

**CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) -**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Period of Report</b>
Marion Atkinson	Cabinet Member Regeneration and Skills	March 2022

**INVESTSEFTON UPDATE**

**Summary**

InvestSefton's key area of focus for the past 20 months has been the development, delivery and disbursement of emergency business grant funding from Government Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) which are summarised in this report. At the start of the pandemic InvestSefton also supported business rates by handling 2,140 telephone enquiries for a six- week period to allow the Revenues team to expedite grant support. Since April 2020 Sefton Council has made 23,147 grant payments to 22,848 business recipients totalling £97,613,018

Further ARG has been allocated to the Liverpool City Region for a new grant scheme titled 'Trading On' to help support small-medium sized businesses (10-249 employees). Sefton's allocation is £1,438,890.58 has now been fully expended with grants awarded to 96 businesses.

A further £336,185 ARG has also been allocated and an additional grant window was opened for two weeks ending 7 February 2023. Over 300 applications were received, and appraisals are ongoing.

InvestSefton has continued to provide business support during the pandemic through its external funded programmes with enquires reaching unprecedented levels alongside website visits which have surpassed 52,000. The team has also handled over 4,800 enquiries.

The LCR ERDF Business Growth Programme has been approved for a project extension from 1 January 2022-30 June 2023 by the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities . The legal process is currently being firmed up. The ERDF Place Marketing for Investment Project has also been approved.

Inward Investment has also been secured most notably in Bootle through Mersey Reach and Atlantic Park while the team has supported Southport Town Deal and Southport Business Park activities. Other investment and expansion enquiries remain ongoing and active.

The team is now beginning to return to 'business as usual' activities as part of the Economic Growth & Housing service's Recovery plan. This will help with transitioning work which is being planned as part of the wider review of the Sefton Economic Strategy for summer 2022. The team have begun face to face events for businesses and Business Advisers are also meeting customers on site which is also encouraging.

## Covid business Grants

### Trading On Scheme

The Business Grants team is currently delivering the ARG Trading On Scheme. This is **£1,438,890.58** grant programme for Sefton businesses for small or medium-sized businesses, with between 10 and 249 employees

Update as of 10 February 2022:

Total no of applications	125
Rejections/Transfers /Withdrawals	29
Ready for Payment/Approved	96

All checks completed approved applications banded into a matrix to determine grant levels on a broad LCR basis based on job no's.; financial losses and commercial property costs. Sefton has now defrayed its entire allocation of £1,438,890.58 with grant payments reaching business accounts by 14<sup>th</sup> February.

### LCR ARG 3 Scheme

The Government has provided Sefton Council, and other neighbouring local authorities in the Liverpool City Region, with further Additional Restrictions Grant payments (ARG3). This fund is to support businesses severely impacted by the rise of the Omicron variant and will be allocated to those businesses most in need, in particular those in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors.

Sefton Council's ARG3 allocation is **£336,185**. The Council anticipates high demand for ARG3 grant funding, therefore it could not guarantee that all applications received during the grant window would be approved for a grant payment i.e., the ARG3 grant scheme is not intended to support all businesses that have been impacted by the Omicron variant. For the avoidance of doubt, the ARG3 grant is intended for businesses that are ineligible for the Omicron Hospitality & Leisure grant (OHLG) which is being delivered Council's Business Rates team.

In determining the criteria of this grant scheme, the Council has had to balance defraying the small allocation of funding within the shortest period and supporting those businesses that can evidence being most impacted by the Omicron variant.

The scheme opened on 25 January and closed on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022. ARG 3 allocations are limited and applications were dealt with on a first come first served basis. Grant levels have been agreed at LCR level:

£1,0000-Home based businesses

£3,000-Businesses in commercial premises (but not eligible for Omicron Grant)

Update below as of 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022:

Total Number of Applications	309
Stage One	207
Rejections/ Transfers/ Withdrawals	77
Ready for Payment/ Approved	25

Full details on all Covid schemes can be viewed at:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/business/business-rates/covid-19-business-support-for-202021-202122/>

The Business Grant and Business Rates teams are working closely to ensure we meet our government deadlines in February and March to ensure all monies are fully expended.

