

CABINET MEMBER REPORT
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) -
14 September 2021

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Paulette Lappin	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services	August 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

- 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.

From July reports have been, and will continue to 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 latest report to be presented to Cabinet on 2nd September indicates that an underspend of £0.583m is currently forecast against the Council's revenue budget.

The closure of the accounts for 2020/2021 was completed in June, with the revenue and capital outturn position reported to Cabinet in July.

The draft Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021 was published at the end of July. Due to delays in the completion of the internal valuations of the Council's assets, it was agreed with the Council's external auditors (EY) that we would publish the Statement of Accounts without the impact of any of the completed valuations. All valuations have now been completed and the draft Statement of Accounts have been updated. EY are currently undertaking their audit and the final Statement of Accounts will be presented to Audit and Governance Committee in September for approval.

Customer Centric Services

Business Support Grants

The application window for COVID-related business support grants ended on 30th June 2021.

The table below summarises the payments made for the various schemes between April 2020 and July 2021:

Grant	No. of Payments	Value of Payments
Small Business Grant	3,284	£ 32,840,000.00

Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Grant (£10k)	397	£	3,970,000.00
Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Grant (£25k)	529	£	13,225,000.00
Local Authority Discretionary Grant	340	£	2,237,500.00
Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) (Tier 2 & 3 Restrictions)	598	£	426,372.68
Local Restrictions Grant (Sectors)	8	£	9,049.42
Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum - Nov 2021	1,816	£	2,788,272.00
Christmas Support Payments for wet led pubs	102	£	102,000.00
Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum - 5 Jan to 15 Feb 21	1,988	£	4,592,033.00
Closed Business Lockdown Payment	1,992	£	9,207,000.00
Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open)	467	£	2,045,556.00
Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum - 16 Feb to 31 Mar 21	1,974	£	4,771,512.00
Restart Grants - Non-Essential Retail	651	£	2,039,495.00
Restart Grants - Hospitality, Leisure, Accommodation, Sports & Personal Care	1,202	£	10,954,000.00
Taxi Drivers - Round 1	2,620	£	262,000.00
Taxi Drivers - Round 2	3,242	£	648,400.00
Hospitality & Leisure Round 1	231	£	407,500.00
Hospitality & Leisure Round 1 - Top-up	219	£	1,476,910.00
Hospitality & Leisure Round 2	1	£	1,334.00
Hospitality & Leisure Round 2 - Top-up	153	£	280,822.00
LCR Local Business Support Grant (Round 3)	476	£	1,921,500.00
LCR May Top-up	726	£	3,027,287.15
Care Providers	149	£	520,000.00
Totals	23,165	£	97,753,543.25

Test and Trace Self-Isolation Support Payments

The Department of Health and Social Care has further extended the scheme to 30th September 2021. In line with the increase in the number of positive COVID-cases, there has been an increase in the volume of applications received from residents advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

As at 9th August 2021, 4,358 claims have been received, with decisions made in 3,844 cases, i.e. 942 mandatory awards, 717 discretionary awards and 2,185 refusals where applicants have not met eligibility criteria. Total payments made to date are £471,000 mandatory payments and £358,500 discretionary payments.

Rules around payment eligibility are due to further change with effect from 16th August 2021 when those who are fully-vaccinated and identified as a contact of someone who has tested positive are no longer required to self-isolate.

The team dealing with the scheme continue to telephone most applicants to discuss their claim, and when a claim is refused, offer other welfare support, especially support towards Council Tax through the Council's exceptional hardship fund.

Customer Services

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 One Stop Shop-service in Southport continues to be provided from The Atkinson.

COVID-related telephone calls into the Contact Centre again increased as more residents enquired about how to apply for the Test and Trace self-isolation payment.

Revenues & Benefits Software system implementation

Following the new contract that was awarded to NEC (previously known as Northgate Public Services) from 1st April 2021, staff from Customer Centric Services, ICT, Agilisys and Northgate have been working together to finalise the project plan and complete the project initiation stage before moving to implementation.

