

**CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) - 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Trish Hardy	Communities and Housing	June 2021

**NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

**Area Co-ordination**

Dates have been set for walk abouts with Councillors in their wards with the Neighbourhood Policing team at Marsh Lane through June and July.

The second South Sefton Police Meet & Greet took place on Friday 28th May.

Derby ward Councillors met with the Friends of South Park group to discuss the opening of the new South Park hut. Councillors would like to name the hut in memory of Councillor Mike O'Brien.

The Community Payback service is moving back to public sector control to from 26th June 2021. This coincides with the removing of covid-19 restrictions which have hampered the activities of the team for the last 12 months. The Neighbourhoods officer will be working with the team to draw up a program of activities.

Asylum Seekers in the Scarisbrick Hotel have now been relocated to homes within the region and the hotel is now empty. An e: mail of thanks from SERCO has been circulated to partners and importantly the volunteer group that were supporting the asylum seekers with coffee mornings, ESOL, toiletries and clothing.

The Area Coordinators have been working with MP Dowds office to arrange community litter picks. The first took place on Randell Drive estate in Ford ward on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May. The Skips were funded by One Vision Housing and the Ford ward Councillors ward budget. The two skips collected 1.48 tonnes of waste. A programme is now being developed to host these events in other areas of the Bootle constituency during 2021.

**Covid Community Engagement officers**

The team have been supporting Public Health in Formby in response to the increase of cases in that area. They have also been conducting a survey on Vaccine take up and working to bust the myths surrounding it. The team have visited Southport, Formby, Crosby and Bootle New Strand stations and have spoken to 522 people.

**Welfare Reform**

Food bank

1st April 2021 – 30th April 2021	South Sefton	Southport
Total Vouchers received	317	95
Adults Fed	392	118
Children Fed	220	69
Total Fed	612	187
Crisis Type	Low income – 231 vouchers presented 460 people fed	Low income – 54 vouchers presented 123 people fed
Family Type	Single 191 vouchers presented 60.25%	Single 63 vouchers presented 66.32 %
Age group	25-64: 352	25 – 64: 99

## **Hate Crime**

The Hate Crime JAG (formerly MARAC) continues to meet via MS Teams and consider ongoing cases and new referrals.

The Hate crime and Equalities officer is attending a meeting of the Crown Prosecution Service Merseyside and Cheshire Hate Crime Local Scrutiny and Involvement Panel.

## **Equalities**

The new chair of the Corporate Equalities group will be Christian Rogers.

A report is being submitted to the Consultation Standards Panel on the equality and diversity questions to be attached to consultations, ensuring that they correspond to the relevant parts of the Equality Act 2010 and that departments have a lawful purpose for collecting the information.

## **IYS**

### **YOT Performance**

This report is to provide a summary of the Youth Offending Team's performance in relation to nationally and locally set key performance indicators. National data is sourced via Police National Computer (PNC) and is the latest available. Local data is sourced via Child View, a live database. Data extracted from Child View is a snapshot of a point in time and therefore is an approximation rather than an absolute. Local statistics for 2020/21 may have been affected due to courts being closed as a result of COVID-19, these will continue to be monitored.

First Time Entrants (FTE) relates to those young people who receive a criminal record for the first time. During January to December 2018 the rate of FTE's in Sefton was 215 compared with 171 during January to December 2019 a reduction of 44 per 100,000. In actual numbers this translates in a decrease from 51 to 41 in the same period. Sefton's continues to be proactive through prevention strategies, particularly with out of court disposals and the use of community resolution plus. Local tracking for past three years evidences continued reduction in the number of FTE. During Q4 2020/21 there were zero first time entrants recorded.

Re-offending is defined as the percentage of those young people who have re-offended from an identified cohort of first offenders. Previously to June 2019, anti-social behaviour incidents were recorded as offences on Child View suggesting an increasing rate in re-offending. Since June 2019 recording of incidents and offences were recorded separately and tracked locally which has shown a decrease in the number of re-offenders for 2019. The report factors in a reduced number of offences and incidents recorded during 2020/21, a likely impact of Covid-19.

