

<b>CABINET MEMBER REPORT</b>		
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) -</b>		
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Period of Report</b>
Paulette Lappin	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services	June 2021

The service, as with the rest of the Council, has been focussed on supporting members, staff, residents and business in responding to and dealing with the pandemic.

### **Finance**

Within the finance service, there has been significant activity on a number of key issues, namely

- Continuing to support the implementation of new Government grant schemes which offer financial assistance to individuals who are self-isolating and businesses that are forced to close or face significant financial challenges due to local lockdown;
- Understanding issues relating to COVID-19 that need to be met from the emergency fund and other funding sources provided by the Government;
- Understanding the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on the Council's income sources; and,
- Reviewing the Budget Plan for 2021/2022 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan, including the potential ongoing impact of COVID-19.

The Council's Budget Report for 2021/2022 was presented to Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> February and Council on 4<sup>th</sup> March. This included the implications of the Local Government Finance Settlement as well as an assessment of the ongoing financial impact of COVID-19 and measures to mitigate this impact in 2021/2022.

From July reports will be presented to Cabinet on monitoring the Council's revenue and capital budgets for 2021/2022, including the impact of COVID19, and outlining new funding streams being made available to the Council.

The audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2019/2020 by EY was completed in March. The Accounts were approved at Audit and Governance Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March.

The closure of the accounts for 2020/2021 will be completed in the next few weeks with the draft Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021 due to be published before the end of July.

### **Customer Centric Services**

Customer Centric Services have just completed a busy year-end period following the despatch of the annual bills for Council Tax / National Non-Domestic Rates and benefit year-start notification letters. As expected at this time, the Contact Centre has handled a high volume of customer enquiries about Council Tax and available payment options.

COVID-related enquiries have reduced considerably, although the Business Rates team is busy preparing to pay Restart Grants to businesses re-opening following lockdown restrictions.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has extended the Test and Trace Self-Isolation Support Payment scheme to 30th June 2021 although there has been a significant reduction in the volume of applications received from residents.

As national restrictions continued to ease, COVID-related calls into the Contact Centre have continued to decrease. The Contact Centre stopped providing a weekend support service in mid-April and has been able to return to a pre-COVID service delivery with focus shifting from testing and vaccination enquiries to Council Tax and recovery, Cleansing and Elections.

Bootle One Stop Shop continues to support the taxi-trade by offering appointments to drivers who are required to attend in person to renew licenses. The team has also administered the Liverpool City Region taxi grant funding.

The One Stop Shop-service based at The Atkinson in Southport resumed service on 12th April 2021; initial customer demand has been low.

## **Risk and Audit**

The **Internal Audit** team are continuing to work on delivering the internal audit plan with a current focus on providing assurance on the Covid related business grants that have been provided to local businesses both nationally and from Liverpool City Region. The Team are working with colleagues across the Liverpool City Region so that there is a consistent approach to counter fraud steps that should be in place.

**Insurance Team** have completed and are working on the following initiatives to improve the Council's risk management.

- The team completed a tender exercise in December 2020 to value a sample of Council properties for insurance purposes to ensure that the current rebuild values used are accurate and will protect from insurers using average clause in the event of major loss. The team is currently assisting the inspection of the buildings by the external valuer before using the output in this year's renewal
- We are working with insurers and the Council's liability insurers to robustly defend claims and in limited circumstances will pursue through the Courts claimants to recover Council costs where the claims are proven to be exaggerated
- Team also continues to work extensively with Service Teams including Highways and Tourism to improve the management of insurable risk in areas where there are high numbers of claims or areas of concern.
- The Team launched an approach for the Council's Maintained Schools which was designed to be attractive against the Government's Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) scheme and was shared for consultation with the Schools Forum in December 2020 with implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021

The **Risk and Resilience Team** were actively involved in the initial Covid-19 response and were involved in a number of cells within Sefton (Business Continuity and Death Management) as well as the Surge Testing in Southport. The focus on Emergency Planning during the quarter has been on exercises and training for the loggists and volunteers. There has been a focus this year on finalising the development of Service Business Continuity Plans across the organisation enhancing the existing planning framework. The following focus will be on testing and exercising the BC Plans.