## Business engagement

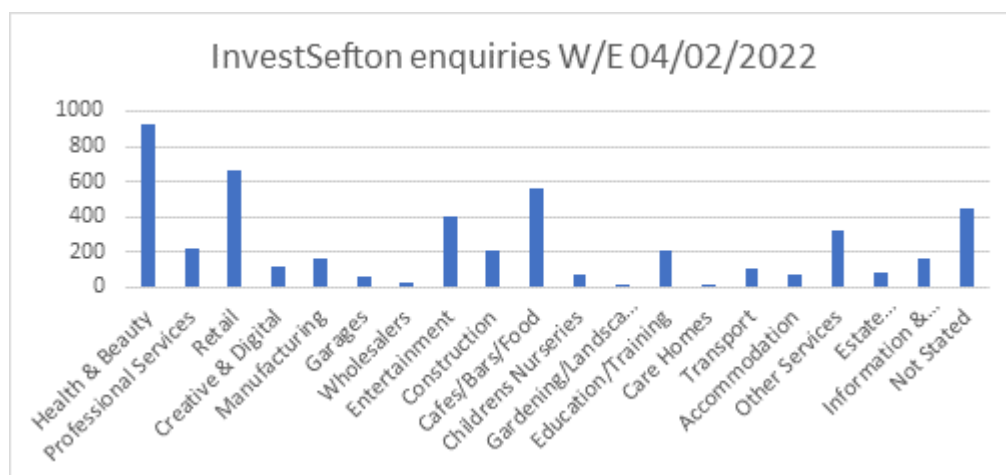
### Website

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. Since the site has gone live (Monday 30th March 2020) until Thursday 3rd February 2022, it has received 52,172 unique sessions. From Friday 28th January 2022 to Thursday 3rd Feb 2022 the website has had 344 sessions.

The top two visited pages were financial support and starting a business. The top five countries of origin accessing the website are as follows: UK (85.5%), US (7.6%), China (1.5%) Canada (0.9%) and Ireland (0.9%).

### 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 **4,833 enquiries** from a wide range of businesses. Breakdown by type of business is provided as of 4 February 2022.



*Of these, 1,767 were in connection with business premises, starting a business, rates and business grant payments/ongoing business support through the pandemic. The remaining 3,066 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.*

Recent case studies below; business names have been anonymised:

**Murder Mystery weekends-Crosby**-owner invented the interactive murder mystery concept in 1981 and received an M.B.E. for the huge boost to tourism that she has achieved. The business performs mystery murder weekends all over the country but like most businesses during lockdown suffered financially through loss of business. InvestSefton has supported the owner by advising on access to finance including Covid Grant support and the team recently received the following message from the business "I know this isn't exactly the thing to do, but I just wanted to say a genuine 'thank you so

*much', for your help thus far. We have received two small grants from Sefton and a small grant for help with marketing a new business"*

**Litherland Based US and novelty sweet retailer and wholesaler.** The business sells a wide variety of sweets, desserts and soft drinks taking orders in person and online and delivering throughout the Merseyside area. Stock is sourced throughout the UK to find products not sold by immediate competitors. Due to the pandemic the split of sales from in person to online has fluctuated and the business is now reviewing its model to identify areas of growth potential. InvestSefton supported the business by reviewing their website and providing recommendations for SEO improvement as well as supporting the business to apply for ARG grant funding.

**HR Consultancy based in a Business Centre in Maghull.** Customers include Local Government, schools, academies, call centres, hospitality and supply chain. The Company offers a range of HR and Business improvement services, including recruitment, absence management, performance management, conflict management and mental health & wellbeing. The Business is looking to source more business. InvestSefton supported the business by identifying specific sectors for targeted marketing including care providers and nurseries as well as helping with the development of a marketing flyer to specifically target SME's.

**Waterloo based nutrition business, providing support, consultations and nutritional strategies for clients based on scientific assessment of an individual's metabolic health.** The business operates from a private clinic in Waterloo or on site for group sessions with public sector/private organisations. The owner has a strong network of professional associates that they take referrals from and collaborates with but has reached a point where they need to review their business model in order to achieve further growth. InvestSefton has supported the business with developing a business plan as well as undertaking a managed referral to the New Markets programme to secure funding for digital marketing expenditure.

## **Inward Investment**

Inward Investment enquiries have seen an increase, although this continues to be focused on Industrial Space. The lack of a pipeline of supply remains a restraining factor on investment and growth. Nevertheless, the team is engaged in several confidential projects which, when more advanced and free of non-confidential agreements will be reported. Ongoing, non-confidential work includes:

- Mersey Reach Bootle-CNC Robotics has occupied a 12,133 sq ft unit following a recent relocation
- Southport Business Park- Ongoing work to support investment in the site. Work with interested local end users and developers. No 3 Southport Business Park (Former Paymentsfield House) – refurbishment works commenced to refurbish building in to a multi-let space. Working with agent and landlord to attract investment/occupiers.
- Santander – 15,000 sq ft of accommodation taken on a 10-year lease in Alaska House, Atlantic Park. Fit out to commence early November, with occupation early 2022.

## **Tourism**

### **Conferences**

Below is a summary of the opportunities that are being progressed, please note due to the closure of the Southport Theatre and Events Centre securing any form of major conference is extremely difficult.

Pursuing	12
Proposal submitted	1
Awaiting response	0
Won	1
Lost	6
Closed	9
Low Priority/Future contact requested	2
RFP	2

Lions Club and Ladies Aglow have committed to requests for proposals for their events in Spring 2023, Further contact has been made with them since the festive break period and activities to progress their bids continue. Both events are approximately 500 delegates for three nights and two nights respectively. These would be held in local hotels with the right conference space.

Ladies Aglow previously were considering October 2022 but after a board meeting with their members on 7<sup>th</sup> January they decided that there remains a cautious attitude to attending an in-person event so opted to request pricing and availability for Spring 2023.

