

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

| Councillor | Portfolio | Period of Report |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| John Fairclough | Cabinet Member Locality Services | June 2022 |

Strategic Transport

Port Access

- The new double track section of the rail line at the Port entrance has been operational since September 2021. Improvements to signals at Earlestown West are included in the works associated with transferring the control of signals from Warrington to Manchester, which is not due to happen until 2029.
- The Port of Liverpool Access scheme being proposed by National Highways remains significantly delayed. Site investigations, environmental surveys and scheme design work are being planned for 2022. The statutory public consultation in advance of the DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate will take place once those investigations have been completed and this is not expected until 2023.

LTP and Growth Plan

- Sefton is continuing to work with the LCR Combined Authority/Merseytravel and the other local authorities on the delivery of the transport capital programme. Following the Government announcement of £710m over the next 5 years for the Liverpool City Region from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, the programme for 2022/23 has been approved by the CA. It provides a significant uplift in funding for transport infrastructure, particularly for highway maintenance, with a resulting pressure on staff resources. Recruitment for new staff to help deliver the programme is ongoing.
- In response to the Council's climate emergency declaration and an increased focus on active travel measures, work is continuing on the development of Low Carbon,, Active Travel and E-mobility Strategies for the Borough.
- The completion of the North Liverpool Key Corridor scheme on the A565 Derby Road was significantly delayed following the dispute between Liverpool City Council and its contractor. The final works have been completed with the exception of the commissioning of the new Toucan crossing near Bedford Place. This is programmed for the end of June.
- The development of Full Business Cases for the Southport Eastern Access and the Maritime Corridor projects funded by the CA is continuing. Consultation on the Eastern Access scheme has been completed and comments reviewed. Both schemes are included in the CA's programme for

delivery in the next 5 years and further development funding has been secured.

The designs completed have been sent to Active Travel England (ATE) for review. There is some frustration in securing a response.

- Design work is continuing on improvements the junctions at Kenyon's Lane and at Hall Lane on the A59 Northway, these will be developed in the context of a wider improvement of the cycle route between Switch island and Robins Island.. A package of funding including Government grant funding for improvements to traffic signals, developer contributions and Sefton transport capital programme will be used to deliver these improvements. ATE are supportive of the project and are encouraging the Council to consider the link to the wider communities and the potential for improvement east and west on the A59.
- In Southport, improvements to Scarisbrick Avenue in conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Initiative are currently underway.
- The business case for the movement, access and public realm project within the Southport Town Deal (*Les Transformation de Southport*) has been completed and submitted to government for consideration. Consultation on the proposals to improve access and connectivity in the town centre and provide safer and more attractive public spaces has been completed and results appraised. The commissioning of further design and scheme development work is being programmed.

Local Transport Schemes

- The Transportation Capital Programme for 2022/23 has been compiled and will be reported to Cabinet Member.

Sustainable Transport

- The European Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) funding for two major cycling schemes was approved in December 2018. The design of a new pedestrian and cycle route through Crosby Coastal Park has been completed. Public consultation was carried out and the design has been revised in response to comments received and reported to Cabinet Member. The planning application has been considered by Planning Committee and a decision deferred. A review of work has been undertaken and concerns raised are being addressed, with the scheme being further considered at the Planning Committee at the end of June. A procurement exercise has been completed and works will commence if and when approval is granted. Habitat improvement works are also being considered.
- The Department for Transport have confirmed that they are willing of the funding provided from tranche 2 of the Active Travel fund to be used for improvements to a section of the A565 Formby By Pass. These improvements are targeted for being on site later in 2022.
- Revenue funding has been received from the Active Travel Fund for the development of projects capable to improving cycling and walking throughout the borough. Works are currently progressing the A59 cycleway, the remainder of the A565 corridor to complement the improvement to the links

identified above, junction on the A565, including Woodvale and the development of a local Walking and Infrastructure Plan to compliment the City Region Strategic Plan.

- Consultation work has been undertaken on three School Street Pilot schemes in Southport. Funding has been secured to develop other school streets initiatives throughout the borough.

Highway Development and Design

Highway Development and Design

Planning Applications

- The team continue to process large numbers of planning applications despite ongoing challenges associated with the recent turnover in staffing resources. These include applications for sites identified in the Local Plan and continues to involve close liaison with case officers from the planning department. A total of 153 applications have been responded to in April and May 2022.