National re-offending data for Sefton for 2016/17 was at 47.7%, during 2017/18 there was an increase to 49.6%. Local tracking suggests historical data will show a further increase for 2018/19 before showing a decrease for 2019/20 reflecting locally tracked data. In Sefton during January 2017 to December 2017 the rate of re-offending was 49.6% compared with 49.6% during January 2018 to December 2018. The YOT family average was 39.5%.

Our reoffending rate is higher than previously, however the number of children in the cohort has reduced although they present a greater level of complexity, impacting on their offending behaviour. The reduction in numbers is a national trend and influenced by the slower processing of matters at court, however early indications reveal that court throughput will increase as restrictions lift and Sefton expects an increase in numbers by the summer.

Custody Rate is the number of young people receiving a custodial sentence. Local tracking shows for the past 3 years there have been three custodial sentences recorded, two during Q2 2018/19 and one during Q3 2019/20 with zero young people receiving a custodial sentence during January to December 2020. Sefton has the lowest rate of custody amongst the Merseyside YOTs and the YOT family. Performance continues to be extremely good

During 2019/20 there were 243 offences committed compared with 182 post lockdown, a reduction of 61. During 2019/20 the largest number of offences committed were for Violence Against the Person with 29%, compared with 2020/21 where the largest number of offences committed were for Drugs with 45%, highlighting a reduction in the number of offences recorded post lockdown and a reduction of serious offences.

Currently both national and local tracking show Sefton YOT to have strong performance regarding first time entrants and custody rates. Sefton YOT continues to be proactive through prevention strategies reducing the number of young people who receive a criminal record for the first time and continues to perform extremely well having the lowest rate of custody amongst Merseyside YOT's and the YOT family.

## **Contact with young people**

It was still considered necessary to complete a Covid assessment for every child in response to the pandemic. This assessment includes factors pertinent to YOT regarding mental health, education and training, supporting services and risk levels. These will enable a clear and tailored plan for each child to identify the most appropriate method of engagement.

Managers regularly review the method and type of intervention for each case. This could include direct contact through home visits, door step visits or in a safe place including council building. Engagement contact continue via the use of telephone, virtually and face to face, adhering to social distancing.

Planning ahead Sefton YOT are currently working in partnership with Early Help and Digital Advantage (professionals working in the creative technological sector) to develop a programme aimed at ten young people who have creative and technological interests and are interested in short film making. The programme outcomes are to build confidence, increase both technical and communication skills and increase individual employability. The programme is scheduled for delivery in late June.

## **Help for Young People Group**

In May YOT are delivering a new programme called Help for Young People is a healthy relationships programme designed for males who have been identified as experiencing relationship difficulties with parents or guardians and who would acknowledge that their own behaviours within the relationship have been problematic.

YOT have encouraged males age 13 – 16 years to engage, who have exhibited violence or aggression towards parents or guardian. The Programme outlines key elements of a positive male role model that can develop and sustain healthy relationships and explores the values attitudes and skills that reflect this.

## **Youth Service**

Staff from both the youth service and commissioned providers have completed ICAN training, the training is focused on techniques to inspire and support young people to identify skills and develop potential.

As restrictions lift, youth service staff will start to deliver more face to face sessions and increase outreach provision towards the summer, they will link in with partners to identify areas that may be experiencing anti-social behaviour. The Youth Bus is back out in the community, four evening a week.

To support mental health the youth service have highlighted Kooth to support re-engage and heighten awareness of the online counselling service available. The Kooth Engagement worker will offer training to schools/providers on to both the benefits and how to access the service.

Sefton Youth Team are working in partnership with Active Sefton who are providing sporting activities for six weeks to young people in Bowersdale Park.

## **LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES**

### **Libraries reopen from lockdown**

Following the government announcement on the easing of some lockdown restrictions, the Library Service reopened its doors cautiously on the 12<sup>th</sup> April.

