

CABINET MEMBER REPORT		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) -		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Paulette Lappin	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services	August 2022

The service, as with the rest of the Council, has been focussed on supporting members, staff, residents and business in responding to and dealing with the pandemic.

Finance

Within the finance service, there has been significant activity on a number of key issues:

The latest budget monitoring report will be presented to Cabinet and Council in September. This highlights the growing financial pressure that the Council is facing in 2022/2023, particularly in Children's Social Care, with an additional pressure now included relating to the pay award offer. There is a remedial action plan proposed to meet the current forecast pressure in 2022/2023 – however, this is mainly through utilising one-off funding (e.g., general balances and earmarked reserves) which isn't a sustainable solution to the ongoing impact of these pressure in future years. It should also be noted that the forecast pressures in Children's Social Care may be worse given the number of high-cost cases and the potential for them to be extended beyond the current forecasts.

The implications on the Medium-Term Financial Plan will be assessed, in terms of the overall pressures and what is permanent or temporary, and proposals are currently being formulated to enable to the Council to set a robust and sustainable budget in 2023/2024.

The draft Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021 was published at the end of July 2021 with the final Statement of Accounts being presented to Audit and Governance Committee on 15th December. However, although nearly all work has been finalised, the audit is still to be completed. This is mainly due to an emerging technical valuation issue that needs to be resolved at a national level – CIPFA consulted on a practical solution that would enable audits to be completed. However, the consultation was inconclusive, so no solution has been proposed – CIPFA plan to consult on the issue again in the near future. Should any further amendments be required since the December 2021 Committee, the Chair has been granted delegated authority to approve the final Statement of Accounts following these changes.

The work to close the accounts for 2021/2022 was completed, with the revenue and capital outturn position reported to Cabinet in July. There have been delays in producing the draft Statement of Accounts for 2021/2022, partly due to the issue with the 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts described above. The accounts will be published by the end of August 2022. Officers are meeting with our external auditors in early September to discuss their plans for the audit.

Customer Centric Services

The Service continues to manage high workloads, especially relating to Council Tax, with outstanding work volumes starting to reduce, albeit slowly. The priority over the last few months has been the extensive work required to make payments for the Energy Rebate Scheme announced by the Government in February 2022.

New staff recruited to the Contact Centre earlier this year to manage the peak of Energy Rebate calls are now being trained to handle a range of enquiries for other Council services to reduce customer delays. Staff in Revenues and Benefits continue to work extra hours at weekends to reduce work volumes.

Council Tax Energy Rebate

The Council is administering two aspects of the Government's Energy Rebate Scheme to support households with the rising costs of energy bills, i.e., the Council Tax Energy Rebate and a discretionary Energy Rebate fund.

The Council Tax Energy Rebate, i.e., a one-off £150.00 payment, has been made to approximately 109,000 households in the borough in Council Tax bands A-D to bring this part of the Government's scheme to an end.

A Discretionary Scheme has been approved by Cabinet. Software has been installed and tested and it is expected that discretionary payments will commence from the end of August. A significant part of the Discretionary Fund will be awarded directly to specific targeted groups, with no requirement for an application process. These recipients will also receive a letter of notification advising of the payment and for a small number of these cases, bank details will be required for payment to be made into a nominated bank account.

The Customer Services team continues to support digitally excluded customers who need to provide bank details to receive payment under the Scheme, via the Contact Centre and the One Stop Shop service in Bootle and The Atkinson, Southport. A comprehensive set of frequently asked questions and answers is available on the Council's website, is reviewed, and updated regularly. Press releases and social media have also been used to keep residents as up to date as possible.

Customer Services

The Contact Centre continues to handle a high volume of telephone calls, e-mail enquiries and social media contact. Priority service continues to be provided for customers calling with Social Care and ELAS enquiries.

Energy Rebate telephone enquiries have significantly reduced as households have received their payment. Enquiries about bin collections were high during June and July whilst there was disruption with the service. There was also an increase in telephone calls for Highways which were primarily due to the burst water main in the Litherland area and the major gas leak in Bootle.

Contact by social media continues to increase with more customers using the digital contact options that are available, however it is apparent that some residents prefer to deal with the Council in person at the One Stop Shops: - in July 2022, 2,303 customers attended Bootle One Stop Shop, this included 409 taxi drivers who were offered an appointment to discuss their licence application. A further 590 appointments were made for customers with a Council Tax, ELAS or Benefits enquiry. The remaining 1,304 customers were seeking general council-related advice at reception.

It is proposed for customer drop-ins to be reinstated on specific days at Bootle One Stop Shop from mid-August, ensuring customers requiring financial support can be seen immediately and without an appointment.

There were 518 customers who attended the Atkinson in Southport, this included 146 customers who were offered an appointment to discuss their Council Tax, ELAS or Benefits enquiry. There were a further 372 customers seeking general council related advice at reception, such as Blue Badges and Parking.

Taxi-Licensing

Progress with Taxi Licensing continues to be excellent, with the licensing of vehicle plates being processed within 48-hours of being received. This has been acknowledged by trade representative and they have complimented the speedy turnaround and efficiency of the service.

With Sefton's primary training provider Antrec closing for business on 31st July 2022, all their outstanding 'new driver applications' were processed at Bootle One Stop Shop before they closed. New driver applications that have been received by e-mail are now starting to be processed, with drivers invited to Bootle One Stop Shop for an appointment if they have submitted all the required evidence to be licenced. If a knowledge test is required, this will also be offered at Bootle One Stop Shop.

Unfortunately, there remain some technical issues with scanners and printers at the Atkinson that will need to be resolved before the Taxi Licensing service can be reinstated from that location. Further site visits are required, however once up and running, it is proposed that a service will be offered every Tuesday and Thursday. Arrangements will be closely monitored, and the number of days the service is offered may increase should there be an increase in customer demand.

With the new staff that have been recruited now integrating extremely well within the team, positive progress continues to be made. Following discussions with Council representatives from Licensing, the customer drop-in facility for certain elements of the service is likely to be reinstated from 5th September 2022. This is another service improvement that will be widely appreciated by all key stakeholders of Taxi Licensing.