- A workshop was hosted with the events staff from Britannia Prince of Wales and Royal Clifton. The workshop focussed on how Britannia hosting the biggest capacity venues have an opportunity to win business during the closure of the current Southport Theatre and Convention Centre (STCC) and the opening of the new entertainments, conference, and exhibition venue. It is also an opportunity for Britannia to change perception of their product and service by responding and delivering to exceed expectations. An action plan was drawn up to implement some key activities to improve their response to bids and a further meeting is to be confirmed with their group GM.
- Sustainability and Carbon Zero – We are currently working with Scott Mclean representing Green Business Tourism Association (GBTA) and Green Business Meetings (GBM). GBM have recently formed a partnership with Meetings Industry Association with a view to rolling out their accreditation across the country. Engagement with our respective partners to seek commitment is taking place.
- Business reviews are planned with some of the Guest Houses and a meeting with key Southport Hotels Association members took place to discuss the challenges of the coming year and how Meet Southport can best support them. Hospitality Southport which engages with the larger hotels will be meeting late February.

### **Destination Marketing**

**Christmas Campaign** – the Christmas campaign ran throughout December. Advertising to the local market was funded by Southport BID and included local radio, press ads and targeted digital activity. The regional campaign was funded via the ERDF. This included regional radio, Instream, 48 sheet digital displays, e-newsletter, VisitSouthport website, Facebook, Instagram and Google. It was generally felt that it was the best campaign we had run for some years and Marketing Southport and the BID look forward to developing this partnership further for Christmas 2022.

**Design Agency** – the contract for our Design & Campaign Management Agency was placed on The Chest in November and the contract for 2022 was awarded to Gingerhead.

**PR** – The tender for our agency went on The Chest in December. There were 11 submissions and after scoring Fido PR were selected. They have provided an initial calendar and activity schedule for the 2022-23 financial year. Discussions with them are ongoing.

**Visitor Guide** – the 2022 guide has been delivered to various national and local channels and distribution commenced at the beginning of February.

**Southport Restaurateurs Association** – The 2022 Eating Out Guide has been printed and is currently being delivered to the local distribution network (restaurants, attractions, accommodation providers etc.).

**E-newsletter** - Database stands at circa 50,000 with the addition of 2021 data and regular newsletters are sent to this audience.

**Travel Trade** – We continue to see enquiries from travel companies over recent weeks – requests for images for their 2022 guides, information requests regarding parking, drop-off points etc. Campaign planning for 2022 is underway in conjunction with our agency. Options being worked on are exhibitions, buyer familiarisation trip, advertising, e-newsletter and PR / editorial placement.

**Golf** – We are working with England's Golf Coast to manage the re-scheduling of overseas golf business. 2021 was a difficult year with travel restrictions across the world. However, on a positive note, most of the business has been rewritten into this year rather than lost. Sefton golf clubs and hoteliers are being extremely supportive in holding rates for the rescheduled business. Our main issue at present is the availability of tee times on the top courses for overseas groups.

**Marketing Southport** – membership currently stands at 107 (111 this time last year). We have lost several businesses (closures or COVID affecting cash flow so unable to afford membership fees).

## **Events**

### The Southport Food & Drink Festival (2<sup>nd</sup> June – 5<sup>th</sup> June)

- The closing date for applications is Friday 25<sup>th</sup> February. There has been a huge interest in the event.
- After the closing date, the applications will be assessed, and the successful companies will be contacted in due course.
- Due to the Jubilee celebrations and additional bank holiday's the event will span 4 days instead of the usual 3.

### Southport Air Show (9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> July)

- The Air Show tickets are now on sale. Changes for 2022 are that under 16's are free. There is also a new ticket allowing you to view the show from the Pier.
- Trader booking are starting to increase, and time will be spent contacting companies who have previously attended to see if they are booking for 2022.
- Procurement of infrastructure is taking place and quotes are being requested. Orders will be placed after the 1<sup>st</sup> April.
- The Armed Forces have been contacted regarding their involvement in the ground activity.
- An aircraft 'shopping list' is being pulled together by the Flying Display Director for consideration by the Events Team.
- Various ground attractions are being contacted and booked in.
- The Air Show is in July this year due to tide times.

### The British Musical Fireworks Championship (23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July)

- 7 competitors have now been confirmed for 2022.
- Infrastructure is being secured and quotes obtained.
- Tickets will be on sale shortly

We are also working with The European Tour with regards to the Cazoo Classic that will take place at Hillside Golf Course on the 21<sup>st</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> July.

## **Tourism Operations**

### **Southport Market**

- Southport Market performed strongly over the Christmas period. The market closed for a two-week period after the festive season, giving the chefs and serving staff a two-week break.
- The Market continues to evolve, and the offer refine, recently the market has seen a new children's play area/shed installed along with delivery of a new outdoor seating area ready to accommodate up to 100 customers
- A new independents market has now commenced to complement the monthly maker's market. An Arts Market along with Flower Market will also commence from April.

