

# CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

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

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

## INVESTSEFTON UPDATE

### Business engagement

#### Website

InvestSefton website has a dedicated COVID 19 landing page which is updated regularly with the latest guidance and news from Government, Growth Platform, Sefton Council and other sources of help. All relevant and critical links have been synchronised with [www.investsefton.com](http://www.investsefton.com) now available with minimal clicks from Sefton Covid-19. Since the site has gone live (Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020) until Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021, the site has had **39,980** unique sessions.

From Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> May to Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June, the website has had 333 sessions (down from 458 last week)

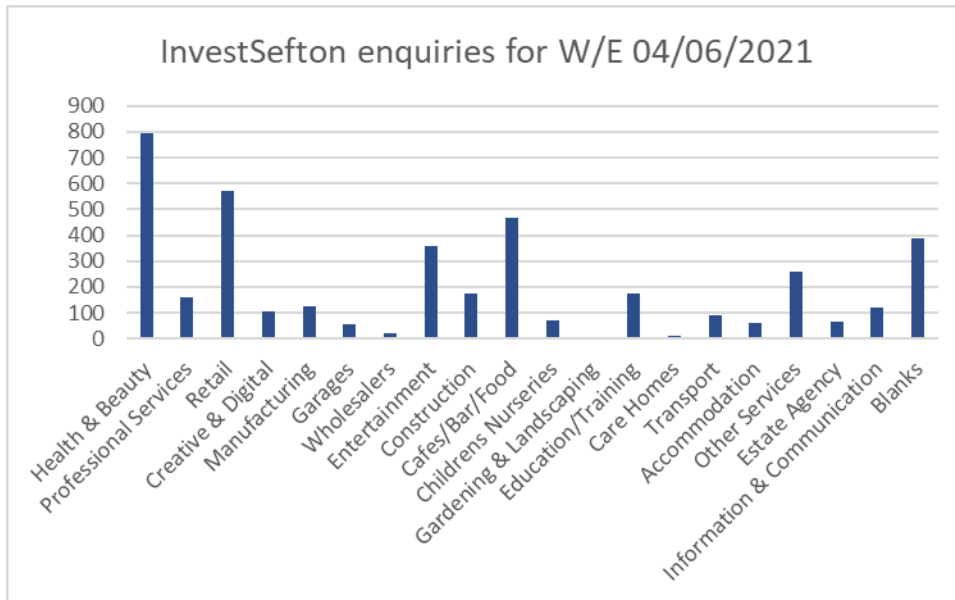
Average time spent on the website in the past week was 1 min 1 sec (up from 58 secs last week).

As usual the 2 most used pages were the homepage and <https://www.investsefton.com/covid-19-financial-support/>

From Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May to Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 45.9% of users accessed the site using a desktop/laptop, 49.8% used a mobile device, and 4.3% via a tablet device.

### Business enquiries

InvestSefton supported Business Rates during the first month of the delivery of the Small Business Grant and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grants, handling over 1,740 recorded calls with a further 400 unrecorded due to the volumes of demand. The team is receiving record numbers of enquiries. InvestSefton has handled **4,083 enquiries** from a wide range of businesses. Breakdown by type of business is provided as at **4 June 2021**.



*Of these, 1,767 were in connection with Rates and business grant payments/Furloughing staff/self-employed scheme or Discretionary Business Grants. The remaining 2,162 are of a general business support nature including business start-up and property searches. As can be seen in the above graph most enquiries have come from businesses services such as high street retailers, including cafe's, hair/beauty salons but other sectors are also emerging as owners seek what support will be available in the event of ongoing restrictions.*

### **Business Grants**

Since October 2020 InvestSefton and Tourism have been leading a dedicated Business Grants team comprising staff from a range of Council services including Corporate Resources and Sefton@work. During each of the three rounds external support, funded by the CA, has also been provided by The Womens Organisation and Chambers of Commerce.

ARG has been used to fund three rounds of grant support aimed primarily at businesses in Sefton's Hospitality and Leisure Sectors. Schemes were expanded in rounds 2 and 3 for Retail and home based businesses.

These schemes have also resulted in three top up payments being offered to all businesses in receipt of grant under the first three rounds.

### **Licensed Taxi Driver Grants**

Sefton's Licensing team have overseen two rounds of grant funding to taxi drivers totalling £910,100.

### **Liverpool City Region Care Provider Grants**

The Combined Authority and local authorities launched a new Care Grant using Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). The social care sector has overall been significantly impacted by Covid-19 and seen a significant fall in demand alongside an increase in cost to manage within a Covid safe environment. The scheme opened on 4<sup>th</sup> May for a two week window closing on 18<sup>th</sup> May.

To qualify the business must still be trading and solvent and not have received funding from the existing three rounds of grants currently being delivered. InvestSefton and the Business Executive are supporting Children's and Care Staff teams delivering the scheme.

