



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

### REMOTE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2ND MARCH, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Bradshaw (in the Chair)  
Councillor Byrom (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Brodie - Browne, Brough, Doyle, Grace,  
Killen, Lewis and McKinley

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lappin

#### 40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor McCann.

#### 41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

#### 42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### 43. CABINET MEMBER REPORT

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

Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services presented her report.

RESOLVED: That

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

#### 44. DIGITAL STRATEGY - PRESENTATIONS

The Committee received presentations on:

Backhaul Network and the Liverpool City Region Digital Strategy from Andrea Watts, Executive Director – People; and

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,  
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 2ND  
MARCH, 2021

Sefton's Digital Strategy 2021 – 2023 from Helen Spreadbury, Senior Manager ICT & Digital. The Committee was advised that the Digital Strategy had been approved by Cabinet at its meeting held on 4 February 2021 and a link to the Cabinet report and accompanying Strategy was included within the agenda.

#### Backhaul Network and the Liverpool City Region Digital Strategy

Andrea Watts, Executive Director – People advised that the Metro Mayor's manifesto made a commitment for LCR to be the most digitally connected area in the country and putting the infrastructure in place now to ensure that the region could be at the forefront of the digital revolution moving forward; and provided information on:

- The importance of providing a platform for transformational growth and development in LCR
- The joint venture agreement worth £30m over 15 years between LCR, its. and NGE Concessions and the anticipated £105m economic benefit over the 15-year period and the creation of 500+ jobs
- The impact of a new “motorway” for digital traffic in LCR
- The benefits for Sefton which included 43 km of network and connection to the transatlantic cable in Southport
- The timeline for the proposal and that Sefton would see some of the earliest new build construction by October 2021
- LCR Digital Strategy
- The focus on Digital Inclusion – working with Local Authorities to create/maintain a comprehensive research and evidence base; to develop and deliver an effective, all-encompassing digital inclusion programme; and redress Digital Poverty

A Member asked how many of the anticipated 500+ jobs, to be created as part of the joint venture agreement, would be Sefton based. This information would be obtained and circulated to Committee Members.

#### Sefton's Digital Strategy 2021 – 2023

Helen Spreadbury, Senior Manager ICT & Digital indicated that the Digital Strategy for Sefton 2021-2023 was developed in line with the Councils 2030 Vision and included significant engagement and consultation; recognised and took into account Regional and National Strategies; was a two-year strategy in line with key priorities for the Council; was an outward facing document which set out the authorities ambitions and priorities; and that internal governance was being established to robust programme development and delivery; and provided information on:

- The Strategy's objectives of the connected Council, empowering residents and business growth

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,  
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 2ND  
MARCH, 2021

- The governance arrangements associated with the Strategy

Members asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- Upgrading of the old analogue network infrastructure to enable improvements to be made in the speed and performance of digital connection; and the introduction of improvements such as “fibre to premises” rather than fibre to cabinet
- Reference was made to the Digital Inclusion Working Group and its Final Report approved by Cabinet in December 2018; and in particular, to a recommendation that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Employment and Skills Board be requested to consider the development of a Digital Skills Passport Scheme (incorporating numeracy, literacy and communication skills) to help Sefton residents to gain future employment, via the Learning and Skills budget to be devolved from 2019. It was suggested that the implementation of this recommendation should be pursued with LCR

RESOLVED:

That Andrea Watts and Helen Spreadbury be thanked for their informative presentations.

#### **45. DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AND SICKNESS ABSENCE MONITORING**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Personnel Officer that provided information of the levels of discipline, grievance and sickness absence within the Council (excluding schools).

The report indicated that the management of the workforce was an important activity to ensure that outcomes for Sefton’s communities were achieved and to ensure that the workforce is appropriately managed and motivated.

Annex 1 to the report provided a breakdown of disciplinary, grievance and capability formal cases from October 2019 to September 2020; and it was noted that the Council enjoyed a comparatively good level of cases as a result of the good overall industrial relations environment, the partnership approach that was undertaken and the work undertaken within departments; and that a lot of effort was taken to avoid formal procedures where possible.

The report also provided information on the number of employees suspended from the authority and advised that suspension took place in order to facilitate an investigation into matters which could result in dismissal for gross misconduct.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,  
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 2ND  
MARCH, 2021

The report also provided statistics (Annex 2) on sickness absence within the authority for the 12 Month Period 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020; and detailed the reasons for absence and referral to the Health Unit; and that the Council continued to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence.

The report concluded by advising that the Council had a Sickness Absence Policy which operated in a partnership with trade union; that long term absence was being dealt with in accordance with overall business need and short-term absence was operated in accordance with recognised and agreed trigger points; that all policies, where applicable, were subject to modification in accordance with the Equality Act 2010; and that trade unions and management recognised the need for correct management of sickness absence to provide appropriate support to lessen the demands on employees who remained at work.

Members asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- Mental health support services provided to staff to help with their health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Whether there was any correlation between sickness absence and agile working
- Should a more achievable long-term sickness absence target be set as the current 1.8% target was continually missed

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the discipline, grievance and sickness levels and the latest information in respect of ongoing work be noted; and
- (2) the initiatives currently being implemented to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence be noted.

**46. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21, SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS  
AND KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for 2020/21; the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by a Working Group(s) appointed by the Committee; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and providing an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,  
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES) - TUESDAY 2ND  
MARCH, 2021

- (2) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.