The **Risk and Resilience Team** are also working on developing a proposal for the Council's Risk Appetite as well as facilitating the updates of the Council's Corporate Risk Register working with the Risk Owners to update the risk register. Other work includes:

- Working with the Merseyside Resilience Forum
- Developing plans for the winter period

The **Assurance Team** have been involved in the development of fraud risk assessments following the self-assessment against the CIPFA Code of Practice on Fraud for each Service Area. The team have also been involved in providing support to the provision of Covid related grants to local businesses.

As a result a range of assurance checks continues to be undertaken across Customer Centric Services, which includes refunds, Council Tax discounts and exemptions, Business Rates Reliefs and Exemptions, including Small Business Rates Relief. This work complements any audit activity undertaken during the year.

In the programme for the current year is the completion of the Council's Counter Fraud Strategy with consultation with the Strategic Leadership Board with final approval of the Cabinet later in the financial year.

For the Health and Safety Team there will be a continued focus during the next quarter of delivering the Health and Safety Improvement Plan and also the ongoing recovery programmes from COVID-19 with planned priorities –

- Continue to support to assist Managers with the recovery programmes from COVID-19.
- Continue to review, update and monitor the Health and Safety Standards and Policies, with focus on working from home, display screen and workstation assessments and stress risk assessments.
- Continue to develop the Council-wide training needs assessment which will eventually build into the health and safety training plan and provision.
- Continuing the delivery of risk assessment training for the managers who have responsibility to undertake risk assessments, in collaboration with the Corporate Learning Centre. Following up with the managers who have not responded to the initial request for their risk assessments and evaluating the quality of the risk assessments.
- Focus on improving the accuracy of incident reporting across the Council will continue to ensure incidents of threatening and abusive behaviours towards staff are reported.
- Continue to deliver a health and safety management audit and inspection regime across the Council, to schools with a Service Level Agreement with the Council and those schools where the Council retains responsibility for the health and safety as the employer. This will provide assurance that health and safety management systems are suitable and effective.

The Council has a contract with its liability insurers which includes an allocation of free training or service days to assist with implementing effective risk management across the Council. Health and Safety, including COVID-Secure audit support and school Governor training is planned for later in 2021.

## **ICT**

The ICT Service continues to respond to changing business requirements in line with the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. As well supporting the establishment of the local Test and Trace team the ICT client team has also facilitated the setup of the local mass testing centres and more recently supported surge testing with the provision of tactical solutions to deliver connectivity requirements. In addition, the team have deployed mobile telephones as scale to support agile working. The team have also supported the live deployment of the new Customer Platform CXP, with the solution now live in the Contact Centre for COVID-19 business processes.

Further deployment of the new CXP solution is now planned for the forthcoming period, the new Anti-social behaviour process is now signed off for deployment and conversations are underway to go live with Bins not emptied processes. The team are now working on a plan to transfer all current business processes in Northgate to CXP with rebuild underway. In addition, the team has supported the migration and upgrade of the corporate website to the Umbraco platform with redesign work now completed and user acceptance testing in progress.

The challenges reported previously in relation to the capacity of the corporate network have now been resolved with the implementation of managed (split) tunnelling on the network. This reconfiguration directs all Microsoft 365 traffic away from the corporate network for all staff working from home thereby maximising the use of corporate networks for critical applications located in the Data Centre at St Peters.

The team have now completed two Proof of Value projects, to test out new technologies to support cloud migration. The results of these were incredibly positive, particularly for the Windows Virtual Desktop. Approval has now been granted to move forward with a full cloud migration of the data centre at St Peters to the Azure Cloud. The ICT Client team is now working closely with Agilisys colleagues to finalise the statement of work for the project, and recruitment is also underway for a temporary Project Manager to lead the Project for the authority. Proposed start date is end June 2021.

Implementation of the new Cloud Based Telephony solution has now started with the successful supplier (8x8) and build is now underway for the first group of users with testing due to start in June. The finalisation of profiling is underway for remaining teams and deployment is on track for June and July. Handsets and headsets are ordered and project remains on track.