All open and closed business grants can be seen at:  
<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/business/business-rates/covid-19-business-support-for-202021-202122>

The table below provides a summary showing the performance of all ARG funded schemes in Sefton as at 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

	(i) Discretionary Business Grant	(ii) Hospitality & Leisure Grant Round 1	(iii) Hospitality Leisure & Retail Grant Expanded Round 2	(iv) Local Business Support Grant	(v) Top up Grant Rounds 1 and 2	(vi) Top up Grant Round 3	(vii) Taxi Grant	(viii) Taxi Grant Top ups	(ix) Care Provider Grant
<i>Period</i>	11 Jun- 23 Sep 2020	16-30 Oct 2020	30 Nov-11 Dec 2020	10-26 Feb 2021	28 Jan-5 Feb 2021	14-28 May 2021	30 Nov-15 Dec 2020	29 Mar- 25 Apr 2021	4-18 May 2021
No of grant applications received	591	296	244	662	397	748	2,620	3,242	171
No of grants approved	344	231	157	459	378	0	2,620	3,242	128
Total Grant paid £	2,237,500	1,592,400	310,338	2,238,750	2,008,884	0	262,000	648,400	415,000
No of applications rejected/duplications	247*	65	87	190	5	0	0	0	12
No of applications under review	0	0	0	13	15	562	0	0	31

\*includes ineligible businesses already in receipt of rates grant and insufficient funding to meet demand

#### Notes

- (i) The Government provided a limited amount of additional funding available to support businesses with fixed property costs that were affected by COVID-19 but are outside the scope of the existing Business Rates Small Grant Scheme and Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Scheme. Scheme supported businesses with fixed premises costs of less than £51k pa including voluntary sector; Bed and Breakfast operations and Visitor Economy sector businesses
- (ii) The grants are for businesses in the Leisure & Hospitality industry whose activities have been significantly affected by Covid-19 restrictions. The grant supports businesses that have been able to continue trading through these difficult times, or that have been forced to close as part of the Government's Tier 3 Lockdown.
- (iii) The scheme was expanded to Retail businesses operating from commercial premises forced to close during restrictions; businesses that directly supply the Hospitality sectors and home based businesses, for example self-employed person, sole trader, or a limited company that predominantly works in or supplies the Hospitality and Leisure sectors, and can no longer generate income through usual channels, for example face to face to face, and has ongoing business-related costs. Licensed Market traders are eligible to apply under this category.
- (iv) Businesses that have been ordered to close (as from 5 January 2021), are not in the business rates system, are based in commercial premises, and not eligible for Local Restrictions Grant (for businesses instructed to close). Supply chain businesses that predominantly supply the hospitality and leisure sectors and are based in commercial premises; Self-employed / sole trader / home based business (that predominantly works in or supplies the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors) / licensed market trader Businesses in any sector that can demonstrate a loss of at least 40% in sales/revenue due to Covid-19 (including self-employed / sole trader / home-based businesses). The grant funding in this

*category aims to help small and micro businesses in any sector that are not eligible for other grant schemes and that are struggling with a loss of sales/revenue in the current financial year due to the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic.*

- (v-vi) Top-up Grants awarded to businesses in receipt of grant from Rounds 1, 2 and 3*
- (vii-viii) Grants to licenced taxi drivers including top up payments*
- (ix) Care Provider grants to Ofsted /CQC registered Childminders, Out of School clubs; Day care Nursery/Pre-school provision and Adult Care homes*

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

Sports company vehicle for an individual who sells sporting equipment online and provides self-employed support to local soccer activities. The business which is based in Maghull is looking to grow but needs support to do so. InvestSefton assisted the business by fully reviewing their current operations and devising a strategy document to enable them to maximise future opportunities for growth.

### **EU Webinar 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

The EU transition period has now passed, and businesses who trade with the EU must ensure that their operations are compliant with new trading regulations, or risk penalties and delays.

On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May InvestSefton hosted a live webinar and Q&A on common issues faced by businesses in the city region, with the LCR Local Growth Hub, and Department for International Trade and Liverpool and Sefton Chamber. Topics included new regulations for importers and exporters, employee visas and Northern Ireland Protocol. Ten businesses from a range of sectors including manufacturing, business consultancy, audio supplies and construction aggregates attended, and learned about free one-to-one business support, and New Markets grants for exporters. A second webinar is scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Good Business Festival-9<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

The finale of the Good Business Festival 2021 will take place from 2pm on 9<sup>th</sup> July in Pleasureland, Southport. The event will be hosted by Paul Sinha from ITV's the Chase and the theme is 'Family Fortunes' looking at the trials and tribulations of running a family owned business. Local Southport businesses will join a panel including Norman Wallis MD of Pleasureland.