### **Southport Theatre and Convention Centre**

- The STCC will be mothballed over the next couple of months, this will minimise the costs of services, gas, electric etc. We will also take the opportunity of making the building safe against illegal entry.
- Work has started to remove the ceiling in the theatre due to the high risk of it collapsing.

### **Southport Pier**

- After going out to tender, we expect the contract to replace the pier decking to be awarded imminently. The decking will take several years to complete due to the size and cost of the project.
- At the request of Sefton's insurers, we are looking at the viability of CCTV and gates on the pier, we continue to work with our colleagues in Planning and Sefton Arc to bring this request to fruition if we can secure the finances and planning permissions.

### **Marine Lake Events Centre**

- The Design team have been appointed to take the scheme through to completion. AFL Architects who have vast experience in event centre design have been appointed.
- Both the procurements for Civils and Mechanics have been completed, AECOM have been appointed for both services. AECOM did the initial work up to stage 2
- Meetings with Water and Light Show companies have taken place to understand the services in more detail. Procurement to commence shortly.

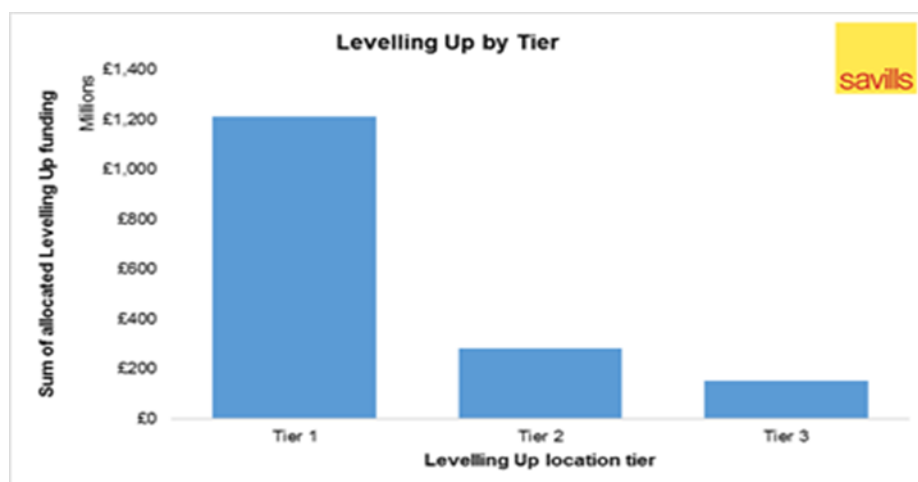
- CBRE have been appointed as Planning and Heritage consultants, the same team that worked on the new Everton stadium with WSP being appointed as transport advisors
- Procurement for Environmental advisors is underway via The Chest along with a number of other services and surveys
- The Operator Procurement is also underway, this process will take 5-7 months to complete
- Meetings with other LA's have taken place to understand best practice and lessons learnt

## **GROWTH & INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATES**

### **LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER**

The Levelling Up White paper was issued by DLUCH in February 2022. [Link here: [Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom)] There has been no corresponding announcement yet on new funding allocation to support delivery however further announcements are anticipated including the emerging Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)

It is anticipated there will be a further round of Leveling Up Funding in 2022. It is not clear yet when the prospectus will be issued or what categorisation/criteria will be used. The Levelling Up White Paper provides some clarity on the main areas of focus for the Government. Informal feedback on Sefton's Round 1 bids advised strong bids were submitted clearly identifying strategic fit, deliverability and value for money. The graph below shows where the funds were directed in terms of Category Tiers 1-3 priority. (Sefton was in Tier 3).



## **SEFTON GROWTH AND INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**

### **Welcome Back Fund (DLUCH)**

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. Events and activity associated with attracting people back into the town centres, making them more attractive and safer has been the main focus of the fund.



Welcome Back Fund has supported a number of activities:

- Support to develop an action plan for safe reopening of local economies;
- Communications and public information relating to public safety messaging;
- Business-facing awareness raising activities and guidance.
- Temporary public realm changes to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.
- Support for a safe public environment for Sefton's visitor economy.
- Events and activities to encourage visitors back to the High Street.

All funds have to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 so this programme is nearing its end.

## **BOOTLE TOWN CENTRE**

**Bootle Strand** –The Council is driving forward plans for a repurposed Strand Shopping Centre following completion of key acquisition and site clearance work including :

**Strand Transformation** – work is ongoing to explore options for repurposing the Strand. This will look at the future development options and operational arrangements for this key town centre asset and help inform member consideration of the best approach to take to optimise this key town centre asset, to aid town centre recovery and regeneration.

**Bootle Canalside** - Work is progressing to complete the semi-permanent Bootle Canalside event and activity space. Following the successful August Bank Holiday event and recent Christmas themed family event linking with local schools and community groups, further consultation and engagement on use of this site is ongoing. The Bootle Canalside pop-up provided a taster launch of the area concept and the Christmas event was used as a further opportunity for feedback on the use of this key site next to the canal and included involvement of local primary school children who came down to the site for a pre-Christmas event.