Section 38 Highways Act 1980 legal agreements

- Submissions for s38 agreements have continued requiring the subsequent processing of these at times, lengthy and complex applications, particularly following the approval of planning applications for Local Plan sites.
- The report is as follows: -
 - No of live s38 and current developments subject to a s38 application – 38
 - No of stalled or no activity (on the part of a developer) – 1 where the developer appears to have ceased trading
 - Number of development sites adopted within the last 3 months - 0
 - No of submissions awaiting technical approval – 12
 - Number of new and recent submissions awaiting administrative set up - 1

Section 278 Highways Act 1980 legal agreements

- The numbers of this type of application also remains high, including the approval of planning applications for Local Plan sites. The team are currently managing 61 live s278 HA 1980 highway works schemes in various stages of development on behalf of the Council. The successful delivery of these schemes is dependent on close liaison with the Legal, Finance and Planning Departments.

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- England Coast Path/Coastal Access The delivery of the establishment works are to be completed through the Term Maintenance contracts and are due to commence in the summer 2022 with a planned completion by October 2022.

Strategic Highways Development and Future Planning

- The team is continuing to work closely with the Planning Department to provide a strategic approach to development to ensure that the necessary new transport infrastructure is in place to support new developments coming forward in future years.
- The team continues to request construction traffic management plans for new developments so that we can manage the highway network efficiently and effectively with minimum disruption to users of the highway and with the important benefit of highway safety. Once plans have been agreed, the team is working closely with colleagues in network management and planning to ensure that the plans are being adhered to.

Highway Design

- The team has continued to provide the design and delivery of strategic transport investment schemes, including major highway schemes, STEP programme schemes and to provide assistance in the planning and development of future strategic schemes led by the STPI team, with a number of schemes at various stages of delivery. Currently the Scarisbrick Avenue Public Realm works are on site, tenders have been received and appraised for the Crosby Coastal Park scheme and are currently being assessed, whilst designs are progressing on a number of other projects including junction improvement schemes on the A59, Ainsdale Car Park, Crosby Town Centre, Great Georges Road phase 2 and Birkdale Village.
- In addition, the team continues to support the Development Control function undertaking Transport Assessments and Technical Approvals for the Highways Act S38 and S278 submissions and the design and delivery of some Highways Act S278, including the Lydiate Lane roundabout and minor works schemes.
- The team also has responsibility for the revenue and capital bridge maintenance programme and is managing the maintenance schemes on Hightown station footbridge and Hillside station bridge as well as a number of minor bridge maintenance schemes. Further funding has been secured to enable an assessment to be undertaken of the strategically important Miller's Bridge over the railway.

Permit Scheme

- We have 2 new assistant permit co-ordinators who are helping with the increased number of permits that we are receiving.
- The 7th annual review of the scheme has been completed and officers are currently assessing the information. Early indications are that performance targets have once again been achieved and works durations continue to reduce.

Winter Service

- The annual consultation of the service has commenced. Results and recommendations will be included in the o&s report in September.
- Gallagher Bassett are also undertaking an independent assessment of the policy. This is being done alongside the annual review and any relevant information will be included in the report.

Operational In-House Services

Catering and Building Cleaning Services

Service provision in both Catering and Building Cleaning have returned to normal following the impact of Covid-19.

With schools finding their funding stretched more than ever before, in order to balance their budgets, many schools are reviewing their options as regards catering and cleaning provision.

Some schools have put or are in the process of putting their services out to competitive tender, whilst other schools need to reduce the cost of their services by reducing the provision they receive.

In the Building Cleaning Service, more schools are moving towards a term time only service with a summer clean, in order to reduce costs.

Officers are working with our partners in schools to creatively address the problems they are facing but also supporting staff through what can be an unsettling time. However, two schools are returning to the Building Cleaning Service in the coming weeks which is a positive outcome.

Recruitment of staff in both services remains very difficult in certain parts of the Borough with some posts receiving no applications, causing operational difficulties.

Food costs remain a significant concern. Price increases from suppliers have already been absorbed and there is every likelihood that further increases will follow later in the year.

As a member of the TUCO purchasing framework, we are as well placed as we can be to ensure that any future increases are not only justified but also fairly reflect the increases that food producers and distributors are having to bear.

We are also working closely with our operational staff to ensure that they are taking all the necessary steps to reduce food waste.