Schools ICT – implementation of the new Connectivity Service for schools is now underway, for those schools who have taken the SLA for Connectivity. The schools already live are reporting significant improvements in the speed of their connections. Deployment across all relevant schools is due to complete early July

Further procurement activity continues at pace and the team are finalising the roadmap for the forthcoming year, Revs and Bens procurement is now completed, as is Libraries. The new Microsoft Contract was delivered on time and has resulted in an approved offer for the Council. Work is underway to finalise the contract for bulk printing and the team are also supporting Adult Services with their procurement of a new triage tool.

## **Property Services**

The Property Services Department are a Multi-Disciplinary team delivering various services, professional advice and initiatives across the Borough of Sefton. Below are some examples of ongoing pieces of work throughout the department.

### **Asset Management / FM**

- Ongoing work to deliver Phase 1 Asset Disposals Consultant appointed to assist.
- Asset records input and liaison with Building Maintenance colleagues for new (property based) IT system in support of Corporate Landlord Implementation Ongoing.
- Agreement of terms and reporting for Lease of various assets Ongoing.
- Negotiated and agreed Heads of Terms for sub Lease of part of first floor Magdalen House to CCG with physical decant now being developed Completed.
- Negotiated release of restrictive covenant St Wilfrid's school. This now enables ourselves to complete the land sale to Bellway with the capital receipt going to School improvement schemes and recreational facilities in the area. Completed capital receipt received.

- Sale of Boyer Avenue garage site in Maghull by way of Auction completed and capital receipt received.
- Completed two further acquisitions of leasehold interests of residential and commercial properties at Sandbrook Way Ainsdale.
- Let a number of seasonal refreshment concessions throughout the Borough.
- Working to vacate the 1<sup>st</sup> floor right hand wing of Magdalen House to facilitate the CCG's move from their temporary home on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor to their permanent office on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.
- Gathering and collating data for Future Ways of Working to inform decisions on Agile Working and Building Capacities.
- Ongoing management of 'day to day FM operations' to also include the COVID-19 measures and management within buildings.

#### Maintenance Management & Building Services

- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Corporate Buildings.
- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Education Capital programme.
- Delivery of reactive maintenance and statutory compliance services to Corporate and Educational buildings.
- Professional advice and support on a broad range of regeneration programmes.
- Development and implementation of a new coordinated (property based) IT system in support of Corporate Landlord Implementation.
- Preparing and awarding remedial works scheme to remedy Latent defects at Dunes Splashworld.
- Reviewing essential maintenance work requirements for Corporate buildings, including phasing at Bootle Town Hall.
- Delivering services in support of major adaptation to vulnerable and disabled residents.

#### Project Management

- Continued professional support to Growth Board on several projects.
- Completed various projects despite the current constraints.
- Provide support to other teams on asset disposal, Building Maintenance, Asset Management and Statutory Compliance colleagues.
- Developing a revised agile model proposal.

#### Energy Management

- Continued active support of those in fuel poverty and the most vulnerable – taking place remotely. Cabinet member briefing on 2020/21 performance being collated.
- ERDF Retrofit for the future – on track. Due to end Nov 2021.
- Local Authority Delivery of Green homes Grant (LAD, GHG)
  - LAD1b consortium of LCR LAs secured funding to retrofit low income homes to 30 homes. On track.
  - LAD2 direct award of funding from the CA to Sefton to retrofit ~215 low income private homes. CA have confirmed direct award and work is progressing well. Estates in Netherton, Litherland and Bootle with problematic insulation issues to be targeted. Scheme to end December 2021.
  - LAD3 – due to be announced in Summer 2021, Sefton officers are liaising with LCR CA to discuss options for possible bid(s).
- Works to upgrade roof insulation and improve glazing at Southport and Bootle Town Halls progressing – works currently out to tender and expected to begin June 2021 & completed by September 2021.
- Salix funding for schools withdrawn without notice – a briefing report will be presented to Cabinet member June 2021.
- Energy & Utility Dashboards for HoS to be launched June 2021
- Works to develop a decarbonisation programme for 14 buildings is underway and due to report July 2021.
- Climate Emergency