### **Inward Investment**

As the economy moves in to recovery and the restrictions on activity relating to the Pandemic are withdrawn it is expected that there will be an uptick in activity. We are already seeing a rise in activity from local businesses seeking expansion space or space more suitable for revised operational models. The work with the Growth Platform to revitalise city region city region inward investment activity is nearing conclusion of strategic work and will soon be commencing operational delivery to coincide with the re-opening of the economy.

Site visit for Mast (or a Bootle based business) to view 3 potential properties to enable the businesses expansion and investment remain in Sefton. All properties viewed remain of interest and we are now working with them on further information gathering to support shortlisting and financial appraisal.

Ongoing activities include:

- Supporting Planning design guide pilot
- Levelling Up letters of support

- ERDF Place Marketing extension and future strategy
- Freeport
- Enterprise Arcade for Southport
- Developing an Investment proposition with Growth Platform for MMC projects

## **GROWTH & INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATES**

Work is continuing across a range of economic recovery projects and initiatives within the Growth and Investment Programme with a number of projects complete, nearing completion or in delivery. Details below outline work underway in Bootle, Crosby and Southport and also Sefton's key coastal gateways at Crosby Lakeside and Ainsdale.

Following the town centre funding announcements for the post March 2021 budget, Sefton Council are exploring a range of external funding sources to support its economic recovery work. These include the Levelling Up Fund, Welcome Back Fund (Reopening High Street ERDF Fund) and emerging One Public Estate as well as working with other key partners to assist and draw in additional investment funding to aid recovery work.

### **1. Levelling Up Fund (LUF)**

Sefton Cabinet have agreed to submit two bids for LUF for Bootle and Crosby town centres in this first round with a submission date of 18th June 2021. This is a competitive bidding process which required MPP support and will help support both the Bootle town centre transformation and regeneration programme and Crosby's regeneration and recovery work.

Bids of up to £20M of funding potentially available for each Local Authority to bid for with investment proposals to focus on supporting high priority projects that will make a visible impact in local areas and also align to and support net zero goals. Government are looking to prioritise bids that can demonstrate investment or begin delivery on the ground in 2021/2022.

The first round of the fund focuses on three themes:

- smaller transport projects,
- town centre and high street regeneration
- support for maintaining and expanding cultural and heritage assets.

Future rounds of LUF funding are to emerge next year.

Sefton is currently Category 3 (lowest priority). Members and the Chief Executive have challenged Sefton's Category 3 status. Both bids are being developed at pace to meet the deadline and are still being finalised at the time of writing this report. If approved, bids will be published.

Applications for funding should clearly demonstrate how proposed investments will support relevant local strategies and their objectives for improving infrastructure, promoting growth, enhancing the natural environment and making their areas more attractive places to live and work. Local areas will also need to show why the proposed investment represents the highest value local priorities.

The assessment process will focus on the following key criteria:

- Characteristics of the place
- Deliverability
- Strategic fit with local and Fund priorities
- Value for money

MP priority support for both LUF bids is being sought and key stakeholder letters of support for bid submission in June.

## 2. Welcome Back Fund (MHCLG)

This is an extension to the current Re-opening High Street Safely (RHSS) funding allocated to Sefton last year for safe re-opening following the first Covid lockdown in March 2020. This brings a further allocation of £344K to Sefton Council to spend on its town centre re-opening. This ERDF fund is very constrained in terms of eligible activity and can only be used on specific types of activity. Officers are exploring eligible activity under the constraints of the fund.

Welcome Back Fund will continue to support for the 4 main types of existing RHSS activities including:

1. Support to develop an action plan for safe reopening of local economies;
2. Communications and public information relating to public safety messaging;
3. Business-facing awareness raising activities; and
4. Temporary public realm changes to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.

In addition, the Welcome Back Fund will also:

5. Support and promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy; and ;
6. Allow local areas to develop plans for responding to the medium-term impact of CV-19 including trialing new ideas particularly where these relate to the High Street.

Eligible activity under these two new strands could include:

- Publicity campaigns and marketing activity for street markets to support local businesses;
- Improving green space and seating areas to encourage people back to town centres; and
- "Beautification" of areas to support the visitor economy.

Sefton Council have appointed *Maybe Tech* a social media platform and training pilot to support and encourage more business use of social media given low levels of use to date for engaging with their customer base. More details can be found here <https://www.maybetech.com>

## Project Specific Updates

### 1. SOUTHPORT

#### Southport Town Deal

Following the Southport Town Deal allocation of £37.5m work has progressed on agreeing Heads of Terms including high level route to business case approval and monitoring and evaluation plan for the Town Deal programme.

Project list includes:

- Marine Lake events centre
- Light Fantastic
- Enterprise Arcade
- Public Realm enhancement
- Building Better Experience

May 2021:

- Heads of Terms project confirmation returned to MHCLG
- Press release issued: [Next steps towards £37.5m Southport Town Deal completed - My Sefton News Channel](#)

- Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the Town Deal programme developed and agreed.
- Business case development now underway for approved schemes.