Risk and Audit

The **Internal Audit** team are continuing to work on delivering the internal audit plan with a current focus on reviews of:

- Operators Licence,
- Annual Governance Statement,
- Corporate Governance Review
- Beach Car Parking,
- Golf Income,
- Performance Management,
- Grants assurance and a review of number of Schools.
- Climate Change
- Risk Management

We have successfully recruited to the first of two permanent Principal Auditors positions with the staff member starting in July 2022. We are currently advertising for the second position and hope to have a second candidate in post shortly.

Insurance Team have completed and are working on the following initiatives to improve the Council's risk management.

- We are looking at the procurement for the re-valuation for insurance purposes of the remaining Council properties which have not been subject to a re-valuation in the past two years.
- We are currently working on the insurance renewal which we expect to be challenging from a cost perspective as the increase in inflation in the construction industry is feeding through into claims costs and subsequently insurance premiums. The insurance market remains focused on technical pricing to achieve profit rather than in the past focused on market share.
- We have used some of the "free days" as part of the insurance programme risk bursary to examine how the Council's trees are managed effectively in accordance with our legal responsibilities. Other days have been used to look at the Council's Highways Winter Service Policy.
- We are working with insurers and the Council's liability insurers to robustly defend claims and in limited circumstances will pursue through the Courts claimants to recover Council costs where the claims are proven to be exaggerated.
- Team continues to work extensively with Service Teams including Highways, Green Sefton and Tourism to improve the management of insurable risk in areas where there are high numbers of claims or areas of concern.
- We are currently ensuring that outstanding risk actions from the Risk Improvement Surveys completed by the material damage insurer have been implemented which will help the renewal in 2022.

The **Risk and Resilience Team**. The Emergency Planning focus during the previous quarter was on a gas leak, water mains burst in Litherland and the heatwave during July.

Business Continuity we are reviewing the current Service Area Business Continuity Plans with the teams and are looking to undertake another activation test of the BC plans. We are currently exploring a proposed exercise of the Council's BC arrangements in October/ November 2022

The **Risk and Resilience Team** are currently working on the Council's Risk Appetite which is due which is due to complete in October 2022 as well as facilitating the updates of the Council's Corporate Risk Register working with the Risk Owners to update the risk register. Other work includes:

- Working with the Merseyside Resilience Forum
- Development of a Shoreline Pollution Plan
- Development of Severe Weather Protocol

The **Assurance Team** were seconded to the Business Grants Team to provide support and assistance for the delivery of grants to local businesses until the end of June 2022. Subsequently two of the Team were seconded to Revenues and Benefits to provide additional support to the Team.

For the **Health and Safety Team** there will be a continued focus during the next quarter of delivering the Health and Safety Improvement Plan and also the ongoing recovery programmes from COVID-19 with planned priorities –

- Continue to support to assist Managers with the recovery programmes from COVID-19.
- Continue to review, update and monitor the Health and Safety Standards and Policies, with focus on working from home, display screen and workstation assessments and stress risk assessments.
- Continue to develop the Council-wide training needs assessment which will eventually build into the health and safety training plan and provision.
- Undertaking a planned review of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and completing the Annual Health and Safety report.
- Focus on improving the accuracy of incident reporting across the Council will continue to ensure incidents of threatening and abusive behaviours towards staff are reported.
- Continue to deliver a health and safety management audit and inspection regime across the Council, to schools with a Service Level Agreement with the Council and those schools where the Council retains responsibility for the health and safety as the employer. This will provide assurance that health and safety management systems are suitable and effective.

ICT

The ICT Service continues to work on a number of significant transformation programmes as well as delivering the BAU ICT Service alongside Agilisys. A key priority over the last period has been to support the moves of Children's Services into Magdalen House and ensuring the delivery and installation of all ICT equipment. There have been some challenges with obtaining equipment in a timely fashion due to worldwide supply issues, we continue to work through these to complete the programme of work, once completed the focus will move onto equipping the remaining floors.

The main phase of Cloud Migration project is now completed with 79 servers, (with associated applications) along with 20 additional standalone databases now located in the Azure Cloud, the final phase will include the migration of the Liquid Logic system to its new environment (which is a further 11 servers), planned for September and the upgrade and migration of the libraries Net loans system (1 additional server), which is being arranged with the supplier. Work is now focused on to the remaining on premise Data Centre Rationalisation and rightsizing, ready for an eventual move of the Data Centre to Bootle Town Hall.

Cloud Telephony deployment is now completed with number porting from the Virgin Contract to 8x8 due to take place in two phases, August and September.

Further deployment of the new CXP solution is now planned for the forthcoming period. 9 processes are now live, with a further 8 due to go-live early September. Clinical Waste and Bins Not Emptied processes are also expected to go-live in September subject to senior management and Contact Centre sign-off. Work on the transfer of the remaining 6 legacy processes will continue over the next few months.

Work continues on the rolling website improvement programme. Quotes have been received from external web agencies for further improvements to www.sefton.gov.uk and this work is expected to be

commissioned in early September. In addition, quotes have been requested for the upgrade of the Umbraco web content management system. Alongside this, the Communications team continues with an ongoing content review and is also reviewing ancillary sites to see if any of these should be incorporated into the main Council website.

The migration of legacy bulk print jobs to the Council's new bulk print provider continues and is expected to complete by the end of September.

Procurement activity continues to be a challenge, a new procurement forward plan has been developed to take account of the reduce resource. However the team is pleased to report that we have now secured the support of a Procurement Consultant via a matrix recruitment, and he starts with the Council in September for a six month period, whilst we explore further options for permanent recruitment. Procurement is now completed for Managed Print, with an award to Canon, Xerox devices will be replaced from September 2022. Procurement is well underway for Corporate Connectivity, with evaluators now reviewing the bids received, the next projects will include ESP for Leisure and the Mobile Phones Contract which is up for renewal.

The threat level in relation to Cyber Security remains high and the team are working hard to implement new technologies and tools to stay one step ahead of the risk. Recently Sefton commissioned Microsoft to complete a Cyber Security Assessment, our result was positive with Sefton scoring above average based on the scores of other local authorities assessed however a full action plan is now in development to work through the improvements recommended. In addition the LGA will be completing a Cyber 360 in October this year, the results of which will also feed into our continuous Cyber Security improvement plan.

