

## CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) – 8 March 2022

COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Ian Moncur	Health and Well Being	February 2022

### Green Sefton

Overall: Green Sefton

- The 2021 Annual Review, was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny (Regeneration and Skills) meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November, and provides an update on the progress of Green Sefton's establishment and development, its operational delivery over the last year, and sets the strategic work programme for the coming year, all in line with the Service Vision 2030, and Service Plan.
- Visitor Action Plan: to address excess visitors seen on the coast in recent times, and taking forward the successful pilots from 2020. See here: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/4375/coast-visitor-action-plan-2021.pdf>. A review is ongoing, led by the Cabinet Member Reference Group, to consider resources and actions for future years which is to be discussed/ agreed at Budget Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> March.
- Coast Plan sub strategies development, incl Position Statement production to summarise the vision, and progress to date on the delivery of the Coast Plan, see here: [Sefton Coast Plan Visioning Position Statement 2021](#)
- Coastal Gateways mapping sessions have taken place for all four gateways; Crosby, Formby, Ainsdale and Southport, which require a final edit/workshop with partners from the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership (SCLP), and then presentation to Cabinet Member to consider masterplanning and next steps.
- Climate Emergency Action Plan; particular actions re: offsetting and other aspects specific to Green Sefton. Overall summary statement was shared as part of the COP26 agenda, see here: [Green Sefton Archives - Page 2 of 15 - My Sefton News Channel](#) three articles are listed on this page; for strategic land use development with partner agencies, for launching our Business Supporter scheme, for monitoring coastal change and climate, and for our 'managed for nature' initiative.
- Our 'place based' strategy remains in development.
- Re-looking at time management; to make sure we focus on the right things at the right time – see workload matrix within the Annual Review document and presentations.

These are now shared with me on a regular basis (service wide, and team by team, and individual officers now use them in their monthly 1:1 meetings with line managers).

- Internal Working Groups continue to develop – (incl the various strands for developing income and growth, information and intelligence, systems of working, health and safety etc).

More detail on all of the above, and our prioritised work programme, has been summarised again in an Annual Review newsletter, which includes links to a 2 minute headlines short film, and a narrated version of the main presentation, see here: [Green Sefton](#).

Further, officers are more than happy to discuss any of the issues as requested.

In summary, key ongoing issues headlines are as follows, split into the three service areas of Green Sefton:

#### Green Sefton; Development:

- There haven't been any flood events or storm events of note over the last period.
- The Local Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy is due to be adopted by the Council in early March after being recommended for approval by Cabinet in early February.
- The detailed design for the Pool Project is underway and feasibility and affordability will be assessed in March.
- Rainbow Drive – development works are ongoing with ward members to deliver a multi-use games area in 2022, following consultation undertaken pre-pandemic
- Bootle Driving Range – construction is complete and opened to the public with a 'soft launch' at the end of January 2022 with positive feedback to date. A more formal opening will take place early Spring. It is worth noting that this was constructed from using a new self-funding business case model.
- Ainsdale gateway short term improvements – the Toad Hall artwork completed in late summer 2021. The successful trail of pop-up high quality food and drink concessions at Ainsdale and Crosby is to be followed up in 2022 with longer term arrangements to be tendered asap. Officers are progressing with design work for the off-beach car park improvements at Ainsdale and initial scoping of toilet improvements – both have been hampered by much increased cost estimates, which will slow down progress. Planning application for the car park has been submitted however, and officers remain hopeful for these works to be completed during 2022/23.
- Successful bid to Historic England to undertake repairs to Hesketh Park Conservatory during 2021. Consultation has been completed for the future development of Hesketh Park, following a legacy fund being gifted in a will.

The outcome of this is to be shared with me as Cabinet Member, with formal approval of the resulting scheme, early in 2022.

- Successful bid to Veolia Environment Trust for major redevelopment of Runnels Lane Park in Thornton.
- Binastructure funding secured from WRAP– 48 new bigger litter bins have been installed across Sefton in parks and greens spaces including communication campaign to combat litter.
- Surface Water Management Plan – final amendments to reports for Formby and Maghull.
- Working with Highways to seek opportunities to deliver highways drainage schemes where flood risk to properties can be reduced, with funding allocated for the next 5 years.
- Working with Mersey Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency to seek options to slow the flow and improve water quality to Melling Brook.
- FCERM have updated their pages on Sefton.gov.uk to make the information available easier to find and more accessible.
- In discussions with United Utilities to secure 300k match funding to undertake some interim works along the Crosby Coast where erosion is continuing and the sea wall is failing, to bide time until funding is secured to deliver a major coastal defence scheme to the section of coast most at risk.
- Ainsdale Birkdale land drainage scheme has opened up watercourses through the Green Beach to allow free drainage of the surface water drainage systems.
- We have successfully recruited to the vacant shoreline management co-ordinator post who will be commencing employment with Sefton at the end of March.
- Continuing to work with risk management authorities to find solutions to alleviate flooding in Maghull, following storm Christoph and the publication of a statement of intent signed by all risk management authorities.
- Continuing to undertake routine inspections and maintenance to inland and coastal assets and undertake reactive works when necessary.
- The FCERM team worked with the Ecocentre and Edge Hill University to produce a series of short animations called 'coasts for kids'. The project has been successful in being shortlisted for a Liverpool City Region Culture and Creativity Award for the environmental sustainability category. The awards ceremony is the 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