## **Southport Market**

Comprehensive refurbishment and refit of traditional market hall into a new food and drink offer with a flexible events space capable of holding events and temporary markets.

Southport Town centre investment strategy identified the need to broaden out the traditional local visitor economy and encourage diversification and enterprise development. It identified a number of key opportunity areas including areas of public sector ownership which could be utilised to help address the connectivity and visitor movement as well as business enterprise and development. The existing market was struggling and in need of refurbishment to both attract investment and meet customer demand. Building on the success of the Southport Food and Drink Festival and its town centre location, the market hall was identified as a key opportunity for both changing the town centre offer to attract new visitors, generate footfall and help draw people into new areas of the town centre as part of a market quarter.

Refurbishment and repurposing of this key facility was seen as a way to optimise the building's unique architectural form and presence in the town centre whilst at the same time signal change, creating a sense of place and encouraging diversity. The £1.4m refurbishment and repurposing of this key town centre facility is in the final stages of fitting out and is due to reopen late June/early July depending on government guidelines on reopening. Recent Press release: [Behind the scenes images reveal amazing transformation of Southport Market - My Sefton News Channel](#)

## **2. CROSBY VILLAGE**

A Levelling Up bid is in the process of being prepared for Crosby Village to secure resources to bring new uses into the village, broadening the community services on offer, attracting investment and increasing footfall within the town centre. Plans include a community hub centred around a new library, community healthcare services, a public café and new residential accommodation in the heart of the village centre.

This new state of the art facility will be perfectly placed to help create a vibrant new community hub which will serve local residents for many years to come in a modern energy efficient, attractive, landmark multi-purpose building. This will encourage significant numbers of local residents and visitors in to the town centre supporting the wider objectives of covid recovery and long- term economic stability.

The development will involve significant improvements to town centre access arrangements and also bring with it improvements to public realm creating safer and more attractive gateways into Crosby centre particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. LUF is a competitive process and initial decisions are anticipated in autumn this year.

Elsewhere in Crosby Village work is continuing with private sector interest in Telegraph House following its purchase in 2020 by Crossfield Developments. Proposals for a mixed-use retail and assisted living scheme are currently being developed for this key site in the town centre. Secondly, following the outcome of the planning appeal *Plus Dane* recently prouced proposals for a mixed residential and commercial development on the former Central Buildings site. These will be submitted in the summer.

## **3. CROSBY LAKESIDE**

Contractor Crossfield Developments have been appointed following a competitive bidding process for the refurbishment work ongoing at Crosby Lakeside. Work is progressing well

within the facility to provide an improved hospitality offer and updated venue. The contract has also been carefully managed to allow the watersports activity and leisure operation to reopened. Work is intended to complete in winter 2021 to provide a brand-new offer for visitors and the local community. Following Cabinet consideration in February 2021, agreement to a wholly Sefton Council owned company operating the hospitality side of Crosby Lakeside has been agreed with a dedicated management director.

Press Release: <https://mysefton.co.uk/2021/02/04/exciting-plans-for-the-future-of-crosby-lakeside-adventure-centre-are-now-underway/>

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

**Bootle Strand** – The Strand Shopping Centre feeds directly into the key priority of ensuring retail remains a core function of Bootle Town Centre, despite the current challenging retail market and Covid 19 restrictions affecting trading. The Council is driving forward plans for a repurposed Strand Shopping Centre and following completion of key acquisition and site assembly work on land adjacent to the Leeds Liverpool canal.

Work is progressing at pace to deliver Bootle Canalside proposals and a concept design is complete and moving forward into detailed design. This includes development of a programme of meanwhile uses, events and activities on the land next to the canal, which will help open the canal frontage and capitalise on its waterside location and canal linkages into Liverpool and Bramley Moor Dock. A planning application was submitted in May and is awaiting consideration.

Discussions are also progressing with the Canals and Rivers Trust on how to animate the canal corridor and capitalise on the green and blue corridor. Detailed design work ( RIBA stage 4&5 ) to develop detail and delivery is currently being tendered with a view to starting work in summer subject to planning.

Press Release for Planning Application:

[Transformation of Bootle Canalside moves to next phase - My Sefton News Channel](#)

**Bootle LUF Bid** – work progressing on preparing this bid for Bootle Canalside. This will build on work already undertaken on canalside use, enhancement and animation and look to bring forward new activities and open space into the town centre.

#### **5. AINSDALE ON SEA**

##### **Ainsdale Coastal Gateway**

Green Sefton progressing consultation and engagement for Ainsdale beach gateway improvements. This will help inform consultation on the wider Sefton coastal action plan. This will deliver a number of improvements to visitor facilities for this summer including new toilet facilities and artwork led by Green Sefton.