Breathing Space

Legislation came into effect on May 4, 2021 to provide respite to those with problem debt the right to legal protections from their creditors. The first notification that a resident in debt to the Council had entered Breathing Space for 60-days was received on 5th May 2021.

35 cases have been referred to the Council up to July 31, 2021 with total debts amounting to £83,033. Of the 35 cases, Breathing Space has expired on 8 cases without any payment arrangement being offered, the debts on those cases totals £34,778.

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 have recently completed a corporate governance review which included work on the development of the Annual Governance Statement. 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. We are currently recruiting two temporary Principal Auditors which is taking longer than we anticipated due to the current jobs market.

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 result of the exercise has identified significant differences against the current revaluations. The revised figures have been included in the insurance renewal.

The team are currently drawing up a proposal to complete a revaluation of a further sample of properties which will be brought forward for approval.

- 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 are currently in the process of completing the insurance renewal for the Council which is due on the 29 September 2021. The insurance market remains "hard", with significant cost increases arising on all cover levels, insurers appetite for risk reducing and insurers pricing for profit not markets share. As a result, despite having a relatively good claims experience it is likely that we face cost increases above the annual inflationary uplift or limits on cover unless we carry out actions to reduce risk to the insurer.

The **Risk and Resilience Team**. The Emergency Planning focus during the quarter has been on following up on the training for the loggists and volunteers. We are currently developing succession planning and a training plan for the loggists as well as further planned training for the volunteers. Business Continuity Plans have been completed in the first wave and we are now working through a programme of refreshing the existing plans as well as bringing forward plans to test the activation of the plans and undertake exercises.

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 revised Emergency Plan for the 2022 Grand National

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.

Assurance officers from the Risk and Audit Team have been providing support with the NFI Blue Badge mortality checks exercise, with the latest progress update being:

Number of matches received 905
Numbers investigated 201
Badges cancelled 172
Earliest date cancelled from 22 February 2019

There is potentially financial savings generated as well as enhancing the Council's reputation as a result of intervention to detect and stop the potential misuse of Blue Badges. The saving relates to the loss of parking revenue to the Council as a result of the abuse of Blue Badges. Most importantly, the impact of any misuse has on genuinely disabled persons who cannot park and drive further distances to find suitable spaces.

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.
- Undertaking a planned review of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and completing the Annual Health and Safety report.
- 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 training for new Heads of Service will be provided from the allocation as well as using some of the days to help develop a e-learning content for a risk management course.

ICT

The ICT Service continues to respond to changing business requirements in line with the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. This includes supporting the Economic Growth and Housing team in the implementation of ICT systems to support grants for local businesses in line with regional plans.

In June the Client team played a key role in the completion of the Electrical testing at St Peters House, this included a full power down of the Data Centre hosted in this building, the challenge was significant and there was an impact on a number of projects whilst resource was redirected. However, the work went very well, and the team managed to maintain a skeleton ICT Service, including access to email and Cloud Telephony during the outage.

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 with go live planned for August and go live of the Bins not emptied process is now scheduled for September this year. The team are now working to transfer all current business processes in Northgate to CXP with work scheduled to complete across all areas for first quarter of 2022.

In addition, the team has supported the migration and upgrade of the corporate website to the Umbraco platform. UAT is now completed and the Client team continues to work in partnership with the Communications and Agilisys team to resolve any snagging issues identified prior to go live.

The statement of work for the Cloud Migration project is now signed off and the project starts week commencing the 9th of August, with a new temporary Project Manager due to start with the authority on the 1st of September. The project will see migration take place in 3 waves running from Autumn 2021 through to March 2022. The team has also secured the services of a third-party security company to complete independent validation of the design and associated security infrastructure.