- Annual review complete and reports to go to Member ref group 27 May, June Cabinet and July full Council. Highlights include 10% reduction in carbon footprint despite accounting for emissions for staff working from home.
- All committee reports (except planning and licencing) to include Climate assessment from May 2021 – now live.
- Dwayne Johnson interview to raise profile of Climate activities May 2021.
- General staff training e module draft ready for May 2021 launch.
- Air Quality Education and behaviour change – Immersive room being procured for Southport Eco centre. Work ongoing to promote the clean air crew website to schools across the LCR.

## Legal Services

- The Legal Contracts team remains extremely busy at working above full capacity, in particular advising on all of the Council's major Growth Programme projects (the £37.5m Southport Town Deal including the proposed Marine Lake Events Centre development, the continuing Bootle/Strand regeneration), housing projects led by Sandway Homes, highways projects) and various LCR schemes (including digital connectivity, street lighting, etc.). The Covid pandemic continues to have a very significant effect on the Council's procurement and contracting activity which Legal Contracts supports, including ongoing variations reacting to the pandemic, extensions of existing contracts to ensure service continuity in a sub-optimal market for fresh procurement) and numerous Covid recovery schemes. Brexit also continues to have a transformative effect on the Council's contracting and procurement activity and Legal Contracts continues to provide proactive advice around forthcoming changes to the UK's public procurement regime (both the general regime, and the proposals for a bespoke health and social care regime) and new subsidy control (formerly state aid). The Legal Contracts team has also provided strategic advice on best practice and risk mitigation in light of the Caller Report, especially around the Council's development and regeneration projects.
- The Childcare/Adults and Education Legal Team have worked through a very difficult period for the client departments/schools throughout the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic has brought increased pressures and there has been a significant rise in court proceedings which has been a very challenging time for the team. Nationally there has been a 20% rise with children being harmed during Covid and Sefton have had a rise in care proceedings during this period which together with cases not being able to be concluded due to Covid restrictions has brought increased workloads for the team. There also continues to be a rise in international cases. The Team are currently working on cases where there is involvement from Central Authorities of Poland, Mexico, Portugal and Indonesia.
- With the lockdown restrictions beginning to ease, the adults legal team have noticed an increase in s.21A challenges. They have issued welfare applications in the Court of Protection & more recently have hopefully reached a consent agreement in what could have been a very protracted & expensive historical child sexual abuse matter.
- Given the raft of (almost daily) government guidance, the team have been involved in more Policy drafting & oversight of consultations for the setting of care home & non-residential fees.
- Another direct result of Covid has seen the increase of Ordinary Residence queries due to the Government's Hospital Discharge Policy and the team have also noticed the impact of the pandemic on Mental Health queries.

- The Adults Team await the much anticipated Code of Practice for LPS. (Liberty Protection safeguards) and the Children’s Team are currently working with the Family Court on the Family Justice reforms.
- The property and planning team continue to act on a large volume of existing and new instructions support the estates team to deliver best value on the Councils estate assets. Together with the soon to return face to face planning committees, and a number of high profile and contentious applications looking to be determined in the near future including the 206-house development at Holgate (Thornton).
- Debt recovery :-
  - £18,000 recovered after placing charging orders on property .
  - £32,554.49. in Nursing home fees owed paid after a charge was placed on a property
  - Repossessed 5 properties and sold at auction 2 properties .
- Prosecutions and regulatory
  - Prince of Wales Hotel – prosecution for health and safety at work offences for failing to maintain iron railings that led to a member of the public falling head first down a 6 ft lightwell and sustaining life changing injuries . The Hotel was fined £86,000.
  - Fly tipping prosecution £200 fine -£160 costs
  - Prosecution for breach of a community protection notice - £500 fine , £700 costs .
  - Supported the licensing sub committees with 2 hearings for premises licences .