Following the government announcement on the easing of some lockdown restrictions, the Library Service reopened its doors cautiously on the 12<sup>th</sup> April. For the first 3 weeks demand from book users was high, whereas computer usage has been much slower in re-establishing itself. The libraries are currently open with a mixed offer of full opening ( with Covid restrictions in place) and click and collect.

### **Libraries secure £49,000 funding**

Following a bid to for external funding, Arts Council England have granted the Library service £49,000. Following extensive consultation with ACE, the bid was for funding to hire a Digital Producer who will help develop an innovative and effective digital offer for the Library Service. The Digital Producer will evaluate the existing offer and

develop improvements, train staff in new digital initiatives, lead new digital activities for the public, purchase equipment and software which will help the service evolve its offer to match current trends in society.

Sefton's Library Service has a very good reputation within Arts Council England to deliver innovative projects successfully and this funding is testament to the trust ACE places in our library service

### **Laureate Library Tour**

The Library Service welcomed the UK Poet Laureate Simon Armitage to Bootle Library on 29th April. It was the first time, the Library Service had 'live streamed' an event and while everyone was nervous of the technology working, the event went off without a hitch.

The Poet Laureate was joined by two Liverpool poets, Amina Atiq and Eira Murphy, who all read some of their poems. The event was part of a tour by the Poet Laureate over the next decade, visiting an A-Z of public libraries and it was a definite feather in the cap that Sefton's Bootle Library was chosen as one of the libraries he visits.

### **Bootle in the Blitz book published**

To commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bootle May blitz in 1941, the Library service have been planning the publication of a new book. This lockdown project, centres on the memoirs and notes of the Air Raid Precaution Officer for Bootle, Major George Salt. In the council archive there was a manuscript of his notes from 1946 where he reports on how Bootle developed their Civil Defence Scheme, which ultimately saved countless local lives. Even so, 460 Bootle residents were killed in the blitz and over 900 seriously injured. The original manuscript is written like a council report of the time, with the human stories and tragedies excluded. So the challenge has been to transform this report into an enjoyable and educational read, by adding modern commentary and including some of the incredible stories of heroism and endurance displayed by Bootle residents. The book is now available from each library.

## **THE ATKINSON**

### **Exhibitions**

The Atkinson's galleries re-opened with the **Rui Matsunaga** exhibition from 17 May to 5 June, featuring beautiful mythic paintings, with references to Chinese scrolls, Durer's etchings and manga, addressing a range of environmental concerns.

The **Sefton Open** exhibition had to be presented as an online exhibition this year due to Covid restrictions. It was hugely successful with 246 entries from Sefton residents.

We are also preparing four new exhibitions to open in June for our Museum & Galleries -

**Natural High** - British landscape art looking at the development of landscape painting in key locations including the Lake District, Scotland and Wales. The associated *Inspirations* poetry competition, sponsored by the Art Society, has attracted 40 entries across all ages.

**Courage and Devotion** - Remembering the lives of the Polish Airmen based at RAF Woodvale and the iconic Spitfire - including a scale replica of a Polish Spitfire aircraft made by paper sculptor Suhail Shaikh

**Seaworks** - A survey of photographic art by Paul Kenny who creates, photographs, light boxes and animation using detritus for the strandline and crystallised seawater.

**Captain Pugwash** – the illustrations of graphic artist John Ryan. Captain Pugwash first set sail in the eagle comic here in Southport!

Visitors to the Egyptology collection are now able to see our virtual Ba Bird flying around the gallery via their mobile phones. An online LEGO tour of The Atkinson by talented young animation artist Morgan Spence is also available.

### **Outreach activities**

The Atkinson is supporting Linacre Mission in presenting 'Memoria' from 28<sup>th</sup> June to 2 July, an immersive physical theatre piece by Tmesis Theatre exploring the themes of memory and nostalgia. The Atkinson will also be touring the exhibition 'Sefton's Hidden Histories' to Linacre Mission in September. The project will involve recording oral histories of local residents with connections to the Mission.

