **Retail businesses** that operate from commercial retail premises, have been forced to close due to national restrictions, and that are not eligible for Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed).
- Businesses that **directly supply** the **Hospitality and Leisure** sectors, that are not eligible for Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) and that operate from commercial premises. Examples include brewery, catering, event agency staffing, event photography and hotel suppliers such as provision of linen.
- **Home based businesses, for example a self-employed person, sole trader, or a limited company that predominantly works in or supplies the Hospitality and Leisure** sectors, and can no longer generate income through usual channels, for example face to face to face, and has ongoing business-related costs. Licensed Market traders are eligible to apply under this category.

A business must be based in the Liverpool City Region (covering the local authority areas of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral), have been trading since 11 March 2020, have not been eligible or received a grant from a local authority from October 2020 onwards, employ one or more people, be able to demonstrate that its trading activities

have been significantly and negatively impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, be State Aid compliant, still be trading on or before 1 October 2020.

### Performance (2nd December 2020)

<b>Total budget</b>	<b>£1,615,000</b>
Number of applications received	64
Total amount sought	£1m <i>Based on an average of £4,000/ application – paying a total of 250 applicants</i>
No of applicants providing supporting evidence	75%
Supply Chain Businesses	12
Non Essential Retail	7
Self Employed/ Sole Trader/ Home Based	45
No of applications rejected	2 <i>Duplicate applications, these companies have received previous funding in round one</i>

### Webinars

Invest Sefton is delivering webinars on a range of topics for businesses. A summary of the most recent is shown below:

Managing Stress Webinar – 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020

**5 businesses attended**

Starting Your Business 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**17 businesses attended**

Winning More Business from Your Website 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**10 businesses attended**

Examples of feedback comments include: *‘Another fantastic and informative webinar yesterday and completely free of charge, what a privilege’* and *‘Must say I enjoyed the content and found it very informative’*.

Cybersecurity 15<sup>th</sup> October

**11 businesses attended**

Examples of feedback include: *“I would not miss these Events, as there is always something to be gleaned from other specialists in their field”*.

Business Communications 5<sup>th</sup> November

**9 businesses attended**

Examples of feedback from participants include *“very easy to engage and everyone was involved, really clear and very interesting”*.

Upcoming webinars planned for the next couple of months include Branding & Digital Marketing, EU Exit, Health & Wellbeing and Tendering.

## **Inward Investment update**

Given the current Coronavirus Pandemic the team is expecting to see a significant drop off in Inward Investment enquiries for the foreseeable future. Most businesses are prioritizing Business Continuity and Workforce/Public Health decisions and actions at this time and are likely to continue to do so for at least two months. The team will continue to liaise with both investors and developers during this time and provide appropriate support. In addition, the team is taking the opportunity to work on finalising the Inward Investment Strategy, Propositions and Delivery/Action Plan to implement this as the economy begins to re-open. Investment activity still occurring although some projects have been put on hold and decision making is slower.

InvestSefton continues to be a partner in the LCR Inward Investment service, with enquiries still coming through this route and DIT.

## **Mersey Reach**

### **Phase 1**

- Terms have now been agreed on Unit 3 12,000 sq. ft for an expanding local food and drinks manufacturer
- Strong interest in the one remaining unit (c.40,000 sq. ft )
- Hoardings will start to be taken down around phase 1 to open up the site. This will help with marketing the final unit on phase 1 and generate interest in phase 2.
- Phase 2 – went to Planning Committee on 9 December. A leaflet drop happened for nearby residents to update them on the proposals. Simultaneously working up tender with a plan to be on site anticipated March 2021 with a 6 month build period.
- See link: [Mersey Reach](#) for online video of the site

## **Southport Business Park**

Invest Sefton is supporting regeneration colleagues to bring forward additional development on SBP and together with Estates consider the ongoing management and marketing of the business park. This includes:

- Soft market testing exercise
- Bringing forward development plots (as agreed with SCIG)
- Working with landlord and incubator operator to bring forward redevelopment of existing building

## **Export and Brexit**

The Growth Platform has secured limited funding from BEIS to develop an Export Plan for the City Region, working with partners and DIT. To support this the Growth Platform has appointed an Export Manager.