## Electoral Services

The combined elections were successfully delivered. Following campaigns to promote safe voting and the use of absent vote facilities, the total number of people voting was 68,054.

We saw a slight fall in the numbers voting in the polling stations, but this was offset against those voting by post. The table below shows the comparative figures over the last 3 rounds of local elections.

Year	Postal Votes	Polling Station Votes	Total
2018	22006	47784	69790
2019	20729	42303	63032
2021	27251	40803	68054

It is reassuring to report that only one complaint was received in respect of the measures put in place at polling stations and that in the 2-week period leading up the election day and the counting of votes, almost 2,000 lateral flow tests were taken by staff with no positive results.

Preparations are now underway for the annual canvass of the register electors, which will start in the first week of June.

In January, the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) announced the start of their review of the Parliamentary constituencies in England. The BCE is required to report to Parliament by 1 July 2023, and they intend to publish their Initial Proposals for new constituency boundaries on Tuesday 8 June 2021.

The Queen’s Speech introduced three key areas, which will have an impact on the service and the delivery of election moving forward

- Voter ID in polling station
- Removing the 15-year ceiling on overseas electors being able to vote in parliamentary elections
- Abolishing the fixed terms Parliaments Act

## **Democratic Services Team – Overview**

- The Team have been working hard in ensuring the safe return to Physical Meetings whilst adhering to COVID restrictions.
- The Induction of Newly Elected Members went extremely well, all Members enjoyed the programme, documents and short videos can be accessed on the Councils library by following the link: <http://smbc-modgov-03/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13976>
- Councillor Clare Louise Carragher was Elected the Mayor of Sefton for 2021/22 and Councillor Burns was Elected Deputy Chair at the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 18 May 2021.
- The appointments of the Cabinet and the Councils Committees and Sub Committees were approved at the adjourned Annual Meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2021.
- The Team are now preparing for the New Municipal Year 2021/22 in relation to Committees and in that respect the following Committees will begin to prepare their individual Work Programmes for 2021/22:

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)**

At the Adjourned Annual meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2021, Councillors Carla Thomas and Greg Myers were appointed Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Committee. The Committee's first meeting will be held on 22 June 2021 and its main task will be to set the Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year. The Committee currently has one Working Group on-going, namely for Mental Health Issues. A new Working Group can be considered once the current one has completed its review.

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

At the Adjourned Annual meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2021 Councillors Sue Bradshaw and Les Byrom were appointed Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Committee. The Committee's first meeting will be held on 15 June 2021 and its main task will be to set the Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year; and to consider the establishment of Working groups.

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)**

At the Adjourned Annual meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2021 Councillors John Sayers and Janis Blackburne were appointed Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Committee. The Committee's first meeting will be held on 29 June 2021 and its main task will be to set the Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year. The Committee currently has two Working groups: Effectiveness of the Council's Enforcement Activity and Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People. The Committee has agreed that no new Working Groups will be established until the current two have completed their reviews.

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)**

At the Adjourned Annual meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2021, Councillors June Burns and Paula Spencer were appointed Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Committee. The Committee's first meeting will be held on 22 June 2021 and its main task will be to set the Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year. The Committee currently has one Working Group on-going, namely for Secondary School Performance and Attainment. Any new Working Groups can be considered once the current one has completed its review.

- **Admission Appeals**

- In addition to the provision of administrative support for meetings of the Council, Cabinet, and Committees, the Section has also continued to organise and clerk school admission appeal hearings.

It is an extremely busy time for the Clerk to Education Appeals and so a full report on the progress will be submitted to the next cycle.

- **Civic & Mayoral**

Cllr Clare Louise Carragher was installed as Mayor of Sefton for 2021/22 on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May, Cllr Carragher is looking forward to her term of office, she has chosen the following charities to support during her term, they are the Plaza Cinema, Sefton Children's Trust and Home Start. Work has already begun on planning some charity events during her term.

Upon Councillor Carragher's installation, it brought to a close Cllr June Burns two year term as Mayor of Sefton. Cllr Burns served the office with dedication and distinction and attended engagements when it was safe to do so.