## **SOUTHPORT**

### **Southport Town Deal**

Following the Southport Town Deal allocation of £37.5m work is progressing to finalise detailed business case approval in accordance with the Town Deal requirements. These will go to Cabinet for consideration in March 2022 for the next phase of projects in the £37.5M programme:

- Enterprise Arcade
- Les Transformation de Southport (Public Realm enhancement)
- Building a Better Customer Experience

The Business Case for Marine Lake Events Centre will be submitted later this year as agreed with DLUCH.

Programme Management includes development of a monitoring and evaluation plan for programme delivery and output measurement reporting to Government for the Town Deal programme. Following the Business Case approval these will be submitted to Government for approval later in 2022.

### **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. In particular 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, 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 were seen as a way to optimise the building's unique architectural form and presence in the town centre whilst at the same time signaling change, creating a sense of place, generating additional footfall and encouraging diversity. The £1.4m refurbishment and repurposing of this key town centre facility is now complete, trading well and receiving positive feedback from customers and visitors to the area. Significant trade has been noted following its opening and adjacent vacant premises become occupied since its opening. addition.

### **5.3 The Enterprise Arcade, Southport**

Linked to para 5.1, refurbishment of one of Southport's central town centre buildings next to Southport Market for a new business hub. This will be the first ever purpose-built workspaces for start-up creative and digital businesses in Southport. In October Cabinet approved plans to transform the Crown Buildings in Southport town centre into a high tech, collaborative and affordable workspace for small businesses, dubbed the 'Enterprise Arcade.' Forming part of the Southport Town Deal, £1.5 million has been earmarked for the regeneration and transformation of Crown Buildings, eventually creating a purpose built hub for individuals, freelancers, enterprises, and independent professionals who are taking their first steps into setting up their own business.

The Enterprise Arcade project is a key project within the Southport Town Deal programme to kickstart the previously untapped digital, creative and technological sectors within the resort.

Press release can be seen here: [Exciting Enterprise Hub plans revealed for historic Southport building - My Sefton News Channel](#)

## **CROSBY**

### **CROSBY TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION**

Levelling Up funding bid was unsuccessful however feedback from Government was encouraging and did not discount further effort in this regard. The Levelling Up White Paper was published 2/2/22 awaiting a prospectus for a round 2 call for project expected later this year.

2021 Stakeholder engagement and consultation complete and a summary report and feedback will be presented to Consultation and Engagement Panel at next opportunity. Turnout was good for both the stakeholder and "drop-In event" in addition to c. 550 responses to the online questionnaire.

Central Buildings site development by Plus Dane for a mixed residential and commercial scheme is anticipated to start in early 2022.

## **CROSBY LAKESIDE**

Crosby Lakeside refurbishment continues with a new contractor following termination of the previous contractor due to failure of the contractor to perform. This has however been quickly addressed and procurement of a new contractor has taken place and a revised programme for delivery being is underway. A revised delivery programme is awaited for this scheme and a further update will be issued in the new year. The Sefton Council hospitality company (Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited) is in place to oversee the fit out and ongoing facility hospitality management once complete. Ongoing work on lake management and cycle path improvements and highway works has also taken place this year.

## **AINSDALE ON SEA**

### **Ainsdale Coastal Gateway**

Green Sefton consultation and engagement on Ainsdale Beach Gateway improvements completed and outcome being analysed, and report prepared. Planning application for beach Concessions has been submitted and is due for decision shortly. Beach Hut Petition (Boroughwide) presented to Full Council November 21 and decision made to progress with further expressions of interest. Toad Hall Artwork complete and receiving great coverage and exceptionally positive reviews. More positive media coverage continues and information sign in place. Tender for refurbishment of existing toilets being prepared and basic refurbishment due to start soon. Planning application for car park changes submitted and registered.

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

Following member agreement to acquire leasehold interests in this centre to bring it into full Council ownership, negotiations have continued throughout the pandemic period and through 2021 and a number of properties have now been secured. The Council are exploring options for this centre once in Council ownership including how it can support the wider neighbourhood. Consultation on site development options took place in 2021 with Cabinet and Local Ward Councilors, which has helped inform the option appraisal for this site which is being assessed.

### **Cambridge Road Sefton Community Learning Centre**

Following approval in 2020 for Skills Capital Funding from LCRCA, work is almost completed on the refurbishment of this key adult learning facility which will provide enhanced access to training and skills resources for out of work residents or those wishing to retrain.

The investment has helped to improve the learning environment for users of the Cambridge Road facility, making better use of the space and reducing the operating costs for Sefton Council. Investment in this Grade II Listed building has resulted in the 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. 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 watertight. This will improve the energy efficiency of the building and reduce running costs. Work is anticipated to complete at the end of December on the first phase of refurbishment work.

## **Employment And Learning Overview and Scrutiny February 2022**

### **European Structural Funding**

Sefton@work is currently delivering two Esf projects. The main funding stream is through the LCR Ways to Work project to provide a broad-based employment offer for workless residents regardless of their benefit status, and the other is a more focused project called positive Inclusions which targets specific disadvantaged groups.