Property Services

The Property Services Department are a multi-Disciplinary team delivering various services, professional advice and initiatives across the Borough of Sefton. Below are some examples of ongoing pieces of work throughout the department.

Asset Management / FM

- Ongoing work to deliver Phase 1 Asset Disposals.
- Negotiations with Landlord of Magdalen House for the re gear of the Lease complete.
- Asset records input and liaison with Building Maintenance colleagues for new (property based) IT system in support of Corporate Landlord Implementation Ongoing.
- New Strategic Asset Manager appointed.
- Agreement of terms and reporting for Lease of various assets ongoing.
- Reoccupation of Magdalen House to accommodate future ways of working nearing completion.
- Working in conjunction with Children's Services to support their accommodation strategy.

Maintenance Management & Building Services

- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Corporate Buildings.
- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Education Capital programme.
- Delivery of reactive maintenance and statutory compliance services to Corporate and Educational buildings.
- Professional advice and support on a broad range of regeneration programmes.
- Development and implementation of a new coordinated (property based) IT system in support of Corporate Landlord Implementation.
- Managing remedial works scheme
- Formulated phase 1 essential maintenance delivery plan for corporate buildings.
- Formulating asset survey delivery plan alongside the essential maintenance.
- Delivering services in support of major adaptation to vulnerable and disabled residents.

Project Management

- Provide professional support to Growth Board on several projects.
- Project manage various Education capital schemes.

- Provide support to other teams on Asset Disposal, Building Maintenance, Asset Management, Energy and Statutory Compliance colleagues.
- Provide support for new ways of working agile model proposal.

Energy Management

- Busy period for the affordable warmth team, supporting residents without adequate heating for range of reasons. Additional funding secured to help repair boilers or provide emergency top ups for gas/electricity meters.
- Local Authority Delivery of Green homes Grant (LAD, GHG) – Providing insulation to privately owned properties (worst/not insulated & for poorest residents)
- Works to upgrade roof insulation and improve glazing at Southport and Bootle Town Halls is complete apart from works to restore/insulate the BTH ballroom window will be completed by August 2022.
- A programme of work to support schools (after large energy price rises) is being developed to be delivered this year.
- Feasibility Study for a replacement Wind turbine at Southport Eco Centre is ongoing. Sefton officers are working on providing a long land lease and power purchase agreement to support the project.

Legal Services

Democratic Services Team – Overview

- All meetings are now being held in person.
- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)**
The first meeting of the Committee in the 2022/23 Municipal Year was held on 21 June 2022. A summary of the items considered at the meeting is provided below.

Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups - Update Report

The Committee considered the usual update from the Sefton CCGs, including the impact of the introduction of the Integrated Care System in Cheshire and Merseyside and how this would affect reporting to Overview and Scrutiny. The Committee agreed to consider an informal briefing session on GP practices and requested up-to-date figures for the take-up of the covid vaccine across the Borough.

Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups – Health Provider Performance Dashboard

The Committee considered data on key performance areas for local Hospital NHS Trusts, the GP extended access scheme and local ambulance response times. Responses for the Friends and Family Test were also provided. Members requested up-to-date figures for the waiting times for Mental Health – IAPT; and paid tribute to Fiona Taylor, Chief Officer for the Sefton CCGs, as it was Fiona's final meeting of the Committee before retirement.

Public Health Outcomes Framework

The Committee received the report of the Director of Public Health that provided an update on the Public Health Outcomes Framework and discussed issues of health inequalities.

Cabinet Member Reports

The Committee considered and noted the most recent update report from the Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care, whose portfolio fell within the remit of the Committee.

Work Programme Key Decision Forward Plan

The Committee agreed its Work Programme for 2022/23; and noted the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the progress made on the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (Hyper-Acute Services) and the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee – Liverpool University Hospitals University Foundation Trust (LUFT), and the recent activities undertaken by Healthwatch Sefton. Progress made to date on the recommendations made by the former Mental Health Issues Working Group, was also noted.

Rather than establish a traditional working group during 2022/23, it was agreed that all Members of the Committee would be invited to participate in informal briefing sessions, and consideration be given to the suggestions raised. At the time of drafting this report, Officers are holding discussions regarding the possibility of holding informal briefing sessions on GP practices, to be delivered by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside – Sefton (formerly the Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups); and health inequalities, to be delivered by the Public Health Team.

Next Meeting of the Committee – 6 September 2022

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 6 September 2022 and it is anticipated that the meeting will consider the following reports/presentations in the approved Work Programme:

- Update on Implementation of Mental Health Services Working Group Recommendations;
 - Domestic Abuse; and
 - Sefton Integrated Care Partnership - Development
- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)**
The first meeting of the Committee in the 2022/23 Municipal Year was held on 14 June 2022. Provided below is a summary of the items considered at the meeting:

Cloud First Strategy - a presentation that provided a security update on the Cloud Migration. Members were advised that a Cloud First Strategy was required because Sefton's ICT Infrastructure was aging and required significant investment to ensure it could scale up to meet increasing demands for ICT resource and capacity.

Work Programme 2022/23, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan

The Committee approved its Work Programme for 2022/23; and selected Corporate Communications and Covid-19 as a topic for review by a Working Group.

From a pre-scrutiny perspective the Committee sought further information on the Procurement for the Provision of Enforcement Agent Services.

Cabinet Member Report - March 2022 to June 2022

The Committee sought further information at future meetings on the topics of:

The Member Development Programme - The Workforce Learning and Development Manager has been invited to attend the Committee to discuss Members' training and development.

The Elections Act 2022 and the requirement of photographic identification in polling stations; and it was agreed that the impact of the legislation could be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

Next Meeting of the Committee – 13 September 2022

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 13 September 2022. It is anticipated that the meeting will consider the following reports/presentations in the approved Work Programme:

- New Ways of Working
- Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Update
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and Sickness Absence Monitoring
- Financial Performance Monitoring

Corporate Communications and Covid-19 Working Group

As mentioned above, the Committee selected a Corporate Communications and Covid-19 as topic for review by a Working Group. Councillors Bradshaw, Byrom, Carlin and Robinson have agreed to serve on the Working Group. The first meeting of the Working Group will take place on 25 August 2022. It has been agreed that Working Group meetings will be held remotely. Updates will be provided as part of the next Cabinet Member update report.

