

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

| Councillor | Portfolio | Date |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| John Fairclough | Cabinet Member Locality Services | November 2022 |

Operational In-House Services

Catering and Building Cleaning Services

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.

Two schools are returning to our Cleaning Service in the coming weeks which is a positive outcome.

This issue is likely to be further exacerbated once the annual pay award for 2022/23 is finalised. The current offer would give most catering staff a pay increase of 10.4% and most cleaning staff an increase of 10.5%.

Recruitment of staff in both services remains very difficult in certain parts of the Borough with some posts receiving no applications, causing operational difficulties. It is hoped that the forthcoming pay award will make such roles more attractive to potential applicants.

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.

Burials and Cremations

The Burials and Cremations team have received a high standard of recognition from the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) for Southport Crematorium following an inspection of the site found that all areas inspected were deemed excellent. The service has continuously improved by reducing complaints and ensuring an improved standard of service.

A new contract is currently in progress for the control and safety of all memorial headstones across all of our burial sites, and further training of a wider staff cohort on the use of cremation equipment is underway to ensure sustainability of service provision for the future.

The service is now fully staffed following the completion of a restructure in July 2022 and savings realised through that restructure has enabled the service to employ 2 apprentices to give back to young people and allow them to learn new skills for the future.

Thornton Crematorium and Cemetery has had some larger maintenance works undertaken to ensure correct service provision for the future including roadway repairs to major potholes on the drives and new flooring laid within the Crematory to ensure a safe operation of the cremation process.

Sefton ARC and Careline

As part of the service review that has been underway, an ICT project is underway to improve network switches across all Sefton ARC functions and provide additional control measures for cyber security.

The service recently received a successful assessment for NSI Fire Technical Alarm provision. The assessment report included the following feedback:

"I have reviewed your NSI Portal and have noted there are no improvement observations which require a response submitting to the NSI - Fantastic result!!"

The Careline successfully moved over to a cloud-based platform on the 26 October 2022. Not only did this bring the team together in a new office location within the Sefton ARC building, more importantly, it has significantly increased the resilience of the Careline Service as a whole. The team are now working more efficiently together, and work will continue to make further improvements, with the overall focus on improving processes and working towards our TSA accreditation which is due at the end of November. Work is continuing with transition from analogue to digital alarms across the borough with many analogue lifelines being replaced by Digital Smart Hubs. The move onto the new platform will also provide the opportunity to explore other compatible digital products.

The next project for the Careline team will be the implementation of a new database which will significantly improve the way in which the whole team works. The database, which is already used within Sefton Equipment Stores, will allow us to automate stock monitoring of TECS kit, provide a single point of contact to manage customer information as well as providing more accurate reports into our overall performance.

Waste Management and Street Cleansing

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked for a specific report on the following service areas for November:

Weed Control

As with many areas nationwide, Sefton has had issues with weed growth across varying areas of the Borough. Whilst there are certainly challenges Boroughwide, the weed growth has been particularly prevalent within the South substantially.

This was given significant focus through the formation of a MRG in 2021 dedicated to exploring these issues and seeking resolution, including the production of a commissioned assessment report from APSE. The South of the Borough has increased street furniture, is significantly more industrialised and high volume of commercial traffic creates increased detritus in channels. In turn, this creates significant seed beds for germination within short periods of time, particularly with warm and wet weather conditions becoming prevalent.

With effect from 1st April 2022, the management of the weed control programme delivered via a contractor was moved from the Highway Service to the Street Cleansing Service as part of recommendations made by the MRG.

All street cleansing staff are aware of the necessity to scrape out weeds encompassed within their daily duties, the task is resource intensive. Additional resource has been applied to this task through the recent budget uplift.

A robust monitoring process has been introduced to ensure contract compliance in addition to regular contract review meetings. The programme delivery schedule has now almost completed the fourth spray of the season.

The contractor provides a daily update of areas sprayed and officers undertake spot inspections of those locations to evidence 'die back'.

Failure of the weed control chemical is reported back to the contractor for respray at their costs. A full weed removal programme on the identified trunk roads is also underway.