##### **Ainsdale Neighbourhood Centre, Sandbrook Way**

Following consideration by Council in February 2020, when members agreed to acquire leasehold interests in this centre to bring it into full Council ownership, negotiations have commenced, and a number of properties secured. The Council wish to explore options for this centre and how it can support the wider neighbourhood more positively. Consultation on -site development options took place in March 2021 with Cabinet and local Ward Councilors which has helped to inform the option appraisal for this site due back later this year.

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

Following approval in 2020 for Skills Capital Funding from LCRCA, work has now started on site for the refurbishment of this key adult learning facility. Work started in November 2020 and will complete in July 2021 for this important community learning facility in South Sefton. A £1.3million investment by both Sefton Council and the Liverpool City Region



Combined Authority will provide a refurbished community learning hub providing enhanced access to skills for out of work residents or those wishing to retrain.

The investment will improve the learning environment for users of the Cambridge Road facility, make better use of the space and reduce the operating costs for Sefton Council. Investment in this Grade II Listed building will include a complete refurbishment of the ground floor facilities, a new reception area and café and a reconfiguring of the school hall as a new flexible area for teaching. The Community Learning Hub will also benefit from new IT infrastructure and will be fully WIFI enabled as a result of the investment, while the first floor of the building will also benefit from improvement works. Work will also include repairing and enhancing the building's original features, with external improvements to the roof, windows, brick and stonework.

The investment works will ensure the external envelope of the building is wind and water tight. This will improve the energy efficiency of the building and reduce running costs. The work is being undertaken by a locally based contractor **Cunard Construction** who have experience in the refurbishment of listed buildings whilst also providing social value to the users of the centre and the immediate community.

### **Liverpool City Region Combined Authority: Town Centres Commission Report**

At its meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March, Overview and Scrutiny Committee was updated on the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Final Report of the Liverpool City Region Town Centres Commission "Anchor, Belong, Connect - The Future of Town Centres". This was published by the Combined Authority in March and a copy, along with the associated press release was shared with O&S Committee. A formal response from the CA to the IPPR report recommendation is still awaited and anticipated in July 2021. This will be shared further with O&S when available.

## **TOURISM UPDATE**

### Business Tourism

- The uncertainty of Covid-19 has continued to affect the cancellation and reschedule of conferences as per the figures below.
- With the flagship venue Southport Theatre and Convention Centre (STCC) remaining closed Southport Conference Bureau remains in constant contact with current and prospective clients to retain as much as business as possible within the town moving forward.
- Activity Update:
  1. Liaising with clients to re-schedule and retain business
  2. Researching new venues to add to our portfolio in order to increase choice for our clients and increase our chances of retaining business in the absence of the STCC
  3. Supporting our partners with regular Teams calls offering advice and support and connecting with industry expert guest presenters
  4. Delivering social media training
  5. Supporting our partners to improve their offer to provide accessibility and sustainability information
  6. Working with our colleagues in the wider city region to increase our opportunities for business.
  7. Researching Ambassadors for regional sector strengths
  8. Working with our Marketing Southport colleagues to extend the Southport offer in order to widen the experience on offer to potential business clients.

### Destination Marketing

- The 2021 Visitor Guide has now been fully distributed

- Southport Restaurateurs Association (SRA) - SRA membership currently stands at 23. Tag sponsorship on Sandgrunder Radio and an advert in the Champion currently taking place
- PR – New Press releases written and issued include National Walking Month (March), Town Deal Success (March) and Alfresco Dining (April). Editorial information provided for The Telegraph and Lancashire Life (due to be published early July). Other PR generated coverage includes Evening Standard, Bemused Backpacker and Manchester Evening News. 7 press trips moved from 2020 into 2021 (dates to be confirmed) including Coast Magazine, Birmingham Mail and Viva Magazine. Dates booked for 2 publications, The Cheshire Magazine (June) and Love Exploring (July) plus 1 new booking for Raring2Go! (July).
- Gingerhead (marketing agency) were appointed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year running to develop a comprehensive destination campaign. The campaign is structured in stages working to the government roadmap. The theme is 'Love Southport' and is designed to be flexible to change if there are any changes in the roadmap. Currently we have some Google and social advertising and are working on a bigger campaign including out of home advertising and radio for the Summer season.
- Visit Southport website – this has been updated regularly. Traffic is now tracking at an estimate of 8% behind on 2019 which indicates a fantastic recovery. In May traffic has been up over 40%.

## Events

- There is still uncertainty if major events will be able to take place this year, however planning is continuing for those events not yet cancelled
- Tickets sales are steady, and figures are similar numbers to what we sold at this point in 2019, however it should be noted no marketing push has taken place.