## **Race Equality Statement**

As a member of the Cultural Organisations of Liverpool (COoL) The Atkinson is included in the Race Equality Statement developed in partnership with the Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC). Together the groups represent 38 cultural organisations in the City Region. Both groups are committed to racial justice and to making meaningful change within their member organisations and in the work they do.

Here is the link to The Atkinson's race equality statement.

<https://www.theatkinson.co.uk/about-us/race-equality/>

## **Young Artist of the Year**

The Atkinson, in partnership with The Arts Society Southport, invited Young Artists aged 11-18 living or going to school in the Sefton Borough to submit one photograph of an original artwork to this year's competition. Over 100 entries have been received and five local schools are involved.

All entries will be exhibited on The Atkinson's website until 2022. The winners were announced on Thursday 10 June 2021 and awarded prizes donated by The Arts Society Southport.

## **Half-term activities**

A range of touch-free activities have been created by The Atkinson and were launched during half-term. These include downloadable gallery trails and an augmented reality app allowing visitors to explore the Egyptian collection. The activities were funded by the Cultural Recovery Fund.

## **HOUSING**

### **Rough Sleepers & Homeless Services**

In my March report to the Committee, I described the activities we had undertaken to assist homeless people following the upsurge in homeless cases from January.

Single homeless people continue to approach the Council's Housing Options team for assistance and those individuals rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping (sofa surfers) are continuing to be offered emergency accommodation.

A 3-month period of direct lets from 15th February to 14th May allowed the Council to directly allocate any 1-bedroom accommodation that Registered Providers have empty, which has allowed them to reduce the numbers of those within commissioned homeless accommodation who were ready to live independently, therefore freeing up spaces within those hostels for those people in Covid emergency accommodation with support needs.

To continue this good work, I have recently approved a further 3-month period of direct lets from 14th June until the middle of September. This will further allow our Housing Options service to work with housing associations who have available properties in order to directly allocate those properties to our homeless clients. This arrangement will be limited to general needs one-bedroom homes, as most of our homeless clients are single people.

In my March briefing, I also informed that we had also submitted a further funding bid for RSI4 (Rough Sleeper Initiative) funding for 2022/23 to MHCLG to try to maintain the uplift in homeless services and introduce some further initiatives. I can now confirm that we received the full amount of £582,300.75, which will be used to continue to provide homeless services that continue to accommodate and help those individuals with support needs and keeps the borough's rough sleeping numbers at zero.

I can also confirm that Sefton have received our first ask for RSAP (Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme) funding in order to progress the Riverside rightsizing proposal in the Poets Park area, in order to make 5 x2-bed houses into 10 x1-bedroom units for Rough Sleepers.

This initiative will allow Riverside to make best use of its two-bedroom houses, which are increasingly hard-to-let, and create much needed one-bedroom properties, which are in short supply. Riverside will also be funded to provide support to individuals over the coming years also.

I plan to introduce a Local Lettings Plan to ensure that these properties are only used for the purpose of accommodating rough sleepers or people at risk of rough sleeping.

As part of the priority Covid vaccination programme the Council have sought to include people who are homeless and residing in our various temporary accommodation settings (e.g. hostels) in the priority cohort for Sefton, because of their overall level of vulnerability. The Council's 'swab-squad' is now providing weekly Covid testing at several of our commissioned hostels with the aim to increase testing at all the commissioned homeless hostels including the hotels providing our emergency accommodation.

### Private Rented Sector

Our **3 private landlord licensing schemes** went live on the 1st of March 2018- focusing on the licensing of all private landlords in Bootle but developing stronger 'Additional HMO' licensing schemes to cover more types of HMO properties for Southport and Waterloo.

Over the Covid period officers have not undertaken License compliance visits unless necessary to address serious concerns. Instead officers have focused on undertaking desktop street surveys to identify potential unlicensed properties in the selective licensing areas. In total 1395 unlicensed properties have potentially been identified and have been sent final warning letters (allowing 21 days to make an application, if applicable). This work is identifying significant number of unlicensed premises each week and has led to an increase in new license applications of 855. There has also been a focus on processing license applications. Since lockdown began 898 new licenses have been issued and the backlog of license applications at the start of the Covid lockdown has also reduced by 1285.