Cessation of European structural funds will occur at the end of 2023. With the extension of ESF for the LCR Ways to Work project now in place, this will allow Sefton@work to continue the provision to workless adults aged over 16 through to the autumn of 2023. Positive Inclusions will complete in December 2022.

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**

The government has recently published its initial guidance on these funds which will be distributed via Mayoral combined authorities. Shared Prosperity funding was intended to provide a replacement for European structural funds for those areas which accessed it. The working assumption on the level of funding available for UKSPF is approximately £60m over 3 years. This will not cover the entirety of the ESF provision across the city region, so competition for funding is likely. Clarification of the offer provided under ESF will be extremely important to inform dialogue with government

### **Sefton@work**

#### **General Performance Data January 2022**

NB these data may not be as comprehensive as usual due to the ongoing implementation of the Aptem CRM system and the exportation of cases from the system previously in use. Data will be validated once this process is complete.

<b>Data Description</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Figures</b>	
Total Clients accessing service	Since 01/01/2016	4430	
New Clients accessing service	January 2022	55	
New clients registering by age	January 2022	16-24	14
		25-49	29
		50+	12
New Registrations – NEET 16 - 25 1.3 clients only	January 2022	5	
W2W contracts Male	Since 01/01/16	54.5%	
	January 2022	51.8%	
W2W contracts Female	Since 01/01/16	45.5%	
	January 2022	48.1%	
Positive Inclusions Male	Since 01/01/21	72.2%	
	January 2022	100.0%	
Positive Inclusions Female	Since 01/01/21	27.8%	
	January 2022	0.0%	
ESF clients with Disabilities/Health Conditions	Since 01/01/2016	1,412	
	January 2022	13	
ESF clients without basic skills	Since 01/01/2016	1,340	
	January 2022	17	
Supporting Families (new project replacing	All months	15	

Turnaround)		
People leaving the programme (into jobs/self-emp/training)	Since 01/01/2016	W2W & PI 1,635 200 Other programmes <b>Total 1,835</b>
Ways to Work Starts	Since 01/01/2016 January 2022	4,221 32
Positive Inclusions Starts	Since 01/01/2021 January 2022	72 4

### **Social Care Sector Workforce response**

Discussion have been ongoing with Adult Social Care teams to respond to the social care workforce crisis. The Council is in receipt of some funding to develop local responses to this problem. Sefton@work and Sefton Adult Learning have produced a menu of options which are being considered currently. Activities could include a survey conducted among social care employers about their recruitment methods, engagement with individual jobseekers about their attitudes and perceptions of the sector, jobs fairs with participating employers, training routeway for the sector or a workforce mentoring scheme to promote retention among new entrants.

### **Restart**

Sefton@work continues to deliver the Restart offer for clients referred in by JobCentreplus. Provision is going well, with all job & engagement targets met but the forecasted numbers of clients have not met expectations and the rate of referrals remain low. Almost no referrals of young people have been made to Restart, despite the high rates of youth unemployment. We expect this will change once the Kickstart scheme is wound up.

### **Positive Inclusions**

This project which has a stream targeting younger vulnerable people under 25 and another stream for older jobseekers over the age of 50. In common with all the other projects, the participation of young people remains lower than expected. A range of new engagement methods are being deployed to reverse this trend and new referral pathways with the Leaving Care team have been put in place. Sefton@work is also participating in Sefton's NEET Case Conferencing process, which promote collaboration across a wide range of agencies and providers.

### **Kickstart**

The government's Kickstart scheme will close for new entrants shortly, with last starts on the programme needing to be made before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022. We expect the last starts on the scheme for the Council will be for new trainees within the Employment & Learning team, to be deployed in client engagement and reception duties, social media and marketing and a trainee information/advisory role.

### **Sefton Adult Learning Service**

Figures for this year are better than the same point in 2021, so the trend is a positive one and staff are constantly engaging new methods to market courses to potential learners, despite the reticence of many to come back to learning. Figures for the month of January since 2018/19 are compared below:

**Sefton Adult Learning  
Performance update  
Year to Date Comparison**

	Target	18/19 1st Aug to 1st Jan	20/21 1st Aug to 1st Jan	21/22 1st Aug to 1st Jan
Total number of learners	2000	902	346	704
Total number of unique learning aims	2940	1218	518	896

Curriculum area	Learners			Learning Aims		
	18/19	20/21	21/22	18/19	20/21	21/22
01-Health, Public Services and Care	7	10	266	7	11	276
02-Science and Mathematics	8	0	0	8	0	0
03-Agriculture, Horticulture ad Animal Care	0	46	75	0	50	76
06-Information and Communication Technology	141	11	59	175	11	98
07-Retail and Commercial Enterprise	75	15	13	93	15	19
08-Leisure, Travel and Tourism	56	0	0	62	0	0
09-Arts, Media and Publishing	277	62	97	295	69	128
10-History, Philosophy and Theolog	0	16	23	0	16	23
11-Social Sciences	0	0	7	0	0	7
12-Languages, Literature and Culture	53	47	28	54	53	29
13-Education and Training	26	12	4	26	12	4
14.1-Foundation for Learning and Life	123	119	140	149	203	198
14.2-Preparation for Work	290	64	34	349	78	38

### Current Performance Highlights at 10/02/22

**729** learners have enrolled onto total number of **1075** courses since August 2021

**726** learners have completed Community Learning on 1005 courses. This reflects the comparatively greater demand for non-accredited learning at this time, and the prevalence of craft and wellbeing courses being offered throughout the Christmas period.