## **Registrars**

- The numbers of death registrations are now decreasing in line with the national trend and telephone death registrations will remain until the expiry of the emergency legislation.
- Huge demand for weddings both at the Town Halls and Approved Premises and now taking bookings for 2023.
- As there was no provision made in the emergency legislation to extend the validity period of a notice of marriage/civil partnership many couples who are having to do this process again to enable their ceremony to go ahead. In line with the other North-west authorities Sefton are not charging couples who are having to do this (but will charge for any subsequent notices that have to be given) and to-date we have written off £9300 in notice fees. This is income that we would not have received had the validity period been extended but it is having a massive impact on service demand and availability of appointments.
- The Register Offices at Southport and Waterloo re-opened to the public on 4<sup>th</sup> May (Monday, Wednesday and Friday only at Waterloo until further notice). Footfall has been relatively low at both offices apart from pre-booked appointments.
- The introduction of the Marriage Schedule System on 4<sup>th</sup> May has meant an end to the completion of marriage registers on the day of a wedding. Previously marriages were registered in a hard back book containing between 50 & 250 entries. The marriage schedule system is a similar system to civil partnership and means that a single sheet of paper (schedule) with the details of the couple will be issued to churches and will be signed by the couple & witnesses and then returned to the Register Office after the wedding (weddings that registrars attend will be registered in the same way but we would already

have the schedule). The schedule system allows for mum's name to be recorded on a marriage certificate and it also allows for step-parents and adoptive parents to be recorded up to a maximum of four parents for each party to the marriage. The schedule system will generate some income for the registration service as couples will need to purchase a copy of their marriage certificate from the register office rather than the church (£11 per certificate).

## **Coroners**

- Inquests continue to be delivered remotely and Coroner working through backlog of inquests.

## ***PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT***

### **Operational Issues**

Advice and support continues to be provided to all service areas. Predominantly, issues have been, and continue to be, related to the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact on resources in terms of staffing and service provision in all areas. Regular discussions are taking place at departmental management team meetings and with the trade unions. Meetings are being conducted through Microsoft Teams.

The majority of staff are working from home with occasional agile working at office sites as required, with social distancing measures in place. Advice to staff is that working from home is to continue until proposals for future ways of working have been agreed. Reviews and restructures across the organisation are being dealt with in the context of the current situation.

Smart testing sites at Aintree and Bootle have closed, however, a testing site in The Strand is to open shortly with the majority of staff being temporarily redeployed

Matters relating to disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work have been lesser than usual, but where necessary, formal meetings have been held via Microsoft Teams. Advice and support in the management of sickness absence, particularly Covid-19 related absences, has been the main focus. Formal action under the sickness absence policy and procedures was put on hold when the pandemic started, but this is now being gradually addressed.

### **Pay & Grading and Establishment Control Team**

Job evaluation continues relative to all Council and School posts for new or revised roles. Job evaluations are also conducted relative to any operational and service reviews to maximise efficiencies as part of restructuring exercises across the Council. Team members are involved in service reviews and work to support transformational proposals and potential changes to service delivery. Current restructuring exercises include Education Excellence and Children's Services.

The Establishment Control team are then responsible for building any revised structures and changes to reporting hierarchies into the Councils operating systems.

The Establishment Control Panel takes place every 2 weeks to consider requests in relation to the release of vacancies and the approval of any changes to the Councils Establishment. All establishment changes are mapped to ensure correct payments are made, hierarchical organisational structures are appropriate and operational processes such as My View and Sickness Absence monitoring are effectively maintained.

Establishment Control review safeguarding checks held against posts e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS formally CRB), Health Care Professional Council (HCPC) etc. with Heads of Service and amend as required. The team manages and controls the temporary end dates relative to all fixed term contracts and provides establishment control information reports for the Council and schools.

Regrading applications and appeals are processed in line with the Council protocol.

The team undertakes the review of HAY graded positions for new posts and the evaluation of HAY posts stemming from any revised proposals to the HAY grading structure.