## Food & Drink

- Initial discussions about a potential late summer/ autumn show in early September, working alongside the Southport Flower Show
- Traders keen to take part in any events planned for 2021

## British Musical Firework Championships

- The BMFC competitors briefing will likely take place in June/July

## Bootle Canalside

- Initial plans for autumn events programme at new site
- Events to include – Illuminos, Ice Rink, Markets, Comedy, Music
- Full programme to be finalised once opening date agreed

## Southport Market

- The construction works are nearing completion with building handover expected in June, a late June or early July opening is planned subject to Government restrictions.
- Eight of the ten units have now been filled and leases have been signed. We have a large list of prospective tenants to fill the last two units and a collective decision will be made on who these are allocated to.
- Induction days will take place for all traders the week prior to opening for training on systems , traders will be moving in and setting up units from June 21<sup>st</sup>

- The first Makers market has now run for the first month with a fantastic response from the public, the market attracted over 60 traders, the plan is to grow this to 100 over the next year. The markets will take place monthly and will complement other markets throughout the year.

### Tourism Operations

- Southport Seafront has reopened in compliance with Government Covid restrictions, all tenants are adhering to regulations associated with Covid.
- Maintenance work will commence shortly within the Kings Gardens, the following work will be carried out:
  - Victorian Shelters rubbed down and repainted
  - All seating within the gardens will be sanded and oiled
  - The Venetian Bridge will be sanded and painted
  - Light columns will be repainted
  - Any trip hazards on the pathways will be repaired
- The STCC remains closed due to National restrictions, both short term and long-term options (linked to The Southport Town Deal) continue to be investigated.
- It is not envisaged the conference market will begin again until September 2021
- West Lanc's Yacht Club have reluctantly taken the decision to cancel the 24-hour event for 2021. A lack of confidence in the pandemic being fully under control and a belief that they would struggle to host the event whilst complying with social distancing etc

## **EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING UPDATE**

### **Sefton@work**

#### **General service delivery**

General footfall into the Sefton@Work office on Stanley Road continues to increase, with staff reporting that clients are feeling more comfortable leaving the house generally and getting back to some normality with a focus on job search becoming a higher priority again.

A blended service is still being offered with the telephone appointments and live website chat functions remaining as the prominent preferences at present.

Further re-opening measures have led to the staff group working in two, rather than three "fixed teams" with one group working in the office while the other group operates remote access from home or community outreach facilities.

Preparations are underway for the re-opening of the first floor of the premises to enable more staff to provide face to face service in response to demand. These moves have been made in accordance with corporate risk management strategies and shared with trades unions.

Sefton@Work staff have resumed outreach work at Bootle, Crosby and Southport JCP offices to continue joint working and to improve referrals into the Ways to Work programme and Kickstart opportunities. All offices have been risk assessed and extensive Covid-Safe measures are in place to safeguard staff and clients.

### **Social Value**

Work with Barnfield Construction and meeting their employment and training social value responsibilities is starting to take shape and progress very positively. The Contracts Manager is extremely keen to work with Sefton@Work to ensure that local workless residents have access to the jobs on their sites. There are currently 2x active sites in Southport where we have successfully placed 2 x Labourers and 1x Telehandler. There are several clients prepared and ready on stand-by for when further Labouring positions are released meaning immediate starts can be delivered for the employer of local residents. There is a further site due to open in Bootle although no timescales for additional workforce requirements have been finalised as yet. The sub-contractor list is currently being finalised by Barnfield but once this is complete it will be shared with Sefton@Work as warm leads to contact. The Contract Manager at Barnfield is pleased with the work that has taken place so far and has agreed to consider site visits, placements and other interventions that may benefit our residents or younger people and help move them closer to employment.

### **DWP Kickstart scheme**

Sefton@Work have been working closely with SMBC Cleansing staff to recruit suitable young people to their Cleansing Operative posts. Following interviews and pre-employment checks we have now secured starts for 17 young people will be commencing work on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Succession and Funding**

Members will be aware that the Ways to Work project has been working with DWP for many months about accessing further external resource to enable the project across the 6 LA areas to continue until December 2023 when the European funding ceases.

At the time of writing there have been Project Change Control Requests and applications for additional ESF grant lodged with DWP for decisions. We have recently been informed that new applications made under the 1.1 stream will now be considered as a PCR. And a similar scenario is expected to be confirmed for a 1.3 application made some months ago. A further PCR, incorporating both 1.1 and 1.3 has also been made which will maximise all the grant available to the LCR.

DWP have indicated that they are aiming to make decisions on extension applications more rapidly than they have in the past. We await the outcome of this highly complex situation.

If we are approved in full all the ESF grant available to us and we also have approval to commence the Restart ( to be submitted to Cabinet in June for a decision) , we may be able to create headroom within the ESF scheme for Sefton through moving some staff costs from ESF to operate a new ILM Programme for vulnerable groups which we have not been able to do for some time.

### **Sefton Community Learning Service**

A full-Service delivery plan has been submitted to Liverpool City Region Combined Authority outlining our profiled programme for the next academic year 2021/22.