- An Export Group has been created made up of Growth Platform, Combined Authority, DIT Chambers of Commerce and Sefton Council to act as a Steering Group. This group will meet fortnightly through December with a view to establishing an Action Plan and creating a private sector Export Advisory Group in January. This Export
- This will also shape support required by businesses as a result of EU Exit
- Longer term funding will be sought to ensure that this is meaningful and has sustained impact
- Updates will be provided on a regular basis

## TOURISM UPDATE

### Business Tourism

- While the Southport Theatre & Convention Centre remains closed, and with the ongoing changes to COVID-19 restrictions, the focus of the team has been on the following:
  - Supporting local businesses and providing guidance on how to build towards recovery
  - Maintaining relationships with clients who have previously used the STCC / had their event displaced / have future provisional bookings
  - Researching potential consumer events / shows – a much shorter lead-in time than conferences and the likelihood that theatre / entertainment will return ahead of larger business events
  - Developing a destination-led marketing strategy to promote the town as whole
  - Attended several Visit England / VisitBritain webinars re: post-COVID recovery and destination marketing, with relevant learnings shared with partners
- Fortnightly calls with the Southport Hotels Association have led to a joined-up social media campaign, and feedback from members has been positive – they appreciate the support of their colleagues and are sharing insights and best practise
- @SouthportConferences has an increased presence on social media, with an uptick in Twitter engagement and followers
- The team is putting together free social media training sessions for small accommodation providers that have been well attended along with a full business diagnosis for guest houses
- Hospitality Southport has been set up to provide a link between the Convention Bureau and both large and small accommodation providers. Regular communication between the group is strengthening relationships and offering much-needed support
- Researching social activities that can be offered as part of the conference programme to provide a destination-led sales approach

### Destination Marketing

- Autumn Marketing Campaign – commenced late September and included Radio (Heart & Gaydio), digital and The Guide. As tier three restrictions were imposed the campaign was reprofiled to target local residents and encourage them to support local businesses.
- Visitor Guide – this reverted to A5 in size to reduce postage and distribution costs. Advertising sales have been difficult with the current economic situation for most tourism / leisure businesses. The guide is signed off and going to print this month – 45,000 copies are being printed and distribution channels are in place.
- Visit Southport website – this has been updated regularly in line with the ever-changing landscape we have been experiencing during the COVID-19 epidemic.
- Southport Restaurateurs Association (SRA) Guide – this has been signed off and will be printed in January. SRA membership currently stands at 23.

- Marketing Southport – ongoing support for membership. To date over 100 updates have been sent during the COVID-19 epidemic. These have included updates on central government and local funding for businesses and the self-employed, marketing updates and links to websites offering support to businesses. Marketing Southport membership currently stands at 115.
- We are in the process of appointing a design agency for 2021 to undertake design and campaign planning for the three main campaigns for 2021 (Easter / spring, summer and autumn).
- Travel Trade – a review of current and potential business from this area is to be undertaken over the next month with a view to levels of marketing activity for 2021.

## Events

- There is still uncertainty if major events will be able to take place this year, however due to the lead in time for these, preparation works have now started.
- The impact of the economy will be factored into the overall position that will result in potentially less commercial income from sponsorship and pitch fees.
- The provisional dates for next year's major events are as follows;

Food & Drink Festival 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> June  
 Southport Air Show 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> July  
 British Musical Fireworks Championship – 24<sup>th</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> September

- The majority of 2020 contracts will be honoured for 2021, tickets have been on sale since December, sales are good particularly given the absence of any marketing campaign. To date there have been over 730 tickets sold for the British Musical Fireworks Championship and 392 for the Air Show
- Southport Air Show trade booking forms were sent out before Christmas and the initial interest is positive with many of the bookings being previous traders. Traders have been informed that no payments will be taken until we are sure that major events will be able to take place. This gives them the reassurance to book without the initial financial risk.
- Conversations have started with the Flying Display Director who is currently obtaining costs for civilian aircraft. The Military aircraft allocations will be announced at the end of March.
- Site visits will start to take place as necessary
- A new under 16's ticket has been introduced which will help and encourage more families to visit the event.
- There is also a new 'Pier Viewing' ticket with a limited number on sale where customers can view the Air Show from the Pier.
- The Armed Forces have been informed of the date and are keen to attend – they are currently securing ground assets to bring to the event.
- The event is dependent on the Government lifting the ban on mass gatherings. If the ban is lifted, then measures such as hand sanitiser units and the wearing of masks will be investigated if still required.