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services have amended the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service relative to the calculation of Term-time only (TTO) salaries. Team members were involved in the adoption of the NJC advisory model and the revised calculations have been processed from September 2020. A number of potential Employment tribunal claims have been submitted seeking backdating of these revised Terms and Conditions and officers will work through these claims to progress as appropriate and in line with any legal precedent. In line with the ET decision these claims have been “stayed” until November 2021 pending an Appeal decision ruling.

The team manage the Matrix contract relative to the recruitment of all Agency workers. Agency recruitment is currently at an all time high to deal with the demands across Childrens Services and the new Government initiative Kickstart programme offering 6-month job placements for young people aged 17-24 on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment.

The team manage sickness absence data, including production of management reports, sickness absence analysis and quarterly absence figures for SLT. Team members have been heavily involved in COVID 19 testing administration via the Government portals and the production of managers guidance relative to track and trace, isolations requirements etc.

One of the Team members is on the project team responsible for mapping future ways of working for Council staff when Covid-19 is no longer placing restrictions on how the workforce can behave and building on the changes and adaptations made since March 2020 and how they can be reviewed, refined or extended to further the ambition of the Council for maximising a flexible approach to how it functions.

### **Transactional HR Payroll & Pension (THRP) Services**

A decision was taken In December 2020 to move from ResourceLink to Midland iTrent for the Payroll HR System. It will go live June 2021 and the first live payrolls to be processed on Midland will be for July 2021.

A small project team has been set up and the system is being designed by Midland to meet Sefton’s requirements. Parallel run for April is currently progressing and once balanced, then parallel runs will be done for May and June 2021. There are 51 separate payrolls to parallel run and balance to the penny. Consultants from iTrent have been on site in St Peters to help THRP staff with the parallel run.

Most THRP staff are continuing to work from home this has gone well. Some processes have had to be changed and the staff have embraced these changes There are some staff who have to still go into the office due to various issues, Internet, paper etc. The number of staff going into the office is being closely monitored.

The Team have recently:

- Year end returns – P60s etc.

- End of year pension returns
- Processing furlough monies and claims to HMRC
- Weekly to Monthly pay
- Collecting staff emails so staff can access their pay documents online

They are currently looking at the following:

- Teachers pensions Monthly data collection (MDC) moving to Monthly Contribution Reconciliation (MCR) from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021

## **Occupational Health**

During February, March and April 2021, a total of 175 referrals for SMBC employees were made to the Health Unit. This is approximately 8% more than the same period 12 months previously.

The majority of referrals during this period were from Education Excellence (47.4%%), Locality Services (13.7%) and Adult Social Care (13.7%). As usual the main reasons were stress and mental health related (50.3%), chronic medical illness (17.1%) and musculoskeletal (16.0%).

Given the number of requests for therapy support the Health Unit has agreed to provide an additional 20 sessions (a mixture of counselling and CBT) per week for 6 months. This should help employees access support as quickly as possible. The cost for this should be recouped from the recharges to external organisations that use the HU services.

The Health Unit's service provider contracts are due for renewal from 1 January 2022. The procurement process for this will begin once authorisation from Cabinet Member is obtained.

The Health Unit's "resident" OH Physician, Dr J Boag is due to retire on 30 June. He will be replaced by Dr Ada Chrys-Chikere who will continue to provide the OHP service via remote consultations for the time being.

## **Workforce Learning and Development (CLC)**

### **Apprenticeships**

Staff enrolled on the **Level 6 Social Work Apprenticeship Degree** and the **Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship Degree programme (MBA)** are continuing with their studies and are making good progress.

We've launched two new apprenticeship standards called the **Level 4 Children, Young People and Families Practitioner** and the **Level 5 Children, Young People and Families Manager**, for staff working in Children's Social Care and Localities. 6 staff have enrolled onto the Level 4 and 3 staff on the level 5.

We recently launched a new qualification called the **Level 4 Senior Housing Property Management Apprenticeship**. 1 member of staff is currently enrolling onto the course.