### Green Sefton: Community and Resources

- A budget proposal is included for Budget Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> March to consider increasing the revenue budget allocated for management of the 55 play areas in the borough. Further updates on the allocation of this, and a forward planning style programme of works will be presented to me as Cabinet Member if approved.

- Storm Arwen resulted in a high volume of calls for fallen trees over the weekend of the 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November. Storm clear-up was significant, and the aftereffects will take more further time to respond to – over 100 call outs; mostly full trees and some reporting multiple trees. Sterling work from the Tree and Woodland team inspecting and responding through the night as the storm hit, plus the Council’s contractor, Ide Verde, making sure highways cleared promptly and trees made safe. Not to forget the wider Green Sefton team who have checked parks and carried out clearance and safety work where it was safe to do so.
- The Tree & Woodland team are now well into planting season, having secured funding for planting 270 standards and approx.1000 whips this season, linked to the Northern Forest, Trees for Climate and Queens Green Canopy projects. Several community groups and schools have already taken part in planting activity across the Borough.
- Development of a new Tree Management strategy is still in progress and will be shared for discussion early in 2022.
- Market testing of empty buildings and land opportunities, incl new concessions on the coast for summer 2021 has provided some new opportunities (see Dev Team above) and is continuing despite slow progress during the pandemic.
- Golf development - Bootle driving range now open, see above. Work on Southport Golf course development plans is moving forwards and will be reported to Cabinet for approval of next steps asap in 2022.
- Works for a new artificial football pitch at Orrell Mount Park (on Green Sefton land, but project managed by the Localities/ Communities team) are on hold pending further consultation in 2022. However, the upgrade works to the play area have been completed.
- Early work has begun on development/ refresh of a new Playing Pitch Strategy (led by Planning colleagues).
- Allotment strategy working group; consultation during July and August 2021 proved popular with over 800 participants – will help inform the long-term strategy development. A newsletter has been produced to update Allotmenters, with further development anticipated in 2022.
- Allotment viewings for new tenants restarted and plots are being re-let, helping to address waiting lists. A number of Allotment events were held in 2021 including clean up campaigns and intend to continue in 2022.
- Volunteers and group development strategy in progress, groups and volunteers returning to sites as restrictions ease, resulting in need update Volunteer Handbook early in 2022 – to set out and make clear what friends/ volunteers can expect from Green Sefton, and what we expect in return (including their behaviour to one another, and demands they place on our limited resources).
- Natural Alternatives expansion - halted during the pandemic, however numbers or participants starting to get back towards pre-pandemic levels. New hub opened at Botanic Gardens, incl growing fruit and veg, and consideration of hubs in the south of the borough ongoing. The Team have been supporting the High Park project, Ainsdale in Bloom and South Park hub, making and helping to install raised planters and supplying plants.
- ‘User-survey’ incl customer satisfaction, for parks and greenspaces and coast launched, ran until end of October 2021. Report due early in 2022.
- Northwest in Bloom and It’s Your Neighbourhood Judging 2021 took place despite Covid, results have all been good.