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)**

The first meeting of the Committee in the 2022/23 Municipal Year was held on 28 June 2022. The meeting was Chaired for the first time by Councillor Dowd. Provided below is a summary of the items considered at the meeting:

Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Pilot – a report was considered that provided an overview of the Pilot; and indicated that one of the actions within Sefton's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23 was to undertake a strategic review of temporary accommodation in Sefton to ensure that the provision was suitable.

The Committee requested the Head of Economic Growth and Housing to request Riverside Housing to compile feedback from communities in which their properties associated with the pilot were located for circulation to Members.

Work Programme 2022/23, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan

The Committee approved its Work Programme for 2022/23; and agreed a fresh approach to the operation of the Committee during the year. The new approach will see two additional informal meetings to be held:

- The week commencing 10 October 2022 to focus on Locality Services and to consider an update on the Operational Activities delivered via Locality Services and the Green Sefton 2021/2022 Annual Report, Service Vision 2030, and Service Plan 2022/23; and
- The week commencing 6 February 2023 to focus on Housing and to consider reports on Leasehold House Sales and an update on the operation of Sandway Homes.

This new proposal would obviate the need for the Committee to establish Working Groups as short reviews of services could be undertaken by all Members at informal meetings.

Cabinet Member Report - March 2022 to June 2022

As is the usual practice at each meeting, the Committee considered Cabinet Member reports relating to the Communities and Housing, Health and Wellbeing; Locality Services, Planning and Building Control and Regeneration and Skills portfolios.

Next Meeting of the Committee – 20 September 2022

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 20 September 2022. It is anticipated that the meeting will consider the following reports/presentations in the approved Work Programme:

- Domestic Abuse report
 - Southport Market Update
 - Effectiveness of the Council's Enforcement Activity Final Report – Update on Recommendations
 - Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group Final Report – Update on Recommendations
- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)**
The first meeting of the Committee in the 2022/23 Municipal Year was held on 21 June 2022. A summary of the items considered at the meeting is provided below.

Ofsted Report and Improvement Plan

The Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education provided a verbal update on the above matter, and the Committee agreed that the Improvement Plan should be submitted to a Special meeting of the Committee prior to its submission to Ofsted; and the Improvement Advisor who chairs the Improvement Board should be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee.

At the time of drafting this report a confidential informal briefing for Members of the Committee is scheduled to take place during mid-August 2022, in respect of the Sefton Children's Improvement Plan.

Ofsted Inspection Reports

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education updating on recent Ofsted Inspection Reports and the work of the School Improvement Team. It was agreed that the Head of Education would be requested to submit a report of the event with Headteachers of Catholic High Schools to be held on 6 July 2022, particularly regarding views on academisation and the Archdiocese; and that a letter would be forwarded to the representatives of the Diocese and Archdiocese on the Committee, requesting them to attend meetings.

Impact of Covid 19 on the Primary Curriculum Working Group - Final Report

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer presenting formally the Final Report of the Impact of Covid 19 on the Primary Curriculum Working Group and Councillor Spencer, Lead Member, introduced the Final Report. The Committee agreed the Final Report and recommended that the Cabinet and the Council be to approve the recommendations.

Cabinet Member Reports

The Committee considered the most recent update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care, and the Cabinet Member – Education, whose portfolios fell within the remit of the Committee. It was agreed that the Head of Children's Social Care be requested to submit a report on recruitment and support for newly qualified social workers to the Committee in 6 months' time;

and that information regarding attendance and sanctions be provided, for circulation to Members of the Committee.

Work Programme Key Decision Forward Plan

The Committee agreed its Work Programme for 2022/23; and noted the progress of the Impact of Covid 19 on the Primary Curriculum Working Group; the latest Key Decision Forward Plan; and the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The re-establishment of the Secondary School Performance and Attainment Working Group will be considered further at the next meeting. All Members of the Committee were invited to participate in informal briefing sessions, to include the topics of the Leeds Family Values and the Sunderland model; and the MacAlister Review.

Next Meeting of the Committee – 27 September 2022

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 27 September 2022 and it is anticipated that the meeting will consider the following reports/presentations in the approved Work Programme:

- Update on Ofsted Report and Improvement Plan;
- Children's Social Care Improvement Journey;
- Education Excellence Strategy for Sefton 2021-2025 – Presentation of Strategy;
- Domestic Abuse; and
- Sefton Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – Update.

Members will also be asked to consider the establishment of a working group to review children's health services in Sefton, as part of the Children's Improvement Plan.

• School Appeals

In addition to the provision of administrative support for meetings of the Council, Cabinet, and Committees, the Section has also continued to organise and clerk school admission appeal hearings and school exclusion reviews.

School admission appeals continue to be busy for the Clerk to the Education Appeal Panel.

Following the allocation of secondary school places on 1 March and primary school places on 19 April the school admission appeal 'transition' period commenced in May. This period is the busiest time of year for school admission appeals and presents very many challenges for the team in terms of time, resources, and general logistics. Hearings commenced on 10 May and were scheduled to conclude on 19 July 2022. However, following the submission of a number of late appeals, there will be 3 secondary school and 4 primary school appeals heard during September. During this period, 288 appeals for 10 High Schools and 18 Primary Schools were/will be organised, administered and clerked. In addition to this figure, during the same period 72 'in-year' appeals were/will be held, bringing the overall figure for school admission May to September to 370. This figure might increase due to requests from the Archdiocese.

The Independent Review Panel, which consider appeals against school permanent exclusion, considered two exclusions in February and May.

Legislation that enabled school appeals to be heard remotely brought in under Covid rules. Initially this change was due to last until 30 September 2022. However, following consultation, the changes to school appeals have been made permanent and they will continue to be held remotely. The arrangements proved popular with Panel members and officers with virtually no negative feedback from parents/guardians.

• Civic & Mayoral

Following Cllr Carragher's installation as Mayor of Sefton for a second term in May, work has already begun on fundraising activities for the Mayor's Charity Fund, we are currently planning a Charity Quiz Night; there will be a World Cup Sweepstake for staff to take part in; a possible 80s themed Charity Night in late January and finally the Mayor's Gala Charity Ball which will take place on Saturday 1st April 2023.