Street Cleansing Provision

Synopsis of the service prior to April 2022:

The street cleansing service operate a Monday – Friday service delivery model, with the exception of a weekend provision to the tourist designated locations within Southport. Small selection of locations of high footfall or night-time economy are serviced outside of the Monday – Friday service delivery.

The service delivers mechanical cleansing (both channel and footpath) and manual cleansing.

The current assumed frequency for mechanical channel sweeping is quoted as a 12–14-week rota, however due to only having 3 large mechanical sweepers on the fleet this was not being achieved.

For a Borough the size of Sefton, with the density of population, high leaf fall areas in addition to the highly industrialised locations and docks of the south, this is an ineffective timeframe to address the deterioration of the local environmental quality.

The large mechanical sweeping fleet requires increase to efficiently rectify this issue. Additionally, a 'needs based' provision should be considered rather than a 'one size fits all' approach to fully maximise outcomes.

The employees who deliver the manual cleansing service have a keen focus on the litter picking aspect of their role, however, the wider understanding of 'street cleansing' required reinvigoration. A culture of not seeing the wider issues within the 'street scene' such as accumulation of leaves, fly posting, weed growth or graffiti has developed and this contributes to the deterioration of the local environmental quality or the 'broken window effect' in many locations.

Litter bins:

The litter bin replacement budget does not sit within the service area but is encompassed within 'Ward budgets' under the control of the relevant elected members.

There is no agreed boroughwide 'Litter Bin Installation Policy' which many Councils have adopted with clear criteria to adhere to. Although not an exhaustive list, examples of which may contain:

- Areas of high footfall
- Grazing route from shop to school
- Night-time economy locations
- Area has generated X number of complaints within an agreed period of assessment

A scoring mechanism is usually attributed to each criteria, and if the installation request meets the agreed threshold, then a litter bin is installed. It provides an equitable approach and can be clearly explained to residents.

Future consideration may wish to be given to a Boroughwide litter bin renewal and replacement programme by undertaking a condition survey of litter bins to ensure they are fit for purpose in terms of capacity and review style/aesthetics moving forward to promote uniformity of street furniture etc.

Over the years, differing suppliers have been used and now there are a selection of styles and sizes in situ across the Borough. These could be phased out over an agreed programme for example, with the aim of improvements across the 'street scene' if central management of the budget was an option.

Fly tipping:

There is an excessive fly tipping problem/culture within the Borough.

An O&S report in 2021 assessing enforcement provision made a recommendation of an increased presence of uniformed enforcement officers. If introduced, the focus of said enforcement would be beneficial if weighted towards 'environmental

enforcement' encompassing incidents of fly tipping and visiting commercial premises to ensure that they have legitimate waste disposal arrangements in place.

All UK local authorities are required to collect data relating to the number of incidents of fly tipping within their Borough and submit the quarterly return for Government data collecting purposes. This is done via the web based municipal waste data system Waste Data Flow.

Within all local authorities, when identifying the data required for incidents of fly tipping it is essential that accurate data is captured. There are two sets of data that need to be amalgamated and submitted to accurately reflect the volume of work that is being undertaken and also show the scale for the problem for service led decision making. It's valuable management information when attributing resources to tackle the problem and showing trends.

The first set of data is derived from incidents of fly tipping reported by members of the public either online or via the Contact Centre. The second set of data is from the operational teams themselves who should complete a fly tipping log of any incidents that they identify during the course of their duties that has not already been raised as a formal 'job ticket'.

The Street Cleansing service in Sefton did not undertake the team recording functionality prior to April 2022 therefore the accurate scale of the problem has been masked in terms of data analysis. This has now been rectified.

Improvements since 1st April 2022 as follows:

Increase of large mechanical sweeper fleet from 3 to 4 – the focus of the new round is the South of the Borough, areas of high footfall and locations with high deterioration of local environmental quality.

Rear entry teams have increased from 4 teams to 5, they have been allocated their own 'zone' and will work on a continuous loop within the designated zones. This means that the teams will begin to take accountability for their own work area and also be a presence within the locations, able to respond to issues timely.