**66** Learners have completed qualifications since August 21, who have enrolled onto **70** qualifications

Curriculum Managers are currently planning our summer curriculum the deadline for this is 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022. The focus is on developing more qualifications to rebalance the service's offer.

**142** courses have been cancelled since the beginning of the academic year August 2021

Recruitment Interviews for Site Coordinator and Community Learning Officer posts are in progress and should be concluded shortly.

Recruitment of sessional tutors remains an ongoing challenge, particularly for Maths and English delivery. This issue is a common challenge across all Adult Learning and vocational training provision and is proving difficult in the current climate.

## NEET REDUCTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICE UPDATE

We are now in the process of collecting the Activity Survey from all schools, 50% have responded to date. This piece of work identifies Year 11 destinations for September this year and it highlights those young people who may be at risk of NEET and require additional support to assist them in making informed choices. Some schools have yet to respond, and these will be chased up within the next few weeks. In Sefton we aim to complete this exercise much earlier than the national deadline for completion (end May) to allow us to identify the groups to be supported and devise appropriate early interventions as quickly as possible in the academic year.

### CURRENT PERFORMANCE

- At **3.07%** the Sefton NEET and Not Known combined indicator for 16 and 17 year olds has decreased by **-0.51%** in comparison to January 2021
- In comparison to Sefton's 10 statistical neighbours, December 2021's performance showed that we had the lowest NEET & Not Known combined indicator
- Sefton's actual NEET had decreased by **0.91%** since January 2021
- Sefton's actual NEET had reduced year on year in the 16-17 age group by **-0.48%**
- NEET clients in Sefton are spending on average 11 days less NEET than in January 2021

### Performance against LCR partners, statistical neighbours, and North-West

- Sefton is ranked the lowest in the LCR NEET and Not Known for 16-17
- Sefton Statistical Neighbour 16-17 NEET and Not Known % (ranked 1st for lowest % in both 2020 and 2021)
- At **3%** for NEET and Not Known, this is the lowest recorded performance for Sefton
- December 21 performance is **-2.4%** below Northwest and **-2.3%** below the national average
- **30%** of the 16-17 year old NEET and Not Known clients are in a vulnerable group (51 out of 170)
- At **0.6%**, Sefton's Not Known has remained the same year on year. This is **-1.8%** below the regional average of **2.4%**
- On February 16, the current NEET is 279, a reduction of 94 young people from February 2021 (370)

### NEET CASE CONFERENCING MODEL

The NEET Case Conferencing Model was set up as a task group from the Post 16 Partnership Group. Its main aim is to bring together a range of internal and external partners to target and plan around some of Sefton's most vulnerable young people who are not in education, employment, or training and as a group, identify creative and innovative solutions to support a successful transition into EET.

The group has met 8 times and have received 20 referral cases. Of the 20, we have achieved 12 positive outcomes, 1 client has now moved out of the area, 5 are still NEET (2 of these have health problems) and 2 are new cases which are now being actioned.

The core members of the group include representatives from:

- Local Authority Reps – Lead officers working across all Vulnerable Groups
- Career Connect – Chair

- Sefton@Work
- Colleges
- Training Providers
- Health
- Alternative Provision
- Schools Career Leads
- Family Support – Early Help

Some additional positive outcomes through this group in addition to the practical support for our young NEET clients have included:

- Sharing best practice
- Increased partnership working and ease of referrals across agencies
- Identifying gaps and themes to support NEET and 'at risk of NEET'
- Identification of pathways and training opportunities at Post 16
- Improved Information Sharing on new opportunities

### **Intensive Case loading of Young people with experience of Care across Employment & Learning Services**

We are currently undertaking an in-depth review of the support Sefton@Work, Sefton Adult Learning and Career Connect, through the NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service are offering to our NEET LAC/Care Leavers. This is still in its early stages but will help us to understand the barriers and obstacles some young people face which may be preventing them from entering into EET. This enables us to understand what additional vulnerable groups they may be linked to, the type of accommodation they currently live in, where they went to school, what level of qualifications they have and what vocational areas they are interested in should they be in a position to engage with us in the future.