On Monday 1st August, the Mayor, along with a Deputy Lord Lieutenant planted a tree to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Year as part of the Queen's Green Canopy Campaign, the tree was planted in Runnells Lane Park in Thornton to coincide with a recent park refurbishment that has taken place there.

On Sunday 11th September the Mayor will be hosting her Civic Sunday Service at St William of York Church, Thornton. Planning is well underway for this event, the service will start at 9.30am, Mayor's from other Merseyside Borough's along with the High Sheriff will be in attendance at this event.

- **Member Development**

1. Member Development Programme

The Member Development Programme 2022-2023 is now well underway with Members being invited to attend Courses listed in the Member Development Handbook. Courses are held in a variety of formats, namely, E-learning; remotely via Microsoft Teams; and face-to-face. Some of the Teams and face to face sessions are provided at a number of alternative dates and times of the day to give Members plenty of opportunity to attend (e.g. Corporate Parenting and Accessible Information Awareness).

Member attendance at sessions is notified to the Corporate Learning Centre (CLC) and added to Members' learning records.

Members can access their individual learning records of courses attended by logging onto the CLC Me-Learning website. Members are encouraged to complete course evaluation feedback forms at the end of each session and subsequent sessions adapted accordingly if required.

An update on courses run so far this year is provided in Appendix 1.

2. Member Development Steering Group

Following Council approval on 22 April 2022, the Cabinet Member Regulatory Compliance and Corporate Services approval was given on 19 August 2022 for the establishment of a Member Development Steering Group comprising herself as Chair and up to 9 Members to be Member Development Champions (one to three members) from each of the respective political groups Decision - Establishment of a Member Development Steering Group

Accordingly, the respective political group leaders have been emailed requesting nominations for one to three members of their group to be Member Development Champions/Members of the Steering Group. No responses have been received so far, but reminders will be sent to those who still haven't responded after the summer holiday period.

Cabinet Member approval was also given for the Steering Group Terms of Reference as detailed below:

- To formulate a strategy designed to meet the training and development needs of all Elected Members.
- To create an awareness amongst Elected Members of the training and learning opportunities available.
- To gain commitment from all Members to their training and development needs.
- To develop a training plan based on an analysis of Members' needs and which reflects the needs and priorities of the Council as set out in the 2030 Vision and Council's Core Purpose.
- To co-ordinate the work to achieve accreditation under the North-West Charter on Elected Member Development.
- To review and evaluate the effectiveness of Member training.

- To ensure all new Members are inducted into the work of the Council and their role as a Councillor.

Cabinet Member approval was also given for the following Officers to support the Member Development Steering Group:

- Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (Lead)
- The Democratic Services Manager
- Democratic Services Officer (Member Development and Committee administration and minutes)
- Workforce Learning and Development Officer

3. North-West Development Charter

It is proposed to work towards Sefton's achievement of the North-West Development Charter and the Member Development Steering Group will take an active role in this.

The North-West Member Development Charter will provide an established framework to help the Council undertake a self-assessment to develop and review good practice in relation to Member Development.

APPENDIX 1

Member Development Courses Update - 25 May to 23 August 2022

Course Title	Date(s)	Format	Nos completed/attended	Comments
Annual Planning Committee Training Mandatory for Committee Members and Substitutes	25/5/22 + Mop-up sessions	Face to Face Teams	15 Members 13 Subs 3 non-Committee Members	All of the Members and 13 of the Substitutes have now received mandatory training. The remaining 2 substitutes have yet to be appointed to the Planning Committee and will receive mop-up training via Teams once their appointment is approved by Council on 15 September 2022.
Overview and Scrutiny Training	26/5/22	Teams	20 Members and Substitute O&S Committee Members	Proposed that this course will be mandatory for Members and Substitutes from 2023 onwards. This was the only course offered by an external provider (Centre for Government Scrutiny – CfGS - Cost: £800)
L&R training (Mandatory for new Members of L&R Committee)	31/5/22	Teams	9 (5 of whom were new Members)	Proposed to hold this session face-to-face next year
Health Improvement and Prevention	15/6/22	Teams	19	The session was provided jointly by the Local Government Association (at no cost to the authority) and Sefton's Public Health Team. Proposed to hold this course face-to-face next year in the afternoon (rather than morning).
Accessible Information Awareness	21/6/22	Teams	6	This course was provided on a number of dates in 2021-22. To date 35 Councillors have attended. It is due to run again on 5/10/22
Corporate Parenting (Mandatory)	12/7/22	Teams	14	This course was provided on a number of dates in 2021-2022 when 45 Councillors attended. This course was provided on a number of dates in 2021-2022 when 45 Councillors attended. It is due to run again on 5 Nov 2022, 24 Jan 2023 and 1 Feb 2023.

APPENDIX 1 p2

Course Title	Date(s)	Format	Nos Completed/attended	Comments
Getting Started on Social Media – Guidance for Councillors	22/07/22	Face to Face	N/A	This course was cancelled due to the presenter testing positive for Covid. It will be rescheduled in due course. In the meantime, Members have been invited to attend one-to-one sessions if required.
Information & Compliance (Mandatory)	Once a year	E-learning	28 so far this year	Reminders are sent to Councillors by the CLC each year.
Safeguarding Adults Awareness (Mandatory)	Recommended completion date 29/07/22	E-learning	12 in 2021 3 in 2022 15 total	It is proposed that Members will be required to repeat the training every three years.
Safeguarding Children & Young People Awareness (Mandatory)	Recommended completion date 29/07/22	E-learning	11 in 2021 5 in 2022 16 total	It is proposed that Members will be required to repeat the training every three years.
Equality and Diversity Awareness (Mandatory)	Recommended completion date 30/09/22	E-learning	5 in 2021 1 in 2022	Council approval was given on 22 April 2022 for this course to be mandatory It is proposed that Members will be required to repeat the training every three years.

Electoral Services

Annual Canvass of the Register of Electors

The annual canvass to update the register of electors is underway and initial contact has been made with the 130,500 residential properties on our register database. Work will continue through the autumn months to update the register with those areas with substantial new developments being targeted as well as promoting electoral registration with young people. The new 2023 Register of Electors will be published on the 1 December 2022.