- Green Flag Award for Kings Gardens and Community Awards results have been released (all retained), and planning is in development for 2022.
- Friends Forum June 2021 remote meeting with support from SCVS identified concerns (esp standards of site maintenance) but was broadly positive. Next meeting planned for early 2022.
- Launch of Crosby Coastal Park Forum – new steering group in place and up and running incl assisting the service with leading a conversation about the future of Crosby promenade
- Community Ranger Team Activities / monitoring at a number of sites identified as having increased ASB – seasonal rise. Monthly site-visits, site inspections ongoing and Go Wild events in October half term.
- Rangers have planted 36,000 bulbs (Snowdrop, daffodil and bluebell) with 3 community groups and approx. 15 schools over Autumn 2021.
- Educational Strategy Development - school materials including; heritage, beachcombing and trees, Forest and Beach Schools available to book on the Schools portal - heritage educational project is 'complete' and sheets for Botanic Gardens / Hesketh Park and Derby Park are available for use online.
- Derby Park Memories Project completed with Green Sefton and Libraries with the Killen Family, which will form an interesting and unique background piece to support a wider funding bid for the park in due course
- Ranger activities have included Go Wild during Autumn half-term.
- Corporate Team volunteer activities have been supported by Community Rangers.
- National Campaign activities completed: KBT Dog-fouling, Spring Cleans, World Ocean's Day, World Environment Day, Love Parks Week. Further campaigns in the pipeline for 2022.
- PSPO for dog fouling in place and permanent signage installed.
- Partnership Work with Merseyside Police, MFRS Outreach Team, Adult Social Care continues.
- Business sponsorship scheme approved by the Cabinet Member and a 'soft launch' undertaken in November. The first sponsor has come forward to undertake a planting scheme in Moorside Park in October 2021, followed by wildflower planting in April 2022 in Victoria Park
- 'Binrastructure' school anti-litter campaign took place with 5 schools and relaunched in autumn 2021.
- Ambassadorial programme for the Coast continues with activities planned for winter. Supporting practical conservation tasks on the coast – with NMARG and Beach clean groups.
- Foster service coast walks; talks and activities to take place as there is planned programme until March 2022.
- Staff volunteering monthly events in place.
- Funding Support for community groups continues. New opportunities include Lottery and small grants aid at Climate Change mitigation and green recovery.
- Area/ ward funding has continued to support infrastructure improvements in parks, esp our public play facilities but the long term funding/ maintenance issues relating to play areas continues to be a concern.
- Leases - a number of lease renewals are being completed with support from colleagues in Legal and Estates.

- Concessions – income has been affected by the pandemic but there was some pick up over the summer, especially with the golf courses, and the team are working on new ideas (see development above).
- Sport and Recreation - Allocation of sports pitches for the 2021/22 season complete.

### Green Sefton: Land Management

- Staffing capacity remains a challenge. At times this Winter, circa 45% of operational staff have been unavailable (due to Covid, other sickness, bereavement, training and other reasons). There is little resilience within the service, and grave digging at the cemeteries and crematoria has been prioritised, meaning only basic maintenance/litter picking and bin emptying at best is being prioritised at remaining parks, coast and other sites.
- Resource issues also continued to be an issue throughout the summer with approximately 500+ days lost due to COVID or COVID related isolation episodes. This combined with a period of increased visitor activity and prolonged periods of good summer weather have been a real challenge. Litter, bin emptying and daily cleansing have for some teams taken priority over other routine maintenance tasks. In many locations our grass cutting schedules have reduced to up to 4 weeks between visits which has led to an increase in complaints.
- A proposal for 'normalising' some of the Visitor Action Plan activities has been included in the proposals to be considered at Budget Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and would assist in ongoing capacity during the summer months.
- The workload matrix and programming is assisting in prioritising works and agreeing the areas of focus. Also, an exercise is being undertaken to define the standards the team are able to provide on the ground, given the resources available in 2022.
- Green Sefton: Enterprise (our steps into the commercial world – bringing additional staffing and resource) The team have continued receive works and have increased the number of small contracts. In addition the team are tendering for larger contracts (eg Merchant Taylors School and Sandway homes). The team plan to review the commercial working approach with a view of establishing a better structure to support future growth opportunities.
- The extended beach car park open hours and increase in ticket pricing have resulted in a bumper year for the beach car parks in summer 2021. Visitor management has been a challenge at times due to an increase in incidents of ASB, considered to be linked with the wider frustration with COVID restrictions and increased visitor number due to a reduction in foreign holidays. This led to the team engaging security guards in the evenings, and the VAP update referred to above will look to employ 'patrol stewards' directly for summer 2022.
- During the period the team have developed a successful application via Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier for 5 years funding to support essential habitat maintenance and improvement works, e.g. grazing and the control of invasive species. This will fund circa £500k of both capital and revenue works over the next 5 years, which will keep essential, statutory activities ongoing until the central government Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) is launched (anticipated from 2024, as part of the Environment Act).

- Cemetery operations have been challenging which unfortunately resulted in a short, but intense, period of complaints in Summer 21 – especially with the maintenance of Southport Crematorium due to resource limitations. Additional works have recovered the condition of the site and a dedicated maintenance resource going forwards, and further development of volunteering on site.
- The team are supporting the project development of the Bootle Strand Canalside venue. The project will include an exciting new urban landscape and the opportunity to develop community gardening, events and activities.
- Working closely with colleagues in the Tourism service, a fixed term 1 year post has been created for a site based gardener at Kings Gardens, Southport. This additional resource, filled by one of our successful Apprentices, will tackle the backlog of park based maintenance activities, assist in engaging the public, and overall address concerns raised by the HLF in their recent site visit (pre pandemic), where they were concerned we were struggling to meet the requirements of the Management and Maintenance Plan. After only a couple of months on site, the benefits of the return of a site-based gardener are clear, with compliments having been received from a number of sources,