Cloud Telephony deployment continues at pace with deployment completed across Corporate Resources, Adults and Children's Services Teams. Remaining council services are due to go live at the end of August, with a small number of Schools scheduled for early September. The main risk to deployment is a worldwide shortage of the specialist handsets required. Although most users will access the system via their device (PC or Laptop) and a headset Sefton still does require a number of handsets for areas such as reception spaces, members rooms and Leisure Centres. This means we cannot exit the existing Virgin contract until these handsets are in place. Feedback in relation to the solution has been overwhelming positive across all teams.

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. Due to the aforementioned Electrical Testing deployment has been delayed with completion now due in September 2021.

Further procurement activity continues at pace and the forward plan for the forthcoming period is complete and has being signed off by members of ELT and SLB. A key challenge in this area is capacity, with the resignation of the Procurement Manager. Work is in progress to secure a temporary resource whilst the new structure for Commissioning and Procurement is established.

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. Three sites on Forward Plan for Cabinet reports later in the year.
- Asset records input and liaison with Building Maintenance colleagues for new (property based) IT system in support of Corporate Landlord Implementation Ongoing. Approval obtained for Property Management Assistant to be appointed to assist with input work
- Agreement of terms and reporting for Lease of various assets Ongoing.
- Asset Valuations completed for end of year accounting
- 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. Break Notice served on landlord for termination of Leases of third and fourth floors
- Let a number of seasonal refreshment concessions throughout the Borough.
- The 1st floor right hand wing of Magdalen House is now clear to facilitate the CCG's move from their temporary home on the 4th floor to their permanent office on the 1st floor. They do however require five offices to be built that will require Landlord's approval prior to construction, which will delay their move.
- Most of the departmental submissions have been received for the Future Ways of Working to inform decisions on Agile Working and Building Capacities. These are now being scrutinised to ensure nobody has been missed and whether their requests are in line with the corporate strategy for agile working.
- Ongoing management of 'day to day FM operations' to also include the COVID-19 measures and management within buildings.

Maintenance Management and 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.
- Managing remedial works scheme
- 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.
- Project manage various Education capital schemes.
- 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.
- 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. Delays on finalising contract – now expected to be delivered by Oct 2021
 - LAD2 direct award of funding from the CA to Sefton to retrofit ~215 low income private homes. Works due to start in August. Estates in Netherton, Litherland and Bootle with problematic insulation issues have been targeted. Wider campaign to be launched to offer loft and cavity wall insulation to wider low income homes. Scheme to due to end December 2021, but a 2-month ext. likely.
 - LAD3 and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) – Now called ‘Sustainable warmth’ competition. A consortium bid led by the LCR has been submitted 4 August, results due to be announced in November 2021
- Works to upgrade roof insulation and improve glazing at Southport and Bootle Town Halls progressing – initially delayed due to budgeting issues but now resolved. Aligned with essential maintenance works to avoid additional costs. Works now due to commence August 2021 and conclude by March 2022.
- Bid submitted to expand the work on decarbonising buildings – result due end of August 2021. Climate Emergency
 - Preparations underway for COP 26 conference Nov 2021
 - Action plan projects progressing well (will be reporting to Member Ref group 26 August 2021)
- Air Quality Education and behaviour change – Immersive room to be installed September 2021 at Southport Eco centre. Work ongoing to promote the clean air crew website to schools across the LCR progressing well.

Legal Services

- The Legal Contracts Team remains extremely busy at working at full capacity, in particular advising on all of the Council’s major projects including the proposed Marine Lake Events Centre development, the redevelopment of the Enterprise Arcade, the continuing Bootle/Strand regeneration, green homes projects and various high profile and important Liverpool City Region schemes.