Linacre Ward

Following the passing of Councillor Gordon Friel, there is a vacancy for the office of Councillor in Linacre Ward. The Returning Officer has now published a Notice of Vacancy. A by-election will be held if the Returning Officer receives a request from two local government electors from within the area of Sefton. If no requests are received, then the vacancy will be filled at the next round of local elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.

Elections Act 2022

Progress of the Elections Act 2022 has been relatively slow, despite a huge amount of work being undertaken to develop policy to introduce each new element of the Act. This was also impacted by Ministerial changes. The new Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities is The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP with strategic oversight of the Department's business. The Minister of State at the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for London: Paul Scully MP with responsibility for the Electoral Integrity Programme.

Ministers have made some key decisions which are summarised below:

1. Voter identification implementation has been moved from December 2022 to January 2023. The policy will be in place for scheduled polls in May 2023 and the voter card application service is expected to go live in January 2023.
2. Postal vote handling and secrecy measures will now be implemented after the May 2023 polls. They will most likely come into force in Autumn 2023.
3. The voter card, or electoral identification document, could be an A4 paper-based document with inherent security features, such as watermarks and holograms.
4. The voter card application deadline will be six working days ahead of a poll. This will enable central production and delivery management, removing pressure on local authorities in the immediate lead-up to a poll.
5. Electoral Registration Officers will be able to appoint an emergency proxy up until 5pm on polling day for electors whose photo ID is no longer available to them after the application deadline (in the case of their voter id being lost or destroyed).

The delay in pushing back the implementation of Voter ID to January 2023 will have a significant impact on preparations for the May 2024 elections as its introduction will coincide with other key time events in the run up to the elections.

A Voter ID card will only be required if electors don't hold requisite means of photographic identification. Further details will emerge once secondary legislation is in place and guidance issued on implementation of this part of the Act.

Other measures which will be introduced:

1. Change of voting and candidacy rights for EU citizens – June 2023
2. Online Postal Vote Applications – July 2023
3. Remove the 15-year ceiling for overseas electors – July 2023
4. Requirement for existing postal voters to re-apply every 3 years – January 2024
5. Limit the numbers of electors someone can act as a proxy for – May 2024

Boundary Reviews

The Boundary Commission for England have now confirmed that an electoral review of Sefton will take place starting in March 2023

It is nearly 20 years since our last review, which culminated in all-out elections in 2004. The outcome of the review will be the Commission recommending to government the number of councillors we have and the number and geographical make-up of the wards in the borough.

The Commissioners will consider the warding arrangements in the borough based on the principles of equality of electors, community identity and the effectiveness and convenience of local government.

Interestingly, unlike parliamentary reviews which are based on factual evidence from an earlier point in time, they will base their recommendations on the estimated borough population in 2029.

The process will start in March 2023 with final recommendations going to government in April 2024 in time for all-out elections in 2026 (we have a fallow year in 2025).

The Boundary Commissioners will brief all Members on 15th September 2022 via a Teams meeting.

The Council have recently received a request from Thornton Parish Council to undertake a Community Governance Review to consider proposals to extend the existing parish boundaries. In light of the Boundary Commission undertaking a review of Sefton, Thornton Parish Council have been advised that their request and any similar requests to create new parish or amend existing boundaries will be postponed until the Boundary Commission final recommendations have been agreed and actioned.

The Parliamentary Boundary Review is still scheduled to be completed in July 2023. The next Parliamentary General Election must be called no later than December 2024.

Legal Services

- **Children and Social Care Team**

The Children's and Social Care Team have worked through a very difficult period for the client departments and continues to face unprecedented levels of demand on the service. The impact of the pandemic has brought increased pressures and there has been a significant rise in court proceedings which has been a very challenging time for the team. Nationally there has been a significant and sustained rise in children being deemed at risk during Covid and Sefton have had a rise in care proceedings during this period which together with cases not being able to be concluded due to Covid restrictions has brought increased workloads for the team. There also continues to be a rise in cases with an international element.

- **Contracts**

The team remains extremely busy working, supporting across the entire spectrum of Council departments and services. The team continues to play a key role in advising on and steering the structuring of the Council's major projects under the Growth Programme, in particular the MLEC project, other development projects in Southport, the continuing transformation of the CLAC and the various Bootle regeneration projects. We also continue to advise on a number of long-running projects in which difficulties/disputes have arisen e.g. removal of the non-performing contractor on CLAC, the fallout from VIAM's insolvency and its impact on the delivery of highways work, ongoing negotiations around the Crosby Leisure PFI project, delivery of improvement works relating to the Southport Business Park/housing, etc. We have provided support in terms of governance to address historic practices of service areas commissioning services based on informal, undocumented arrangements.

The team continues to be heavily involved in advising on the Council's commercialisation ventures including initiatives, and the nuanced issues around how the Council interacts with its wholly-owned companies such as SHOL, Sandway, SND and advising on the pros and cons of different commercialisation options. The team is also advising on the Council's initiatives to re-enter the council housing market including potential grant funding from Homes England and other housing support programmes, and on the subsidy control aspects of many funding schemes including the Government's 'Levelling Up' agenda.

The after-effects of Covid pandemic continues to impact the Council's procurement and contracting activity which Legal Contracts supports, including ongoing variations reacting to the pandemic, extensions of existing contracts to endure service continuity in a sub-optimal market for fresh procurement) and numerous post-Covid recovery schemes particularly around social care provision, work restart schemes, mental health schemes, etc.

Brexit also continues to have a transformative effect on the Council's contracting and procurement activity and Legal Contracts continues to provide proactive advice around forthcoming changes to the UK's public procurement regime (both the general regime, and the proposals for a bespoke health and social care regime) and new subsidy control (formerly state aid).

- **Prosecutions and Regulation**

The Litigation and Regulatory team continues to be busy working across a range of prosecution, regulation and compliance issues supporting a wide range of Council functions. Highlights include: the

team have represented the council in a taxi appeal at Sefton Magistrates court and obtained a warrant under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 in order to investigate the state of a property; the debt recovery team have now secured a legal charge on a property in relation to a debt of £73K that dates back to 2004; and recovered an historic nursing home debt of £16,477.12.