The Service Continues to monitor financial expenditure and performance on qualifications with a view to the recently introduced reconciliation threshold. The LCRCA have been required to enforce this in line with national expectations and it means that financial penalties may be incurred for recipients of Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding next year if they fail to achieve the threshold of 68% of the forecasted achievement. In Sefton we are very focused on this, despite the difficulties we have experienced this year providing community learning across a range of different settings and with groups who have been negatively affected by COVID-19. Additional courses and support have been made available to all learners to maximise achievement rates and optimise contract value and there is a good level of confidence that our target can be achieved within the academic year.

The following examinations have taken place so far:

ESOL Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3 and Level 1 Reading, and Writing

Level 1 Speaking & Listening

Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2 English and Maths

Re-sits are scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 with catch-up examinations scheduled on 17 June and 7 July. Tutors have been engaged to provide additional sessions where needed and the Service is encouraging all learners to take part in these prior to re-sits to improve their prospects of success.

The SCLS Summer timetable has now started with 18 courses scheduled over the coming weeks with approx. 90 learners already booked to start. Marketing and promotion will continue throughout this period to increase numbers and manage attendance of learners.

The Service recently took part in a Family Fun-day at Ford Lane Community Centre, which was very well attended. 22 learners took part in Family Learning activities. The Service is also attending the 2021 Music Festival at the beginning of July, providing a great opportunity to promote the service and recruit new learners for the forthcoming academic year.

In common with many community learning providers, the service has struggled during the past year with the availability of good quality tutors capable of providing a wide-ranging curriculum to attract and retain new learners. However, there has been good news on this front recently and the Service has appointed an additional 6 new tutors, 2 of whom have already fully completed the recruitment process and are either teaching or ready to start teaching. There are a further 3 applicants waiting for interview with dates to be arranged. The introduction of the new staff with a wider portfolio of subjects will allow the Service to deliver a broader range of new courses such as Introduction to Coding, Introduction to Electronics, Basic Life Support, Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care, Introduction to Sociology, Introduction to Alternative Beliefs and Practices and Level 2 Teaching Assistant among others.

### **Employment**

Cunard Construction are currently advertising 6 Kickstart positions via Sefton@Work and recruitment is expected June-July.

This month also sees additional paid employment opportunities within the Sefton area, these include apprentice electricians, joiners and roofers, labourers & trades-mates along with opportunities for skilled trades with local companies.

### **Successes @ Cambridge Road**

- 4 x Individuals completed on-site paid placements in March
- 2 x Placements have progressed into new full time General Operative roles with Cunard Construction
- 2 x Apprenticeships have been sustained, they are currently gaining experience on site and across local projects
- 1 x Joiner recruited by the Window Refurbishment Contractor
- 2 x Joiners have been recruited to work for Cunard Construction on the Cambridge Road development

**Green Garden Space** - Activities are currently expected to commence late June/ July, meetings have taken place to discuss requirements in more detail and further involvement for other support services. It is expected this will complement other Environmental projects across Sefton to maximise benefits for the community.

The Service is also looking into an application for funding to improve the Community Bistro.

### **Specialist Mental Health & Employment Contract**

A contract has now been given to Imagine Independence Ltd for a further 12 months delivery. The contract value is £40,350 and is managed via Employment & Learning. Discussions will take place with commissioners in adult social care during this year to assess whether a more joined-up approach could be workable with a single contract to support mental health employment and for employment support for people with learning disabilities and neurological conditions such as Asperger's.

### **Restart Employment Programme**

Sefton Council has received a sub-contracting offer to deliver the national Restart employment programme, which will be put to Cabinet and Council in June and July 2021 for authorisation to proceed. Restart is the major employment programme announced by the Chancellor as part of the government's Plan for Jobs in July 2020. Department for Work and Pensions have procured delivery for Restart across the country in contract package areas through their network of Prime contractors. The successful contractor appointed for the North West is G4S Ltd who have made the offer to Sefton Council. The offer is to deliver assistance to unemployed residents who have been unemployed for 12 months or more and help them get into sustained employment. The contract period is for 5 years, with a contract payment framework which is composed of 30% for delivery fees paid monthly to the council and the remaining 70% payable on the achievement of outcomes for people getting into work. The total potential earnings for the contract is £14.7 million.

Given the dramatic rise in unemployment we have seen in Sefton, this offers the opportunity to do more for our residents while also securing the Sefton@work service for a period of five years while the transition away from dependence on European funding occurs.