A small pilot project was undertaken within the Litherland Ward which incorporated the full removal of vegetation from the rear entries following fly tipping removal. Whilst this was a costly undertaking as the vegetation removal was undertaken by our weed control contractors, it did provide an excellent outcome. Sadly, it did not deter residents from continuing to fly tip in the rear entries in some areas, often as quickly as within a day of the final clearance.

3 x 'Glutton' machines have been purchased and deployed across the Borough, they have both suction and wash facilities. Additionally, the teams have been provided with additional equipment such as blowers and hand tools. Significant low base epicormic growth from street trees has been underway to prevent trapped litter and detritus.

There are currently 12 vacancies within the Street Cleansing Service, 5 are newly funded through the recent revenue uplift, 7 are legacy vacancies that had not been

filled when the former post holder exited the organisation. Recruitment is underway with a focus on internal opportunities in the first instance before external advertisement. Agency staff have been utilised in her interim period until all permanent positions are filled.

The structure of how the teams are deployed on a daily basis is now under review to create a zonal approach that mirrors the model of the rear entry teams where possible, again to provide accountability and a regular area presence.

The service continues to establish a working relationship with National Highways to fulfil our statutory requirement for manual and mechanical cleansing on the A5036.

Waste Containment Consultation

For clarity, the initial Waste Containment Consultation was part of a Cleansing Services Review Report in 2018/19 proposed by the then Head of Locality Services.

The approach to the introduction of communal bins and/or wheelie bins for alternative weekly collection (where infrastructure allowed) to enable the eradication of black sack waste collection methods was part of a number of service improvement proposals at that time.

There were a number of successes following this review and a percentage of properties benefited from receiving individual household wheelie bins. However, the low number of communal bin sites that were created and installed proved far more controversial. There was significant opposition to the sites and furthermore, they attracted fly tipping, unauthorised disposal of commercial waste and unsightly style of waste disposal as some users did not contain waste appropriately or ensure apertures were completely closed following use.

A combination of management instability within the service and the COVID pandemic prevented the project being rolled out any further and this meant that the proposals to provide additional bins – be they individual wheelie bins per household or communal sites – effectively lay dormant for a period of time until late 2021 when the project was re-established and a consultation of the remaining proposed electoral wards took place in early 2022.

The results of which to date are as follows:

Overview

The consultation area was made up of 8,372 premises over 187 individual streets. These premises spanned across 7 electoral wards in total.

Of those 8,372 premises, the Council received 1,209 returns, resulting in just over a 14% participation rate. These 1,209 responses included data collected from online consultation, emails, calls, elected member enquiries, MPs, and petitions.

Whilst every effort was made to address match the email responses a small number could not be identified. Mapping details have been retained to demonstrate overall totals and area totals split into preference.

Engagement and Consultation Online Survey Results

- Total of 983 returns from those who participated online

- 62 without unique code submission therefore input is officially deemed as 'spoilt' as the data cannot be linked to an address

Communications Received outside of the Online Process (Direct Contact)

- Total of 400 emails received from various sources, including residents, elected members, MP's.
- Of those received, 277 households indicated a preference to remain on a sack collection method
- 15 households wanted to take up alternative weekly collections (AWC) utilising wheelie bins
- 4 households expressed a preference for the installation of communal bin sites
- 104 either objected to the consultation or refused both options
- There were a number of petitions received from the L20 area, all of which expressed a desire to remain upon sack collections.

From all combined responses both online and direct communications:

Of the 1,209 the following results:

- Communal Bins - 123 households in support
- AWC (individual household wheelie bins) - 783 households in support
- Remain on sack collections – 248 households expressed this desire

Resulting data illustrates:

- Participation in the online consultation was extremely low
- Data gathered from both sources demonstrated little or no appetite for the implementation of Communal Bins across this area of Sefton
- Direct communication results confirms that there is an appetite from a percentage of residents to remain on a sack collection method
- A small number made preference to AWC and wanting a wheelie bin

Resulting Actions

Benefit analysis regarding moving forward, including further discussions on appetite for change is required.