The team also provides employment law advice on a range of day to day and strategic matters for both the Council and the schools in the Borough. The team also have conduct of all of the Council's employment tribunal cases and a broad range of cases for schools under service level agreements. The team has been providing strategic support on high profile employment work including recruitment issues and incentives in Children's Services and a proposal to apply for immigration sponsorship licenses for overseas social workers.

- **Property and Planning**

The property team has been very busy over the summer; with some significant matters concluding such as the re-gear of the Magdalen House lease. Planning matters also continue having recently concluded the full day appeal of the SAFE, St Mary's Complex, Waverley Street, Bootle development.

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Operational Issues

Advice and support are provided to all service areas regarding employment/staffing matters. Work continues in Children's Social Care and a number of key recruitments have taken place as well as guidance on staffing matters in order to help workforce improvements. The Personnel team has formed a distinct Business Support Unit which is providing support on a number of operational and HR related matters. Work in relation to Children's Social Care is providing a challenge to some other resources.

There is still an impact on service provision relative to the Coronavirus pandemic, but this is much less than in previous reports.

Arrangements are continuing with regard to a planned return to work in accordance with the advice and guidance from the Health and Safety team and risk assessments are being undertaken in this regard. Most staff are continuing to work from home with agile working at office sites as required.

Matters relating to disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work continue to be lesser than usual. Formal meetings are being held via Microsoft Teams, although in person meetings can be arranged as necessary. Advice and support in the management of sickness absence continues and formal action under the sickness absence policy is being taken, again via Microsoft Teams but can be arranged in person as necessary.

Operational Teams appreciate the need for sensitive advice given the pressures on Employees and the Authority.

Pay & Grading and Establishment Control Team

Job evaluation is undertaken relative to all Council and School posts for new or revised roles and relative to any operational and service reviews to maximise efficiencies as part of restructuring exercises across the Council. Team members are involved in service reviews and work to support transformational proposals and potential changes to service delivery.

The Establishment Control team are responsible for building any revised structures and changes to reporting hierarchies into the Councils operating systems. The team members have been heavily involved in the project of implementing the new iTrent Payroll and HR system. The Managers Self Service (MSS) module was rolled out in April 22 to include Children's services following a full review of the CS structure, and consequently managers should be able to access all their direct reports.

The Establishment Control deal with all requests in relation to the release of vacancies, changes of hours, temporary arrangements. These changes are mapped to ensure correct payments are made, hierarchical

organisational structures are appropriate and operational processes are effectively maintained. A review of the EC forms used by managers is underway and a revised suite of forms and guidance will be available shortly.

Establishment Control review safeguarding checks held against posts e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service, Health Care Professional Council (HCPC) etc and the team manages and controls the temporary end dates relative to all fixed term contracts and provides establishment control information reports for the Council and schools.

Regrading applications and appeals are processed in line with the Council protocol.

The team undertakes the review of HAY graded positions for new posts and the evaluation of HAY posts stemming from any revised proposals to the HAY grading structure.

The team manage the Matrix contract relative to the recruitment of Agency workers. Agency recruitment is currently at an all-time high relative to social worker and associated positions especially within Children's Services

The team manage sickness absence data, including production of management reports, sickness absence analysis and quarterly absence figures for SLT.

Work with colleagues from ICT to implement the required linkage between the JE database and the iTrent system is 90% completed and work is ongoing with some minor anomalies.

Officers are involved with Employment Tribunal claims (approx. 580) relative to employees seeking backdating of amendments to Term Time Only salary calculations. The claims have been stayed pending a recent Court of Appeal case and the stay is now lifted.

Within the Policy unit the officers undertake regular reviews of policy, procedures and guidance and introduce new policies as required in line with current legislation. They are also involved in Corporate Equalities initiatives, staff support groups, responding to Freedom of Information and subject access requests, and assistance with mandatory training for managers.

Transactional HR Payroll & Pension (THRP) Services

THRP are now live in iTrent

There are still issues Monthly Data Collection (MDC) for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which we are working with MHR and Merseyside Pension Fund to resolve. The last file to be sent was for April 2022.

The staff are still learning the new system are still working extremely hard and long hours to ensure all staff are paid on time.

Some THRP staff are continuing to work from home and more staff are coming into the office. Some processes have had to be changed and the staff have embraced these changes. The number of staff going into the office is still being closely monitored.

Employee Self Service (ESS) has been rolled out to all Sefton employees, for viewing of payslips and to amend address, bank details etc. and paper payslips and P60s have been produced for staff who are unable to access the Internet.

Claiming expenses via ESS and approved via Manager Self Service (MSS) is now live and being promoted to staff to use.

The team have now completed, Year End Processing (P60s etc), Teachers End of Year Certificates and NHS annual Pension returns.

Teachers Pensions Monthly data collection (MDC) move to Monthly Contribution Reconciliation (MCR) from 1st April 2022 has been delayed until later in the year and a further delay has been requested as the iTrent software has several known issues.

The Local Government pay award from 1st April 2022 is still to be agreed.

The Youth Pay Award from 1st September 2021 will be paid in August 2022 pay.

Occupational Health

Health Unit

During May, June and July 2022, a total of 184 referrals for SMBC employees were made to the Health Unit. This is a decrease of 7.54% when compared to the same period in the previous 12 months in which there were 199 referrals.

Referrals during this latest period included Education Excellence (52.72%), Locality Services (19.02%), and Adult Social Care (8.15%). As usual the main reasons were stress and mental health related (45.65%), chronic medical illness (23.37%) and musculoskeletal (15.22%).

As previously advised face to face physiotherapy sessions have resumed and have been welcomed by the employees who have accessed these.

Annual school crossing patrol medicals are currently being carried out face to face for the first time since 2019. The SCP Officers are also extremely receptive to these.

The Unit will continue to gradually increase face to face services, as risk assessments allow.

Workforce Learning and Development (CLC)

Apprenticeships

Staff enrolled on the **Level 6 Social Work Apprenticeship Degree** and the **Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship Degree programme (MBA)** are continuing with their studies and are making good progress.

There are plans to recruit two Occupational Therapy (OT) trainees from September 2022 to join the **Level 6 Occupational Therapy Degree** in March 2023. The degree will take 4 years to complete and on completion the trainees will be able to register with the Health and Care Professions (HCPC) Council.