- The Food & Drink Festival traders from 2020 will be offered first refusal for attendance in 2021, all that have been contacted so far are keen to attend, measures can be put in place if social distancing is still required, however this would again be dependent on restrictions on mass gatherings being lifted
- The BMFC competitors briefing will likely take place in March/ April when it is hoped restrictions on travel are lifted

### Tourism Operations

- **Southport Market –** The Market Hall is now closed ready for its major refurbishment. Blackhursts Butchers have remained open through the Christmas period. They will be moving to their new unit at the front of the market in the next two weeks.
- This will allow the capital works to commence the w/c 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The tender process for these works are complete with 4 compliant bids received. The contract will be awarded w/c 11<sup>th</sup> January.
- These works should be complete in April 2021; however, we will continue to monitor the impact of the current lockdown on materials and labour supply.
- Legal discussions are progressing with several new traders, announcements should be able to take place in February with regards to who has signed up.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING UPDATE**

### **Impact of Third National Lockdown on Service Provision in Employment and Learning**

Teams are revising risk assessment plans to ensure that all possible measures are being taken in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, clients and learners in the context of the announcement of the third national lockdown. Any revision to plans will be signed off by the Head of Service and will be consulted upon with Trade Unions as initial versions have been.

### **Sefton@work Support for COVID Testing Centre recruitment**

A large piece of work was carried out by Sefton@work to support the recruitment of staff to operate the SMART testing centres across Sefton in December. This work was carried out in partnership with Council HR staff and arrangements were put in place with great speed, using the Covid Secure premises on Stanley Road to provide a base for candidates to bring their identification and their other details. Sefton@work staff and HR worked together seamlessly throughout this, providing application screening and offering starts on the training programmes being run by the Army and subsequently by the Council's Workforce Development Team. The Covid secure environment provided by Sefton@work proved to be critically important for the delivery of this recruitment project within the most pressing deadlines, driven by the withdrawal of the Army from the Borough.

With 3 Test centres to be put in place, the jobs target was for a minimum of 75 operatives with additional site manager positions. Job Matching activity with active job seeking residents registered with Sefton@work was completed, ensuring they were aware of the opportunities available and supporting them through the recruitment. These Site Operative jobs were also promoted via a virtual jobs fair. The target was exceeded in securing more than 75 starts for applicants for these positions.

In order to meet this demand, Employment and Learning staff were temporarily drafted in to assist from other parts of the service, HR and Payroll staff have also operated from the Stanley road base and the opening hours were temporarily extended. Given the much higher throughput of members of the public, the Covid Secure Risk Assessment plan has also been



amended. The response from clients and residents was very strong, and applicants needed to attend in person to finalise job documentation within the pressing timescales.

The recruitment continues at a much-reduced scale in order to recruit additional staff and meet emerging gaps through the introduction of a flexible staffing bank. This has meant that some other Sefton@work operations have been paused to meet this unexpected requirement.

### **DWP Kickstart Scheme**

Following prolonged delays by DWP, the application from the Council to become a Kickstart intermediary provider has now been approved. This will allow the first batch of jobs within local SMEs to go ahead.

Given the length of time that employers have been waiting and also the new restrictions brought into effect in the third national lockdown, staff will undertake further dialogue with employers before young people are recruited, as it is inadvisable to place a young person in a situation where they will be working from home and potentially missing out on the experience of being incorporated into a workplace setting.

### **External accreditations**

In the months of October and November, Sefton@work went through a round of renewals of external accreditations. These included the assessment for the Matrix accreditation, which is the national industry standard for the provision of information, advice and guidance and also the Customer Service Excellence award. Both these were passed with commendations and /or Compliance Plus points from the assessors.

### **Sefton Community Learning Ofsted Interim visit**

SACL received the Ofsted visit on Thursday 10th and Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December. This was not a full inspection and there will be no judgement affecting the grading of the Service, and was carried out within Ofsted's revised procedures for remote visits published in 2020.

The focus of these visits is to ascertain how Adult Education providers, schools or Colleges have been able to understand the impact of COVID on their learners in their communities, what measures they have put in place to respond to the changing needs of learners in the context of COVID and the appropriateness of the adapted offer including online teaching and learning, online safety and the wellbeing of learners and staff.

Inspectors spoke with a mixed group of managers, tutors, learners, stakeholders and employers and at the end of the visit a feedback letter will be issued and published in due course. I as Cabinet Member for Regeneration and skills also took part in the discussions with Ofsted.

The verbal feedback from the interim visit was extremely positive and supportive and we expect several positives to be highlighted in the letter to be received within 18 working days of the visit. This will eventually be published and be available in the public domain.