### **Training delivery**

The Workforce Learning and Development Team have worked incredibly hard since the Covid-19 outbreak to adapt the way we deliver classroom training – this includes offering virtual training using MS Teams and adapting existing classroom courses to eLearning, pre-recorded webinars, self-help guides and commissioning new eLearning courses. Examples include:

- **Safeguarding Adults and Children's Awareness eLearning** will replace the pre-recorded webinars/classroom courses from June 2021.

- **Health and Safety eLearning Portfolio.** A full portfolio of Health and Safety is now available to Council staff. Courses include Health and Safety Awareness, Risk Assessment, Fire Safety at Work, Food Safety Level 2 and Manual Handling of Objects, Asbestos Awareness, Control of Hazardous Substances to Health (COSHH) and Display Screen Equipment. We launched a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in April 2021 to provide schools with unlimited access to our Health and Safety eLearning for an annual fee.
- **Climate Change eLearning** – Working with the Environmental Health Team to develop a new eLearning to raise awareness of Climate Change, what it is and what it means for the Council. This is due to go live early June 2021.
- We're currently delivering essential **First Aid and Fire Warden** socially distanced classroom training in line with current Covid-19 guidelines.
- **Early Help Assessment Launch Events** – 350 delegates from across the partnership attended these events to find out about the new Early Help assessment and how it can be used to engage with families.

We continue to work closely with the Care Homes cell to develop an **Education and Training Programme** for Care Homes, Community Services and recipients of direct payment affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme includes local and national resources covering the following topics:

- Infection, Prevention and Control
- Medication
- End of Life Care
- Bereavement
- Moving and Handling
- Look after You – Health and Wellbeing Resources
- Further sources of support

The resources are updated on a fortnightly basis and are available in PDF format and as separate eLearning modules on Me Learning.

Supported the implementation and roll out of the SURGE testing programme across Southport.

### **Workforce/Organisational Development**

Currently supporting Children's Social Care to deliver on a number of identified improvements following the recent Ofsted Inspection. We are also involved in the Council of 2023 programme and are working on actions which include a refreshed PDR process, succession planning, talent management, and development of the One Council Network and the Values sub-groups.

### **Strategic Support**

The Communications team continue to be at the heart of all activity across the Council and are playing a critical role in supporting all areas of the Council in order to ensure that residents and business are informed at the earliest opportunity of all key issues and information is provided in a clear and concise manner. All internal and external communication channels are being used extensively. The team has worked closely with national colleagues (DHSC and PHE) and local partners from the Merseyside Resilience Forum and our 2 local CCGs, to ensure clear, concise and timely information is available to all our communities in relation to a new Variant of Interest (VOC) being identified in Sefton (initially in the Formby area). Local residents are encouraged to get tested at one of three mobile test sites.

The Procurement team is playing a key role in many initiatives across the Council including the procurement Cloud based telephony, Network connectivity for schools, Sefton at Work CRM, and Libraries RFID kiosks. Work relating to providing an effective mechanism for improving the social impact/social value from our contracted providers, particularly its focus on “Achieving Community Benefit”, which includes “obtaining social value has continued. The team will prioritise this work over the coming months as it will play a key part in recovery.

Business Intelligence team are continuing to support many work streams across the Council including Economic Regeneration, Education Excellence, Adult Social Care, Children’s Social Care and Public Health Services. Key areas of work include daily analysis of Covid-19 pandemic data, processing of National Shielding Service referrals and submission of vulnerable children & young people returns to the DfE. Another key area of work is collating local data in respect of the national immunisation preparation. Furthermore, the teams continue to deal with complaints, subject access requests, consultation & engagement activities and managing the project to digitise the Council’s historic paper records.

The Commissioning team are working with Children’s and Adults Services as would be expected in order that both services can respond effectively by supporting care providers. Again this will be a critical function and activity as the Council responds to the protection of its most vulnerable.

The Strategic Support team continue to support the delivery of COVID testing in the borough, including the recent surge testing and supporting the Outbreak Management Board. The team continue to promote the use of accessible information and have facilitated workshops for Members, with further sessions scheduled. The team also continue to support the Demand Management programme of work including promotion activity for Foster Care Fortnight in May, #Whywecare which involved a virtual event for foster carers to say thank you.