At 31/5/2021, the total license scheme figures stood at: -

	<b><u>Estimated Numbers of licensable properties at the scheme outset</u></b>	<b><u>ALL schemes</u></b> <b><u>3000</u></b>
<b><u>Percentage &amp; Number of Apps received</u></b>		
	<b><u>Total No</u></b>	<b><u>%</u></b>
<b><u>Total to date (valid forms received)</u></b>	<b><u>3462</u></b>	<b><u>115</u></b>

The actual numbers of license applications received exceeds the number of private rented sector properties we estimated at the start of the Licensing schemes by 15%.

The Housing Licensing team have begun working in collaboration with several Registered Providers and Environmental Health and Cleansing on a joint project to tackle fly-tipping in the POETs streets area of Bootle. As this area falls within the selective licensing area, the licensing team have been involved in engaging with Private Sector Landlords and Tenants to ensure they are not breaching licensing conditions in relation to refuse storage and disposal.

The licensing team has also: -

- Removed 1026 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety System from properties where licensing compliance visits had been undertaken, mainly before Covid restrictions. Of the 29 hazards that can be identified, Fire safety, Damp and Mould and Electrical hazards were the hazards most commonly removed.
- Out of 428 properties found to be non-compliant on the first visit, 266 were then compliant on the second visit following the licensing team's intervention
- Served 47 Final Civil Penalty Notices on landlords for "operating an unlicensed, licensable property" a number of these are awaiting appeal, which due to the Coronavirus restrictions has been delayed.
- Revoked 1 Selective licence due to the proposed licence holder being determined as not being fit and proper to hold a licence
- Continued to work with the ASB Team and Merseyside Police, several landlords have been contacted about the behaviour of their tenants and positive engagement and co-operation with the landlords led to a decrease in complaints about those properties.

Other Enforcement activities carried out by the Housing Standards Team since 1/3/2020 has included: -

- successfully won a housing enforcement case at the First Tier Tribunal, who have upheld the decision of our Housing Standards team to issue a Civil Penalty Notice on a landlord for “failure to supply an electrical safety certificate for an HMO”
- Two Rent Repayment Orders were granted, and the team successfully won an appeal to the Upper Tier Housing Tribunal against a Rent Repayment Order to which a Landlord must repay 12 months housing benefit received from operating an HMO without a licence.
- completed 1 successful prosecution under Section 16 (2)(a) of Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- 5 properties have been prohibited from use due to serious defects,
- 1 property had its prohibition lifted, following resale and full refurbishment
- 11 landlords were served a Smoke & Co Alarm Regs Remedial Notice
- A further 105 Notices were served including to provide Notice of Entry, Hazard Awareness, Statutory Nuisance, Requests for information/documentation

## **Empty Properties**

In January I received an annual monitoring report on levels of empty properties in the borough and activities we had undertaken to address problematic empty properties.

The current total proportion of vacant homes in Sefton (at April 2021) stands at 4.21%. The proportion of total vacant properties has, unsurprisingly, remained steady over the past 12 months during the Covid-19 pandemic. This equates to a total of 5,421 properties in the Borough. The total proportion of vacant homes in the borough has also remained relatively static over the past few years. The 6-year average figure is 4.28%.

The current total proportion of properties empty for 6 months or longer (Long Term Vacant or LTV) stands at 2.58% equating to 3329 properties. This figure has reduced by 70 properties over the previous 6 month monitoring period (Oct 2020 – Apr 2021). The current LTV averages are comparable to the 6-year average of 2.44%.

Bootle and Southport appear to suffer from areas of lower demand and higher turnover, and therefore suffer greater problems associated with empty properties.

The report provided four example properties, where we had intervened to carry out enforced sales and where new owners had refurbished those properties and brought them into use. The report also indicated a further 4 properties where enforced sales procedures had commenced. One of these has since been completed.