- 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 endure service continuity and numerous post-Covid recovery schemes particularly around social care provision, work restart schemes, mental health schemes and affected contractors' performance. 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.
- The Employment Team continues to advise on a wide range of employment tribunal claims for both the Council and Schools in the borough. In addition, the Team provides a high quality legal advisory service on day to day employment matters.
- The Property Team remain busy continuing to support the Council's estates team and property portfolio during the coming out of the Covid period, including an increase in matters relating to recovery of rent, and potential forfeiture proceedings when the moratorium ends. Planning matters also continue at pace with the construction recovery, the continuing number of large and significant developments coming through, and the return to face-to-face committee meetings.
- 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. Overall, there has been an unprecedented rise in the volume of work impacting the Team.
- With the lockdown restrictions beginning to ease, the Adults Team have noticed an increase in work across a range of issues. They have issued welfare applications in the Court of Protection and handled a protracted and expensive historical child sexual abuse matter. 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.

Debt Recovery:

- Continued hard work to chase debtors coming to fruition with a final payment being made to clear a debt of £28,000.
- The completion of a sale of a 'problem property' by the Council has recouped £9,837.63 in unpaid business rates with wider benefits for the local area.
- The Team have secured payments in full for two debts which were due to be written off.

Prosecutions and Regulatory:

- A successful prosecution of a business selling counterfeit cigarettes resulting in a costs award and a community service order.

- A number of enforcement notices have been served on properties in breach of planning control.
- An application to appeal the decision of the Council to refuse to grant a private hire driver's licence was successfully opposed.
- Licensing and Regulatory Committee were provided with training and support at their recent meeting.

Electoral Services

Preparations for the annual canvass have been completed and process of updating the register electors has started. A national data match is carried out as part of the process to measure the accuracy of our records against those held by the Department of Work and Pensions. Our results are high at 84.9%, and slightly up on last year 84.6%. Voter Registration will now go out to all households and from all the information received and collated, the 2022 Register of Electors will be published on the 1 December 2021.

Democratic Services Team – Overview

- The Team have been working hard in ensuring the safe return to Physical Meetings whilst adhering to COVID health and safety requirements.
- 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 Council's Committees and Sub Committees were approved at the adjourned Annual Meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2021.
- The Team is now preparing for the next cycle of meetings during the current Municipal Year 2021/22 in relation to Committees and in that respect the following Committees will continue with 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 was held on 22 June 2021 and its main task was to set the Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year. The Committee's Mental Health Issues Working Group has just completed its review and a new Working Group can be considered at the next meeting.

- **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 was held on 15 June 2021 and its main task was 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 was held on 29 June 2021 and its main task was 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. At the time of drafting this report a Special meeting of the Committee is scheduled to consider a "called-in" item on a Proposed Temporary Traffic Regulation Order.

- **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 was held on 22 June 2021 and its main task was to set the Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year. The Committee agreed to defer further work on the Secondary School Performance and Attainment Working Group until data is available in twelve months' time and a new Working Group can be considered at the next meeting.

- **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.

The start of the new academic year continues to be an extremely busy time for the Clerk to Education Appeals. The week commencing 6 September has over 30 LEA appeals scheduled. Archdiocese appeals are scheduled for the following week, with the possible addition of more LEA appeals too. A full report on the progress be submitted to the next cycle.

- **Civic and Mayoral**

The Mayor's Office is now underway on arranging Charity Fundraising events for Cllr Carragher's term of office, we have three events planned, Friday 15th October is the Charity 'Oktoberfest' Night, Friday 16th December, is the Mayor's Charity Christmas Quiz and Mayor of Sefton's Gala Charity Ball on Saturday 26th March 2022. Tickets will be going on sale shortly for the Oktoberfest & Charity Ball.

Plans are now underway for Remembrance Sunday 2021, the Mayor of Sefton will be attending the Bootle Service this year

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.

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 is being gradually progressed.

Pay and Grading and Establishment Control Team

Job evaluation is undertaken relative to all Council and School posts for new or revised roles and 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 team members have been heavily involved in the project of implementing the new iTrent Payroll and HR system.

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 are effectively maintained.