### **NEET Reduction and Prevention Service**

We are ending the year on a high with the overall performance for our statutory duty related to the participation of 16- and 17-year olds. Sefton was ranked in the official data for all Local Authorities as being the 4<sup>th</sup> best among 151 LAs. Our performance on this statutory duty is also above the North West average and is the best within the Liverpool City Region. This is the primary target used by DFe to rate the performance of LAs against their statutory duties for NEET young people

The quality of the data uploaded on our behalf by Career Connect is extremely high and the integrity of the systems analysis and validation before the information is uploaded to the

NCCIS database is extremely rigorous. The fact that we have very low numbers of Not Known destinations for our young people also ensures our data is extremely robust.

## **Older Care Leavers**

A piece of work connected to reducing NEET among older Care leavers aged between 19 and 24 has begun to emerge, as the numbers remaining NEET in this particular group for prolonged periods remain stubbornly high. Although Career Connect carry out the data tracking of this group, the provision of interventions and direct support for these young people is out-with their current contract. Career Connect work with Care leaving young people on their Education, Training or Employment plans up to the age of 18, at which point they are supported through other means such as through the Care Leavers Employment and Training officer based within the Council's Apprenticeship team. This will be taken forward in the New Year and will need to be co-designed and owned with the Leaving Care team, part of Children's Social Care as any new interventions will need to reflect a "whole system" approach.

## **GROWTH & INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATES**

### **Growth and Investment Programme Update**

Despite the impact of Covid 19 on working arrangements and the local economy, work is progressing on several key projects within the Council's growth and investment programme. This includes projects in Bootle, Crosby and Southport and Sefton's key coastal gateways at Crosby and Ainsdale.

#### **1. SOUTHPORT**

##### **Southport Town Deal**

Sefton Council is awaiting the outcome of the recent Southport Town Deal bid, submitted in October 2020. An announcement is anticipated late January 2021 on which bids have been successful in this round across the UK.

Preparation of the bid involved creation of a masterplan for Southport involving input from public and private sector partners in Southport and the surrounding area, the local community including schools, and was informed through an extensive public consultation process despite lockdown which managed to reach across the broad range of the town's stakeholders. The Town Deal Board has overseen the development of the Town Deal Investment Plan (TIP) being submitted and the board agenda and minutes area available on the Council's website.

The bid seeks funding to support a number of key priority projects that will help deliver the Southport Town Centre vision and objectives for economic growth and recovery including a number of interventions aimed at supporting the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors which have been particularly and significantly affected throughout the pandemic as a result of lockdown during the tourism season, social distancing restrictions, key event cancellations and the pre - Christmas tier restrictions, all of which have further exacerbated the impacts of high street retail decline.

#### **2. CROSBY VILLAGE**

At a time when town centres/high streets are experiencing significant decline it is encouraging to see investor interest and activity within Crosby Village with two recent approaches for Telegraph House and the former Central Buildings sites. Following the purchase of Telegraph House by Crossfield Developments in summer 2020, proposals for a mixed-use retail and assisted living scheme are currently being developed for this key site in the town centre. Secondly Plus Dane recently submitted proposals for a mixed residential

and commercial ground floor development on the former Central Buildings site in Crosby Village.

Planning permission was refused on amenity grounds for the Plus Dane scheme late last year and an appeal has been submitted against this decision. If proposals acceptable to planning can be brought forward for both these schemes, it will assist with diversifying the village offer and help increase vitality and viability of Crosby village centre in accordance with the Crosby Village Investment Strategy.

### **3. CROSBY LAKESIDE**

Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre is located at the southern end of Crosby Coastal Park. Sefton's coastline is an extensive natural asset which contributes to the unique character of the borough. This needs to be carefully managed and a balance achieved between the requirement for resident and visitor use with the need to protect the natural habitat. This project fits within the Sefton Coast Plan that identifies those areas most capable of managing visitor use – key coastal gateways – which can help to protect from further damage the more vulnerable areas and those of high natural habitat quality.

The southern end of Crosby Coastal Park, where Crosby Lakeside is located, has been identified as one of these key coastal gateways as part of the gateway to the Mersey Estuary, sitting alongside the internationally renowned Antony Gormley's "Another Place" Iron Men statues.