Whilst there remains a preference from a significant cohort of residents to remain in a sack collection style service, it must be acknowledged that that does not provide the most appropriate methodology in terms of waste containment, control of volume of waste, not does it promote recycling.

Consideration could be given to adopting a 'Waste Containment' approach for the Borough in terms of household waste collection which would need to include significant behavioural change and education to improve

Any requests for communal bins have not been progressed following the announcement by the Cabinet Member at Budget Council in March 2022 that this method of collection will not be pursued.

Upon request from ward members, any communal bins that had already been installed as part of the initial pilot and are no longer required have been removed and residents have reverted back to sack collections. There are a low number of sites

where communal bins have remained, these were site specific requests supported by ward members.

Whilst residents remain on sack collections, there may be merit in providing storage vessels to all residents who require them. This will help to contain waste until sacks are presented upon day of collection.

Further assessments for those areas requesting AWC collections to identify round remodelling and route optimisation is underway.

However, this is a significant undertaking from a resource perspective which will require a controlled project plan of implementation.

Route optimisation surveys have been conducted on all roads identified within the project, this equates to 187 streets containing 8,372 premises. This was an extensive process as we needed to incorporate areas within existing rounds and in some cases introduce new round collection days where necessary.

This phase is almost complete, and feedback will be provided through the Cabinet Member Briefing process and subsequently to ward members, providing information regarding any the properties that are recommended to transfer to AWC collection.

Following the conclusion of discussions with ward members, all residents affected by proposed changes will be written to providing the implementation plan for their address. Corporate comms messages will also be distributed. A definitive timescale for the conclusion of this project is still to be agreed.

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.
- There is little change in the progress of the Port of Liverpool Access scheme. National Highways have confirmed that they are concentrating on updating their traffic modelling to take account of the impact of changes in traffic patterns resulting from Covid. They have confirmed in their latest update, from July 22, that 'this detailed and important work is likely to take approximately 12 months to complete' and therefore they will not be in a position to publish an updated project timeline, including when they intend to formally consult the local community and the wider general public their proposals, until this traffic modelling work is completed. The statutory public consultation needs to be undertaken in advance of the DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate. This is unlikely to take place until late 2023 at the earliest.

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 was agreed and the Council is currently on target to achieve the agreed

spend. The settlement 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.

- Consideration has been given to a programme for 23-24 and beyond to ensure there are no delays in delivery. This programme will be agreed by the LCRCA in February 2023 and will shortly be reviewed and agreed with Cabinet Member.
- 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 Transport Strategy for the borough. Some initial baselining work has been completed and the outcome will be shared, initially with Members. The Council is seeking a report, the aim of which will be to provide a quantification of the current transport related carbon position for the Council and a future trajectory for reductions towards Net Zero. The consultants are also identifying the next steps, which will include an engagement exercise. Progress is also being made on the development of an Active Travel and E-mobility Strategies for the Borough.
- In order to identify potential improvement to the Council's walking and cycling network a local cycling and walking infrastructure plan is being developed. Proposals for stakeholder engagement will be presented to the Consultation and Engagement Panel in early November. A number of engagement sessions have already been held with specific interest groups and some initial plans developed for helping inform the engagement process.
- The preliminary design of the schemes to be included in the Full Business Cases for the Southport Eastern Access and the Maritime Corridor has been completed and discussed with Active Travel England. The detailed design work is now progressing on both schemes and the final drawings will be included within the Full Business Case submission as requested by the LCRCA. Part of the Maritime Corridor scheme is likely to be funded from the Levelling Up Fund, following the success of the transport bid. There is some pressure to have the scheme delivered as soon as the FBC is approved, and therefore procurement options are being examined. Some further engagement to ensure that local Members, businesses and residents are sighted on the proposals and have an ability to shape them is planned for November - January.
- Design work is continuing on improvements to 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. Discussions will have been undertaken with local Ward Members and Maghull Town Council on the details of both schemes and further consultation with the wider public is programmed.
- In Southport, improvements to Scarisbrick Avenue in conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Initiative have been completed, including the installation of lighting. Some defect works are planned for completion in January 2023.