The catering section are continuing to support The Council's Obesity strategy. The Service Manager chairs the Live Well subgroup, which is charged with reviewing and refreshing the Council's work to ensure compliance with Food Active's Healthy Weight Declaration accreditation.

Transport and Vehicle Maintenance

To date the Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Department have inspected and serviced all related vehicles within its remit for the first part of 2022. They inspect, by way of the PMI (preventative maintenance inspection) all HVG vehicles on a 6-week cycle. All vehicles between 3.5 and 7.5 tonne are inspected on a 12-week cycle.

They ensure the vehicles are presented for inspection in a timely manner and work with all service areas to meet this target.

T&VM promote strong collaborative working arrangements with service areas to ensure fleet compliance and procurement is on schedule and is appropriate to meet demands of individual services. The aim going forward is to improve this by adopting service level working agreements between departments to ensure we provide the best service for each department.

The service ensures that all council vehicles and fleet have access to fuel and maintenance when required. They also provide an out of hours breakdown and recovery service for all fleet. As well as providing maintenance for our own fleet we also have several customers and clients for whom we provide maintenance and fleet compliance on their behalf.

Sefton Council's MOT inspections are of the highest quality and recommended due to our impartiality as we do not provide corrective measures or maintenance for this function. We do provide retests free of charge.

We provide a vehicle hire function that meets the demands of our service users, and in most cases exceeds expectation. The service often reacts rapidly to requests with very short notice to provide vehicles to services requesters such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services etc.

School Crossing Service

The School Crossing Service is currently preparing for the end of the summer term.

The service currently has:

84 School Crossing Sites across the Borough. It provides cover for children and adults who require assistance crossing the road.

For the first quarter of this year the service has provided approximately 74% of cover across all locations.

This amounts to 5,378 kerb hours of cover for both children and adults across the borough. And requests for new sites are processed within 1 week. Schools are informed of any vacancies in advance to ensure continuation of cover. Patrols undergo a retraining programme every 2 years.

Sites are risk assessed annually and a robust supervisory schedule is in operation, allowing staff to keep in touch with Management and discuss any concerns or requests.

Patrols staff undergo medicals at the start of their employment and annually for those aged 65 and over. This is due to potential sensory ability deterioration in this group of adults. This measure was agreed together with the Joint Trade Unions to protect and support staff within this demographic. The measure has proven to be a vital tool in identifying health issues for staff both personally and work related.

The service will soon undergo a review of its current structure to ensure we are meeting our objectives and providing the support necessary to all staff.

Burials and Cremations

The service has seen some significant changes over the past 6 months with the commencement of the new Service Manager in December 2021. Since then, the service has undergone changes to improve service delivery and quality of offer to the bereaved.

The fees and charges for the service have remained the same as previous years as the Council have recognised the current cost of living increase and the impact this can have to families during the difficult time following bereavement.

Memorial provision is under review to ensure a more affordable memorial option is available for the bereaved across the service, in addition to a full memorial review to ensure sustainability throughout.

The service has gone through a whole service restructure to remove all temporary staffing arrangements that were in place and ensure staff are recruited on a permanent basis. To increase support for management and customers alike, there has been the creation of an Assistant Manager post in addition to increasing the customer services officer roles within the service to meet demand.

Whilst no staff have lost out, a realignment of vacant posts has provided a moderate saving on salary budgets enabling the service to employ a business support apprentice which supports the local economy of Sefton.

Contracts have been put in place for service security on equipment and new equipment has been sourced to ensure safety and service delivery is met throughout the service. The service will continue to provide a high standard to the bereaved.

Sefton ARC & Careline

The ARC & mobile guard services continued to operate throughout the pandemic, providing security duties, monitoring service, highways and out of hours emergency response.

The mobile guarding service has recently recruited an additional 6 patrol staff from core FTE budget as the posts had been vacant for some time. The recruitment to permanent posts removed the reliance upon agency staff and ensure consistency of service delivery.

The team continue to respond to enquiries for potential future installations, and provide regular quotations for provision of CCTV, Fire and Intruder alarms, and EM lighting.

There have been requests from potential external clients about using Sefton ARC as their preferred monitoring station and we are currently considering these requests.