Training delivery

The Workforce Learning and Development Team continues to deliver a number of training programmes and initiatives. These include:

- **Corporate Mandatory Training** – this includes Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Safeguarding Adults Awareness, Safeguarding Children & Young People Awareness and Climate Change. Monthly reports are shared with ELT/SLB to encourage staff to complete these courses.
- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training delivery is going well. To date, we have trained 153 Sefton Council and schools' staff, an increase of 7 since the previous report (May 2022).
- **Training Needs Analysis / Performance Development Review** – the PDR cycle for 2022/23 begins 1st September 2022. To support this year's process, we are producing an online survey to capture staff L&D needs and requirements. To support the PDR, we are producing an online reporting tool to capture the total number of PDR returns by service area.
- **LCRCA Race Equality Training** – working with the LCRCA and neighbouring LAs to develop a training programme to complement existing E&D awareness training. This will include the 'lived experience' to enable us to address the structural and systemic racial biases that exist in some organisations and to challenges micro aggressions and unconscious biases in the workplace. Sefton was allocated 225 places for the 1st phase of the training to commence October 2022, this will include a cross section of middle managers and hard to reach groups.
- **Corporate Induction** eLearning goes live on Friday 19th August. The eLearning will be for new starters joining the organisation and includes 3 modules: Module 1 provides an overview of the

landscape and the people of Sefton; Module 2 includes the services provided by the Council and Module 3 provides information that supports employees initial period with the Council e.g., a range of services and resources available for new starters.

Workforce/Organisational Development

We have been supporting Children's Social Care with a number of workforce development actions following the recent Ofsted inspection:

The current priority is supporting the senior management team to roll out a training programme to support the implementation of the Leeds Family Valued Model. This includes:

- **Relational Leadership Management Programme** to discuss and reflect on practice and management issues, and how to progress their own and their team members' understanding and application of a restorative practice approach.
- **Core Components for Effective Team Leadership** - Provides opportunities to focus on particular themes, which highlights findings from Ofsted reports, audits, case reviews and research continuously highlight as areas for improvement.
- **Restorative Practice Awareness / Principles into Practice** – this will introduce the main features of Restorative Practice and further develop restorative approaches in key areas of practice.
- **A series of Practitioner Briefings / Practice Forums** – provides opportunities to explore a specific piece of research or practice in depth e.g., Reimagining Child Welfare. Values and Principles and using Language.
- **Series of Practice Forums** which include SMART Planning and Review of Impact Plans, Restorative Practice Approach to Domestic Violence, Family Led Decision Making, Voice of the Child.

Courses are being added to Me Learning and we are sending out comms to various audiences to ensure staff sign up to the programmes that are relevant to them.

We delivered a Culture session to a cross section of Senior Managers to explore our culture and our teams from different perspectives (organisational, own peer group, service areas) and looking to the future which included the positive elements of Sefton's culture now. We are planning to replicate these sessions with a cross section of middle managers some time in the Autumn of 2022.

Strategic Support Business Intelligence

The Business Intelligence team is continuing to support many work streams across the Council including Children's Social Care, Economic Regeneration, Education Excellence, Adult Social Care, and Public Health Services. The team has developed a new performance report for the new Executive Director Children's Social Care and Education and his leadership team. The team will continue to work with Children's Services to further develop this area. In parallel the team is also supporting the development of a new performance framework for data Adults Social Care for inspection preparedness.

The team is supporting the Integrated Care System (ICS) and leading on Population Health Management workstream.

Progress continues with the implementation of the Council's new enterprise data warehouse platform, which will enable big data analytics.

The Service continues to support consultation and engagement activities, respond to complaints and subject access requests in a timely manner and provide information, advice, and guidance across the Council on matters relating to information governance and data protection.

The project to digitise the Council's historic paper records continues at pace, with work ongoing to move records stored at disparate locations to the Council's contracted 3rd party secured storage provider, taking opportunity to destroy legacy records and digitise those that are not required to be kept in original paper

format. The team has recently begun to process legacy records stored at the former Thomas Gray School site.

Strategic Support

The team is now focused to providing support across the various services with policy & strategy development, service reviews and transformation activity, including support for the Council 2023 and supporting the Children's Social Care Improvement plan.

Members of the team are also supporting Children's Services team with the actions in the Improvement Plan and associated review work.

Procurement

The Council Social Value Policy has been agreed by Cabinet Member Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

Communications

The Communications team continues to be at the heart of all activity across the Council and is playing a critical role in supporting all areas of the Council in order to ensure that residents and business are informed at the earliest opportunity of all key issues and information is provided in a clear and concise manner. All internal and external communication channels are being used extensively.

The Comms Team promoted and attended the PRIDE march. An excellent video was created and posted to our social media channels.

Press releases issued by the team on Levelling Up funding bids for Crosby and Bootle received good coverage, as did the release on the Council's bid to host Dippy the Dinosaur at Bootle Strand.

Coastal comms with partners from Sefton Coastal Landscape Partnership (which includes Merseyside Police, MFRS, RNLI, National Trust and others) were well received, and as the weather warmed up the team promoted Drowning Prevention and Water Safety assets and warnings.

The team worked with colleagues at Sefton's 2 CCGs to ensure coverage of the newly formed Integrated Care Partnership, with effect from 1 July, and the closure of the 2 CCGs.

Over the summer the team has helped to promote high profile events in the borough such as the Southport Flower show and the Air Show, and the Bootle Climate Action Festival. The team helped to promote Southport Market's first birthday, and other Town Deal stories, such as the progress with the Marine Lake Events Centre (MLEC) project.

The imminent launch of the Lake House at Crosby Lakeside will hopefully generate more positive coverage in the media.

The new Web Content Officer continues to make good progress on updating and reconfiguring the Council website.

A specific area which captures all the information and advice residents may need about the Cost of Living support available is being created, and will be live and fully populated before the end of August.

The Communications Team have been providing significant support to colleagues in Children's Services; most recently with support to promote a number of management job vacancies, and the launch of the Sefton Caring Charter, helping to organise the launch event and generate positive media coverage. The team will continue to work closely with colleagues across the Council on this initiative, and may do a second round of media comms after 6 or 12 months, but will this time be able to include positive case studies of care experienced young people and the benefits of the caring charter scheme for them and local businesses.