Establishment Control review safeguarding checks held against posts e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service, 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 team manage the Matrix contract relative to the recruitment of Agency workers. Agency recruitment is currently at an all time high to deal with the demands across Children's 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. A review of the Sickness absence systems will be undertaken in line with the implementation of the new iTrent payroll and HR system.

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 and Pension (THRP) Services

A decision was taken In December 2020 to move from ResourceLink to Midland iTrent for the Payroll HR System.

Parallel runs took place for April, May, June and July 2021. There are 53 separate payrolls and 12,500 people paid and each payslip was balanced between the old and new systems.

THRP went live in the new system in a staggered approach in July and August 2021.

The staff have had to learn the new system and still ensure everyone was paid on time from the legacy system and the team have worked extremely hard and long hours to make this happen.

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.

Employee Self Service (ESS) has been roiled out to the majority of employees, for viewing of payslips and to amend address, bank details etc. and paper payslips have been produced for staff who are unable to access the Internet

The team are currently looking at the following:

- Expenses claimed via ESS and approved via Manager Self Service (MSS)
- Teachers pensions Monthly data collection (MDC) moving to Monthly Contribution Reconciliation (MCR) from 1st November 2021

Occupational Health

Health Unit

During May, June and July 2021, a total of 183 referrals for SMBC employees were made to the Health Unit. This is approximately 4% more than the same period 12 months previously.

The majority of referrals during this period were from Education Excellence (50.2%%), Locality Services (10.9%) and Communities (9.8%). As usual the main reasons were stress and mental health related (46.9%), chronic medical illness (20.8%) and musculoskeletal (19.7%).

The Unit is now involved in the progression and build of the OH element of the new ITrent system. Live rollout for this is anticipated mid-September.

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 a new apprenticeship standard called the **Coaching Professional Level 5 qualification** and the first briefing session will be held on Thursday 16th September 2021.

We are getting ready to procure the **Level 7 Senior Leader in Schools Apprenticeship Degree** and will make this available to Sefton schools in Autumn 2021.

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 September 2021.
- **Performance Development Review (PDR) for Staff and Managers eLearning** will be launched end of August/early September 2021. The eLearning will help employees get the most out of the new PDR process, scheduled to go live on 1st September 2021.
- **Equality and Diversity for Managers eLearning** – we are currently working with a training provider and the Corporate Equality Group to refresh and update this course in line with current Equality legislation.

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 monthly basis and are available in PDF format and as separate eLearning modules on Me Learning.

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 getting ready to launch the Council’s new PDR process called My Sefton, My Space. This is a key part of the opportunity’s employees will have to help them develop, grow and thrive in their role.

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 the lifting of Covid restrictions (step 4), encouraging vaccination take up and how to access local testing sites. The team are working closely with ICT and Agilisys colleagues to progress the website reskin project. A number of technical challenges has delayed the project with an anticipated launch date now set for September 2021. August 30th will see the launch of the Sefton Council page on Nextdoor, a hyper local social media site. The team are also finalising the rollout of e-shot, the new email marketing system which will replace Merseynow. The team has worked on many high profile campaigns and projects, such as the launch of the new Southport Market, plans for Bootle Canalside and town centre, Sefton Coastal Partnership summer campaign, and Pride.

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. The team are progressing the implementation of a new data warehouse and analytics reporting platform for the Council. They are also working closely with Children's Social Care to review performance management for the service following the recent Ofsted focussed visit. 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 supporting with a range of projects as part of Demand Management and market management, ensuring that services are available to meet statutory needs, this includes Day Opportunities, Supported Living, Domiciliary Care and Care homes alongside children's placements. This is 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 surge testing and supporting the Outbreak Management Board. The team leads on the promotion and use of accessible information and has arranged further workshops for Members. As part of the support provided to the Demand Management programme of work, the team has been providing project support to Adult Social Care for Day Opportunities and Supported Living developments. The team is also involved in the development of a programme of activities to support our Foster Care families, including outdoor activities with Green Sefton and linking with other service areas to create opportunities.