The service has successfully passed all recent inspections and retained accreditation for National Security Inspectorate (NSI) for:

- FIRE,
- SECURITY (intruder, CCTV, Access control)
- ARC NSI Gold
- Specialist Services NSI Gold

Sefton ARC is preparing for NSI Guarding Gold assessment visit on the 5/6 July 2022.

On-going installation work for a variety of fire, CCTV, intruder and access control systems are planned for the following locations:

- Southport Pier CCTV
- James Dixon Court
- Chase Hays
- Bootle Town Hall
- Vine House

Careline:

KPI: Careline call response time - Target: 97.5% calls answered within 60 seconds

Q1 to date: 99.45% calls answered within 30 seconds

Call volumes:

Q1 to date: 13,019 calls received

Disaster Recovery:

The DR provision is now in place in Hawthorne Road Depot and has been tested successfully. This will be a temporary DR provision until we move to the cloud-based platform when it is likely that we will reinstate our reciprocal arrangements with Coventry Council to become our DR.

Recruitment:

The installer vacancy has now been successfully recruited to and will commence mid-June. The role will provide much needed resource and support to the current function allowing the team to deal with more referrals and installations within the agreed timescales across the borough.

Move to cloud-based platform:

Work is underway to move the Careline onto a Cloud-based platform which will significantly improve the operation of the Careline. It is anticipated that the move should take no more than 12 weeks and once in place, it will allow the team to become more streamlined, improving efficiency and enabling us to move forward and drive further improvements.

Specialist Transport Unit

Recent confirmation has been received from Sefton's Travel Support Team that the tender process has now been completed for all routes with the STU keeping the current 15 school routes and 9 adult routes for the next 3 years.

This has increased from 9 school routes 9 Adult in recent years to cover routes that were previously undertaken by external contractor provision and also reduces the number of taxis being used. The STU staffing structure will be adapted to accommodate these requirements.

A review of the fleet is underway, all options being reviewed which will be financially viable and the inclusion of electric vehicles will also be considered however, infrastructure for recharging across the Borough needs to be a factor.

The service recently provided assistance to Adult Social Care regarding the closure of the Shielings Nursing Home in Lydiate, the relocation of residents to other nursing homes within Sefton and West Lancashire was completed in a smooth and sympathetic way.

Waste Management

Both domestic and commercial waste collections have been impacted since the Easter Bank Holiday onwards due to a combination of factors - operational issues, significant sickness absence and low level resource availability of staff to work over the Bank Holiday days.

From an operational perspective, this impacted predominately the green bin collections Boroughwide resulting in missed collections for 3 cycles in some areas of the Borough (they are collected every 3 weeks), however it also impacted both grey and brown bin collections which were collected albeit delayed.

The service is now in a full recovery process. Grey and brown bin collections are taking place on scheduled days and green bins have been significantly recovered over the weekend of 18/19 June 2022.

Continual contact has been kept with any Trade customers who have been affected and adapted collections have taken place to ensure minimal disruption. These collections are also now back to scheduled service.

Some review of collection schedules is underway to ensure an equitable approach to the volume of properties attributed to each round. As new premises are built the round structure can become unbalanced in certain areas.

On a strategic perspective, the Head of Service attends the LCR Strategic Waste partnership for future planning regarding the implementation of the waste related aspects of the Environment Act 2021.

Street Cleansing

The street cleansing service has recently seen an increase in mechanisation with a fourth HGV sized mechanical sweeper being brought onto the fleet in addition to handheld leaf blowers and hand operated three street cleansing machinery known as 'Gluttons'.

The weed control programme commenced its third spray in early June. A comprehensive inspection process is underway to ensure that there is evidence of 'die back' of weeds approximately 10-14 days following scheduled spray.

The service is currently reviewing the rear entry clearance programme to ensure sufficient resources are attributed to this function. Collaborative working with Environmental Enforcement colleagues will form part of this approach.

GREEN SEFTON

Overview

Overall, the service continues to perform well under the pressures of expectation on service delivery, within the resources made available, and in the context of the ongoing pandemic situation further affecting staffing levels availability.

It is clear that several areas of the service are struggling to meet expectations / basic standards within resources available and efforts are being made to address this. This has resulted in further increase in complaints, and negative press coverage for several areas of the service.

