



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS)

REMOTE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9TH MARCH, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor John Sayers (in the Chair)
Councillor Blackburne (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Brough, Dowd, Halsall, Killen, Lewis,
Myers, Robinson and Sathiy

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Hardy

31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Atkinson, Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

33. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

34. DIGITAL STRATEGY - PRESENTATIONS

The Committee received presentations on:

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

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:

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- 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

Ms. Watts indicated that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) held on 2 March 2021 the same presentation was made; and that the Committee had asked how many of the anticipated 500+ jobs, to be created as part of the joint venture agreement, would be Sefton based. This information was in the process of being obtained and would be circulated to both Committee’s Members when available.

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
- The governance arrangements associated with the Strategy

RESOLVED:

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

35. SEFTON ECONOMIC STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Economic Regeneration and Housing that updated on the progress of the Sefton

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Economic Strategy Action Plan (December 2019) (the Plan) and the associated Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

The report indicated that the Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills had approved the Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan on 28 November 2019; that the Plan was the culmination of two major pieces of evidence gathering and work focussing on Sefton’s economy, namely:

- The Sefton Economic Assessment, a factual statement of the borough’s strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- Framework for Action, or the building blocks of the Strategy

and that the intention was to make the Plan a working document that would be periodically reviewed in terms of its progress and performance at key stages to enable the Council to share its findings and progress, with its partners, businesses and communities.

The report also advised that in January 2020 Officers had started the development of a performance framework to help measure the impact of each of the 7 thematic areas attached to the Plan; that the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in March 2020 required a complete change in direction and strategy as the Council became engaged in a series of emergency measures to help support Sefton’s residents, communities and businesses throughout various lockdowns and associated Government tiers of control; and that while the Plan remained fit for purpose and the foundation for building economic activity, it was inevitable that the pandemic would impact on planned projects. Therefore, a further Priority Action Area had been added - Recovery, which would focus on new Covid-19 emergency response measures including some of the key projects previously identified in the Plan.

Furthermore, in November 2020 the Council produced a Strategic Recovery Plan with a purpose to provide leadership and highlight opportunity and corral our many stakeholders into collective and collaborative action at a borough level; and that this plan was intended to help re-build our economy and that a number of key projects had been prioritised.

The report concluded by detailing the results and outcomes of a wide range of activities in response to supporting the Sefton economy, its residents, communities, businesses and key sectors over the 11 months of the pandemic.

The following appendices were attached to this report:

- (1) Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan (December 2019)
- (2) Sefton Economic Recovery Plan
- (3) Sefton Economic Recovery Plan (Appendices)

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Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- Reference was made to the closure of Carnegie Library in 2013 leaving Crosby with just one library, and information was sought on rumours that an additional library was about to be opened in Crosby. Stuart Barnes, Head of Economic Growth and Housing indicated that there were no plans to create an additional library in Crosby
- A number of Members thanked Stuart Barnes, Head of Economic Growth and Housing and his colleagues for their hard work, in challenging times, to implement many exciting projects across the Borough and provide help and support to businesses. Special mention was made of the recent, successful Southport Town Deal Fund bid to secure £37.5m of funding that would the town rebuild its reputation as one of the premier destinations in the UK

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report detailing the progress made in respect of the Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan approved by Cabinet Member in December 2019; and the associated Covid-19 Recovery Plan, be noted; and
- (2) the Chief Executive be advised of the Committee's appreciation of the efforts undertaken by the Head of Economic Growth and Housing and his colleagues for their hard work, in challenging times, to implement many exciting projects across the Borough and provide help and support to businesses and in particular in relation to the successful Southport Town Deal Fund bid.

36. GREEN SEFTON - INCOME AND GROWTH UPDATE - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from Mark Shaw, Green Sefton Service Manager and Andy Cutts, Green Sefton Development Officer that provided an update on new innovations for income and growth in development by Green Sefton; indicating that the service had an adopted aspiration to reduce reliance on Council revenue as part of both the Green Sefton Service Vision and Service Plan, and to contribute to the overall corporate 2030 Vision; that as such, Green Sefton proposed a number of outline proposals for development in Autumn 2018, and several of these had now been formally taken forwards, whilst others were either still in development, or in the pipeline for future attention; and that provided an overview on the existing and future planned projects.

Mark Shaw and Andy Cutts referred to the following points as part of their presentation:

- Green Sefton Enterprise
- Infrastructure

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- Concessions
- Funding Options
- Natural Alternatives
- Asset Management
- Golf – Bootle
- Golf – Southport
- Ainsdale Gateway
- Future Projects – 2021/22

Mr Shaw concluded that since 2018/19, £1.64M of new capital had been created with these innovative approaches and that the income balance of the service had increased from 25% to 30%; that lessons had been learned throughout as would be expected with any innovation programme; and that more projects were in the pipeline and future reports would update Members on progress in due course.

Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- The potential inclusion of a driving range at Southport Golf Club
- That the issues referred to in the presentation dovetailed well with the previous report providing details of the Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan and associated Covid-19 Recovery Plan; that this would help provide a strong offer for the borough of Sefton; and make Southport the prime tourist resort in the north-west

RESOLVED:

That Mark Shaw and Andy Cutts be thanked for their informative presentation.

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

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought a review of 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; that updated on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and updated on the progress of items that had previously been considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (2) it be noted that the Committee, at its meeting held on 15 September 2020, agreed that no new Working Groups be established until the

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completion of one of the current Working Groups;

- (3) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (4) the update on progress with United Utilities in connection with surface water charges and associated issues be noted;
- (5) the update on the Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Strategy be noted;
- (6) the update on the Liverpool City Region Town Centre Commission be noted; and
- (7) the update on Leasehold House Sales be noted.

38. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS - JANUARY TO FEBRUARY 2021

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that included the most recent reports from the Cabinet Members for Communities and Housing; Health and Wellbeing; Locality Services; Planning and Building Control; and Regeneration and Skills.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update reports from the Cabinet Members for Communities and Housing; Health and Wellbeing; Locality Services; Planning and Building Control; and Regeneration and Skills be noted; and
- (2) Councillor Hardy be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.