- Design work on the first phase of public realm project identified within the Southport Town Deal (*Les Transformation de Southport*) has begun. Some targeted consultation with local businesses is currently underway. This should ensure that all immediate and long-term implications are known.
- Works have commenced on the detailed design of the highway works which will support the development proposed for the Green Car Park which is subject to the Levelling Up Fund. The works are aimed at reducing severance and improving access to the town centre. Discussions are ongoing with relevant authorities over the potential phasing of the works.
- Initial work has also been commissioned to review access to the Strand in Bootle, in order to help shape initial work associated with the re-imagining of the centre.

Local Transport Schemes

- The Transportation Capital Programme for 2022/23 was approved some months ago and will shortly be updated and submitted to Cabinet Member for approval.

Sustainable Transport

- The proposals for a new pedestrian and cycle route through Crosby Coastal Park were not approved by the Council's Planning Department despite the public consultation indicating overall support.

The perceived safety issue which was cited as the reason for refusal has been further examined and a number of alternative options examined with a preferred solution developed. Some further engagement has been held with representatives from the coastal Forum, residents' groups and Ward Members. Further meetings are planned which could help shape further plans. The LCRCA have indicated that there is a limited extension to the funding window which allows time for a modified scheme, which addresses the Planning Committee's concerns to be submitted to Planning. A procurement exercise has previously been completed and may have to be repeated prior to works commencing if and when approval is granted. Habitat improvement works will also be delivered as part of the scheme should approval be granted,

- The Department for Transport has confirmed that the funding secured from tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund can be used for proposals to improve the cycle and walking facilities on part of the Formby Bypass. The design has been agreed with Active Travel England, and tenders invited. Works are programmed to commence in December 2022 and completed by March 2023.
- Revenue funding has been received from the Active Travel Fund for the development of projects capable of 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 complement 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 and a dedicated officer, seconded from Sustrans, will shortly commence the selection and engagement work.

- The LCRCA have commissioned consultants to commence works on the Green Bus Corridor, which includes the consideration of proposals for Bus Priority and active travel on the No 53 bus corridor which includes Stanley Road. Initial meetings have been held with the Council and information provided to the consultant.

Highway Development Control

Planning Applications

- The team continue to process large numbers of planning applications despite ongoing challenges associated with the recent turnover in staffing resources, increased by the fact that no suitable applications were received for the vacant senior highway development engineer post.

The applications include sites identified in the Local Plan and continue to involve close liaison with case officers from the planning department. A total of 246 applications have been responded to in June to August 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 – 39
 - No of stalled or no activity (on the part of a developer) – 2 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 – 18
 - 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 63 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 by February 2023.

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 collaborating 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 active travels 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 completed, tenders have been received and appraised for the Crosby Coastal Park 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. Discussions have commenced with Network Rail over this scheme

Highway Asset Management

Winter Maintenance

- The winter maintenance policy for this year was approved by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th September.
- Our winter season officially starts on 31st October and all pre-season calibration and checks have been completed.
- Regular updates will be provided throughout the season to monitor expenditure, as we have done in previous years.

Street Lighting LED retro fit scheme

- As of 12th October, we have replaced 11,712 lanterns, 2136 lamp columns and 78 LED signs.
- This equates to 1,630,139.53 KWH of energy savings and 357.69 TC02e of carbon savings.
- Discussions are on-going about potential to accelerate the programme with a view to increasing the energy and carbon savings.

- We have received complaints from residents regarding the reduction in lighting levels as a result of the new LED lanterns. We are continuing to address these complaints as they are received.

Traffic signals LED retro fit scheme

- Approval has been given and funding has been received from the LCRA for the replacement of all LED signal head equipment in the Borough.
- This scheme will also reduce energy consumption and provide carbon savings, as well as reducing on-going maintenance costs.
- The scheme is due to start in the next few months and is expected to take 2 years to complete.