Crosby Lakeside is an important Council owned asset that supports a range of key council priorities, including:

- Providing visitor facilities at a key coastal gateway, with an important role in helping both to attract visitors and contribute to the local visitor economy as well as helping to manage visitors in the most sustainable way (in-line with the Coastal Plan)
- Providing facilities that help support and promote the Council's Health and Well-being priorities, including indoor and outdoor activities with a membership gymnasium and water-based activities.
- Providing residential, activity and education facilities for school's community groups such as the Sea Cadets.
- Increasing accessibility to leisure and recreational services, including for those with disabilities.
- Providing local employment.

This important asset is now 10 years old and in need of significant investment to improve it and secure its long-term future.

In November 2019, Cabinet approved proposals for the Council to fund a significant £3.1m refurbishment and enhancement of the facilities and closed the hospitality facilities in March 2020. In July 2020 planning permission for the centre refurbishment was granted and funding was also secured from LCR Combined Authority to develop and enhance this key facility and lakeside activity centre.

The contract has now been tendered and awarded and start on site is anticipated in February 2021 with completion anticipated in by October 2021 when the facility will fully reopen. The existing gym facilities have closed as a result of lockdown, however will reopen once restrictions lift and be open for the duration of the construction work.

### **4. BOOTLE TOWN CENTRE**

**Bootle Strand** – The Strand Shopping Centre feeds directly into the key priority of ensuring retail remains a core function of Bootle Town Centre, despite the current challenging retail market and Covid 19 restrictions affecting trading. The Council is driving forward plans for a repurposed Strand Shopping Centre and completed some key acquisition and site assembly work on land adjacent to the Leeds Liverpool canal. Major regeneration plans are proposed for the centre and in August 2020 a press release shared images of what a repurposed Strand could look like. Work is now underway on developing short, medium and long terms plans for the centre including exploring the market for meanwhile/temporary uses to help facilitate the transition. Demolition of redundant buildings next to the canal (former Post Office and Easivan premises) is now underway and will help open up the canal frontage and capitalise on the waterfront location and canal corridor for activity. The aim is to transform the space and make it more accessible, open and integrated with its surroundings and host a range of new uses and activities including leisure, food and drink, recreational and cultural activities.

This work is the first stage of a phased programme to regenerate Bootle and broaden out the town centre offer. Bootle Strand must maintain its commercial role and support the community around it as part of its transition both to maximise its potential and contribute to the Council's growth and economic recovery programme.

Bootle Town Centre Investment Framework put the Strand Shopping Centre at the heart of town centre regeneration, diversifying the offer and creating a sense of place.

**Bootle Town Centre** – Following the approach taken recently for The Town Deal in Southport, Sefton Council are exploring with key strategic partners and stakeholders the future of Bootle Town Centre and how external resources could be accessed to help develop and deliver the vision for a transformed Bootle.

## **5. AINSDALE ON SEA**

### **Ainsdale Sandbrook Way**

Following consideration by Council in February 2020 when members agreed to acquire leasehold interests in this centre to bring it into full Council ownership, negotiations have commenced, and a number of properties secured. This Centre has had several issues over recent years relating to its condition and appearance, as well as the anti-social behaviour it attracts. The Council wish to explore options for this centre and how it can support the wider neighbourhood more positively. Work is progressing to explore possible site development options including soft market testing, to agree the preferred approach to the future of this site once in Council ownership. Tenants requiring rehousing have been contacted and support offered.

## **6. CAMBRIDGE ROAD SEFTON COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE**

Following approval in 2020 for Skills Capital Funding from LCRCA, work has now started on site for the refurbishment of this key adult learning facility. Work started in November 2020 and will complete in late April/early May 2021 to this important community learning facility in Waterloo, following a significant investment of £1.3million by both Sefton Council and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The refurbished community learning hub will provide enhanced access to skills for out of work residents.

The investment will improve the learning environment for users of the Cambridge Road facility, make better use of the space and reduce the operating costs for Sefton Council. Investment in this Grade II Listed building will include a complete refurbishment of the ground floor facilities, a new reception area and café and a reconfiguration of the school hall as a new flexible area for teaching, study and cultural activities. The Community Learning Hub will also benefit from new IT infrastructure and will be fully WIFI enabled as a result of the investment, while the first floor of the building will also benefit from improvement works.

Work will also include repairing and enhancing the building's original features, with external improvements to the roof, windows, brick and stonework.

The investment works will ensure the external envelope of the building is wind and water tight. This will improve the energy efficiency of the building and reduce running costs. The work will be undertaken by a locally based contractor with extensive experience in the refurbishment of important listed buildings, whilst providing social value to the users of the centre and the immediate community.