To start to address this, an increase in revenue budget was approved by Full Council as part of the budget setting process for an additional £200k into the management of play areas /

facilities from 2022/23 onwards (increasing the budget from £45k per year), and for several of the actions from the Coast Visitor Action Plan for the delivery of those actions on a permanent basis with a further £300k annual uplift – to include additional daytime and evening ranger staff, a full time Community Ranger for the Coast, increased litter management at key gateways, ongoing provision of temporary toilets at beach entrances, and a communications plan to encourage appropriate visitor behaviour.

In addition, to develop the service/ and undertake improvements external grants and other funding are being sought such as;

- the 500k Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier funding for conservation works over the next 5 years along the coast was accepted in February 2022
- a major bid for Botanic Gardens is in early development, with a Task Group set up (chaired by Cabinet Member, and with ward cllrs and community reps), and approval to consult publicly given at the Consultation and Engagement Panel in March 2022
- consultation has been completed for the allocation of monies for Hesketh Park, and cost estimate/ details for priority projects have been developed
- Cabinet gave formal approval to seek tenders for the future investment in Southport Golf Links in March 2022. Tenders for both the White House Café building, and the course itself are now in development
- the FCERM team continue to work with the Environment Agency and other partner agencies on seeking capital monies to reduce flood risk.

Further areas of the service will also need resource consideration in the coming times – both in terms of ongoing revenue, and other capital schemes too.

What is performing well

A narrated version of the 2021 Annual Review has been published on the website, and can be found here: www.sefton.gov.uk/greensefton

This was promoted via a newsletter which was shared in the community, with all ward councillors, with our 'Friends of' and other volunteer groups, sports clubs and leagues, other landowners and partner agencies including statutory and government bodies.

Highlights from the last quarter include:

- The service continues to work in partnership with many other organisations, partner agencies, and of course fundamentally our communities – supporting around 40 'Friends of' In Bloom and other volunteer groups, together with 300+ sports clubs and leagues that utilise our facilities;
- The service has undertaken significant formal consultations recently including an overall customer satisfaction survey for the service, and site / project specific consultations such as for Ainsdale Beach gateway, and Hesketh Park;
- Bootle Driving Range has been completed on site, had a soft launch in February 2022, and a formal opening by the Mayor with local school children in attendance in March 2022;
- Planning is underway for the coming tourist season, including the enactment of a new Visitor Action Plan for 2022. The Multi Agency Group with other landowners and emergency services etc also restarted in March

- The service has responded to several named storm events in recent months. Teams have reacted brilliantly to these emergency issues, with out of hours officer support, practical actions taken in a timely manner, and keeping relevant colleagues, and external bodies, abreast of developments

What requires improvement and what action is being taken

Overall work programming

The Annual report highlighted the tracking of the services overall performance against the actions contained within the Service Plan which has been RAG rated over the last two years. This clearly shows that many actions have slowed down or stalled since the pandemic started due to a reduced staffing capacity to deal with developmental issues, and new operational demands being placed on services as the 'staycation' phenomena resulted in massive increases in visitors and other pressures on our sites.

The action taken to address this has been to develop a more sophisticated work programming approach for the service, with an 'urgency/importance' matrix developed, see next page. This was presented to O&S Committee within the Annual Review, but has also led to each sub team creating their own version, with updates being discussed at team meetings, and individual monthly 1:1's. The overall team matrices were presented to Cabinet Member in January 2022, and will also form part of regular updates.

Working with Volunteers

A specific challenge over the last quarter has been ongoing issues arising with some of our volunteer groups. Probably symptomatic that the service no longer undertakes land management and maintenance to the standards previously seen, and that there is less officer capacity available to respond to complaints, nurture groups, and pro-actively keep them aligned – several groups have become dissatisfied with the Council and/or have suffered from internal issues leading to corporate complaints being raised.

The action taken to address this is to refresh the 'Friends of ...' Handbook – this guiding document introduces volunteers to setting up a group however it will now go much further in terms of expectations to be placed on volunteers about their Policies and Procedures expected of a group, including Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding, and overall Code of Conduct – both in terms of the way volunteers treat each other, and also about how they deal with Council officers.

The first draft of this refresh is to be discussed with Cabinet Member

Defining Standards

As part of addressing some of the frustrations from the community referred to above, we have also instigated a piece of work to define our maintenance standards that we are now resourced to provide. This is initially being prioritised on the inland parks and greenspaces maintenance aspects of the service, but team leaders are working up thoughts on defining standards across wider areas too.

The first draft of this new document will be shared with Cabinet Member.