### **LCR CARE LEAVERS task group**

Prompted by the LCR Employment & skills Portfolio holders group, this Task Group represents the 6 LAs and its scope will include:

- Establish common data sets across all Councils, to improve outcomes of NEET young people living out of area
- Identify what more can be done to support housing needs of Care leavers
- Engage with broader range of organisations and people for whom the corporate parenting duty is not mandatory.
- Identify reasons for inactivity and solutions to address these challenges
- Consider what further travel support could be provided for these young people
- Identify how care leavers can be helped to move on from their first job and progress in work
- Consider how to make ringfenced opportunities available within our own organisations; and



- Identify how social value obligations from a wider range of providers, contracts and stakeholders can be optimised for the benefit of young people with experience of care leavers

## Positive Inclusion Case Studies -

Name of participant – AB

### **Brief overview of participant (including their background, barriers to employment, reason for registering with the project):**

Client was initially referred by Parenting 2000 and first presented to our outreach service. She is under the treatment of her GP and specialist services for extreme social anxiety. She is awaiting the results of an ASD test herself and is the mother of an autistic child who has transitioned to secondary school whilst we have been working with Client.

During our work with client her daughter has begun to receive support at home from CAMHS and several other organisations relating to safeguarding issues that she has disclosed.

AB wanted to move forward with her life and reach her full potential, setting an example for her children about the importance of education and eventual employment.

### **Summary of support provided by the project:**

Despite a fraught and distressing set of circumstances, client has worked with us to apply for, enrol and participate in a number of courses at her local FE college. Despite numerous issues at home and admitting she can be overwhelmed by deadlines set by tutors for handing in assignments etc, she has participated fully in her learning programme and produced work to a good standard and in a timely manner.

Client is finishing a level 2 course in autism awareness this month and moving on to a related L2 in understanding specific learning difficulties. We helped facilitate the latter course as it appears upon examination to provide the best foundation for AB's goal of undertaking a full level 3 diploma in SEN in the next academic year and progressing to allow her to progress to a teaching assistant role in SEN schools.

As an incentive for AB and to give her something to aspire to, while dealing with her current circumstances, we have looked at some of our current SEN TA roles to give her a flavour of what the work might look like and its availability.

### **Positive results/impacts on the participant as a result of their participation on the Positive Inclusion Programme:**

AB is working towards higher qualifications and career goals. She is better plugged into a network of support able to appreciate her personal circumstances. AB is aware she is on a long journey to overcome a range of anxiety issues but she seems to present as more confident at meetings with her advisers as she is more relaxed, more talkative and is better able to ask for particular help and articulate next steps.

Despite challenging personal circumstances relating both to her closest family and her own long-term, ongoing difficulties with anxiety, AB has stuck valiantly to her journey plan. Not only has she sustained engagement with the programme, but she has also met all her milestones in a positive and timely fashion.

AB presents as much more confident currently than she did at initial interview. AB's journey presented her with many challenges, including walking through the door to first meet us, building courage to disclose sensitive information to us, being willing to talk about her dreams and ambitions, dealing assertively with other agencies which were all very difficult for her. AB's journey plan then presented a second tier of challenges including producing work around ongoing family life, speaking to lecturers and course leaders and making friends with her own learner group.

It is a tribute to AB's new found self- belief about her career path that she has met these challenges and continues to build on them.

**Name of participant – AAH**

**Brief overview of participant (including their background, barriers to employment, reason for registering with the project):**

AAH is of Somali heritage and graduated as a social worker in the UAE five years ago. Client is an asylum seeker here in Sefton and has recently been granted permission to work in the UK. AAH presented to Sefton@Work to access help applying to register as a social worker in England. AAH's doctor had referred him to the Sefton Social Prescribing team as there were concerns about his mental health. The Social Prescribing Team asked for Sefton@Work's support.

After assessment, Sefton@Work agreed to support the Client through his social work registration process with the profession's regulatory body for Social Workers. This has included Sefton@Work financially funding the scrutiny fee that is mandatory for overseas applicants to pay to register. The registration process itself is, of necessity, thorough and relatively complex. The Client has required support and guidance throughout the registration process from his Advisor at Sefton@Work. Sefton@Work was also able to certify all the Client's documents for his application.

To support our Client, Sefton@Work has consistently liaised with the regulatory body directly as well as a network of other agencies such as Asylum Link, Refugee Action, City Hearts and the social prescriber team.

Currently the Client is working with Asylum Link to complete his supervised training hours to finalise his application as a social worker. Our client is now able to provide translation and interpretation for new asylum seekers accessing these services and it is expected he will have completed all his prescribed hours toward finalising his registration within three months.

**Summary of support provided by the project:**

Supervised the complete application/registration with social work England.

Provided funding for application- £495.00

Legally certified all relevant documents for application.

Liaised with social prescriber, Asylum Link, Refugee Action and all relevant agencies.

**Positive results/impacts on the participant as a result of their participation on the Positive Inclusion Programme:**

AAH was originally sent to his social prescriber due to depression and low mood he fell into as a result of being unable to use his skills and knowledge and make a contribution to the society which he feels is allowing him a fresh start in life. His relations with others had been severely affected and lack of social contact was exacerbating these symptoms, as there were no apparent answers for him to move forward. Depression, as described by the prescriber, would be a perfectly rational response to AAH's circumstances upon presentation. However, this condition now seems to have improved and medication reduced. AAH says he feels more positive and optimistic about his circumstances as he has been able to seriously work towards his legitimate longer-term goals (ie. to be a social worker registered to work in the UK, be economically active and independent financially, and to participate in society) with help and support.