The number of service requests regarding issues related to Empty Homes, received by the Housing Standards Team, has significantly reduced by 75% since 2015. This has been due to pursuing interventions (such as enforced sales) with the most problematic empty property cases, which has contributed to a reduction in the number of service requests. These cases generated a lot of complaints from the public and would have been reactively dealt with previously. However, since February this year the numbers of complaints about vacant homes has increased. Over 80% of these new complaints relate to Vacant homes outside of the Selective licensing area.

## **Social Housing Allocations (Property Pool Plus)**

Sefton participates in the Property Pool Plus scheme along with Liverpool, Wirral, Knowsley and Halton Councils, as well as the participating housing associations. The Local Authorities have collectively reviewed the current Policy and associated service arrangements. An external consultant (Neil Morland & Co) was appointed to undertake this exercise, and they have worked with the participating authorities to produce a new allocations policy and procedures. This review was subject to public consultation, with the results to be published on 21st June 2021. The Council will be reflecting on the results of the consultation, alongside the consultant’s recommendations, before finalising the new policy. This policy will be brought to Cabinet for consideration later in 2021. I will provide further updates to the O&S Committee (Regeneration & Skills) on this issue at the next meeting.

## **Liverpool City Region**

I represent the Council on the Sub-Regional Housing & Spatial Planning Advisory Group, which feeds into the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority Strategic Agenda. I have been re-appointed as the Vice Chair of this Advisory Group, for 2020-21. I hope to use this position to have greater influence across the LCR.

The role of the CA is having a growing significance, in particular when the Govt allocate resources to the CA for the whole of the LCR. The CA have been working with Homes England to secure resources to help bring forward development of brownfield sites across the sub-region. We are supporting this exercise.

The LCR CA's City Region Housing Statement recognises the need to increase housing supply to support economic growth. The Statement also committed partners to prepare a joint investment plan with Homes England to guide and shape investment in housing. Since the publication of the Housing Statement, work has been undertaken by the local authorities, in partnership with the Combined Authority and Homes England, on preparing a pipeline of housing development sites. This pipeline is allowing partners to take a truly City Region approach to identifying sub-regional housing markets, identify strategic sites, and to inform and support bids into funding and investment programmes.

A Brownfield Land Fund of £45m has been allocated directly to the Liverpool City region CA. The funding will start to be allocated this financial year and is expected to deliver 3,000 to 4,000 homes which start on site by 31st March 2025 at the latest. Sefton have put forward 2 stalled sites for consideration under this programme, and funding has been confirmed soon for the first of these; the Sandway Homes site at Buckley Hill Lane, Netherton.

A refreshed list of other potential brownfield sites has also now been sent to the CA should there be an opportunity for securing funding under this programme.

The Strategic Housing, Infrastructure & Land Fund (SHILF) programme is anticipated to be managed by Homes England. The LCR LAs have collaborated with the CA to produce an indicative list of schemes from the pipeline schedule, which will be used to develop funding bids once the SHILF Funds are made available. However, indications are that this fund won't be launched until later in 2021.

During the discussions with the CA on the projects and bids to be developed the issue of capacity and technical skills within the LAs has arisen, particularly with the impact of COVID-19. The CA are working with the LAs to ensure that appropriate support in both staff and consultancy expertise are available. The CA will soon employ 2 additional members of staff who will work with the LAs to help develop schemes.

## **Council Housing**

I have been keen to look at the Council providing its own social/council housing in future. Sandway Homes (our development company) will provide new homes at their Buckley Hill site in Netherton. Sandway Homes have applied for planning permission for developing this site. A report was presented to Cabinet in January 2021, who have given approval to pursue the acquisition of a block of nine flats, which will be provided as council owned social rented housing. The report and Cabinet decisions are available to see at item 79 <http://smbc-modgov-03/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=10056&Ver=4> and work is underway to progress with the key actions identified within the report.

I have also now recruited a new post to the Housing team that will support this on a full-time basis.