### **Economies for Healthier Lives – LCR project application to the Health Foundation**

Employment & Learning staff have been nominated to represent Sefton in an application for £490k funding from the Health Foundation to the LCRCA to carry out a cross-boundary research project. This project is focused on the redesign of employment services and evolution of an enhanced approach to labour market programme delivery with public health more intentionally at its core, building upon the Wealth and Wellbeing Programme's report. If successful this project will include a review of existing programmes (e.g. Households into Work, Ways to Work) to ensure that they are informed by the best available evidence of the interrelationship between poor health, inequalities and employment; measure success in ways that are meaningful and relevant; put appropriate interventions in place to effectively deliver benefits at both individual and population levels; enable health and employment services to work effectively; build links between public health and economic strategists; and capture learning that is accessible and impactful. There will also be a link with health commissioners and providers to ensure that economic development is built into their service specifications and provisions, to enable a more fully integrated and reciprocal approach to be in place. Partners will adopt a collaborative, test-and-learn approach to integrating support with public health principles, to rigorously evaluate impact in our shared aim of reducing inequalities across the whole of the LCR.

### **NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service**

#### **Current NEET and Not Knowns Update**

- At 3.64%, Sefton's combined NEET and NK indicator for 16-17 has improved by 0.65% in May 2021 in comparison with May 2020 and this has reduced by -0.25% for 16-18. This is an extremely positive outcome given the circumstances facing young people this year.
- Our Latest published figures show that Sefton has the best % rate for Not Knowns and the Combined measure (ie. NEET and Not Knowns) across all the Local Authority areas within the LCR. We are performing better than the North West

NEET/NK combined measure and better than the England NEET/NK combined measure. The combined NEET and Not Known measure is the most important data indicator used by the Department for Education to judge the performance of LAs in their statutory duty for the participation of young people.

- NEET Case Conferencing Group – has met and the group have received 12 referrals. Actions have been agreed to support the referred young people and updates will be received at forthcoming regular meetings. This is a group of practitioners from a range of agencies that are solution focused who can come together to remove barriers and solve problems for the young people being helped into suitable education and training. The methodology is similar to case conferencing style of working adopted through early help team “huddles”.
- The official School leaving date this year for Y11 pupils was 28<sup>th</sup> May. Career Connect has been actively promoting the NEET Reduction and Early intervention offer to these young people as they are deemed most at risk of drop-out in September.
- This month, our churn of NEET young people has considerably improved. Although we have had 21 new NEET clients, 45 have left NEET for positive destinations.

**Vulnerable Groups and EET destinations. This is the participation in education, learning or employment of young people with specific vulnerabilities.**

This will be a priority for Career Connect over the next couple of months as the following patterns have emerged:

- At 84.3% the participation (EET) levels of young people with specific educational needs or disabilities (SEND) has decreased between May 20 and May 21. Participation is down by -1.33%.

**Installing a bright career through Kickstart -Case study**

*Luke, 21, was unemployed and struggling to secure sustainable, reliable employment when he was referred to Sefton@Work by his Work Coach at Job Centre Plus.*

*During his initial interview, Sefton@Work registered Luke onto the ESF Ways to Work project. The aim of the project is to support local people into work through job search, coaching and skills development. It is part-funded by the European Social Fund and Youth Employment Initiative.*

*Luke disclosed that he had some paid work experience, however these roles had predominantly been short term contracts as a Multi-Drop Driver through recruitment agencies and had not allowed him any progression or stability. He was keen to find a more sustainable role that could help him feel he was starting a genuine opportunity that would allow him to learn new skills and gain valuable experience to progress, develop and build on for a long-term career.*

*As a Kickstart Gateway provider, Sefton@Work have worked closely with local businesses to develop quality job placements that offer our young people the opportunity to train and learn in a real working environment while they earn. With Luke being eager to get back into work quickly he was immediately taken through the wide range of varied Kickstart opportunities we were managing the recruitment for and was matched to those best suited to his circumstances, his personality and his skillset.*

*One of the positions that Luke matched with was an opportunity with Fox Networking Ltd for a Trainee Network Installer. Although Luke had no prior experience in this type of role, he did feel he would be able to meet the expectations to learn the trade and fulfil the duties of the role with some support and guidance. In anticipation of his application for the role and to ensure he was fully prepared to do his best at interview, Luke attended the Kickstart*

academy training at Sefton Community Learning with the aim of polishing his interview skills.

Although nervous, Luke was pleased to be interviewed by Fox Networking Ltd for a 6-month Kickstart role as Trainee Network Installer. The feedback from the interview was very positive and Luke was thrilled when he was informed that he was successful. The company is based on Hawthorn Road, Bootle and install and maintain all aspects of CCTV and data network installation.

Tim from Fox Networking Ltd is delighted with the appointment and said **“Luke has really applied himself well, only starting a month ago he has already getting a great grasp of the job role and has built his skills to the point that he will soon be provided with a company van to enable him to complete installation work on his own, and will continue to learn new and transferable skills for the future”**.



Luke’s Kickstart job has been very much a mobile and flexible role so far, and he has covered hundreds of miles visiting new and existing customers from London to Newcastle and is growing in confidence. Luke was visited in Bootle recently by his Sefton@work Placement Officer who reported how great it was to hear from both Luke and Tim that the placement was working very well for both parties.