

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills – 08th November 2022)

COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Trish Hardy	Communities and Housing	November 2022

NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Officers have been working with Crosby Housing to develop a Good Neighbour agreement. They have attended hot spot areas to encourage tenants to sign up to the charter with a view to cleaning up the streets and the rear entries and stopping the fly tipping and Anti-Social Behaviour. The team delivered rear entry fly tipping leaflets, placed dog fouling stickers up and placed a notice on an abandoned vehicle. Work is ongoing with our ASB team, and we will be delivering clean up days going forward.

Additional youth engagement nights have taken place in Bedford Park to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and engage with young people in the area. Funded via Ward budgets the youth nights actively engaged with young people ranging from 15-19.

Operation Banger planning is complete and the Multi Agency plan is in place. There will be bonfire material removal in the period running up to bonfire night available in hot spot areas, and there will be a coordinated night of activity around Halloween.

The summer Holiday Activity and Food programme was a great success. There were 38 providers ranging from schools and charities to skate parks, performing arts providers and sports camps. The activities saw almost 1500 children attend across the 6 weeks. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with providers reporting benefits for children with additional needs; those at risk of becoming involved with county lines; and children suffering from anxiety. Additionally, the provision has enabled parents to stay in work and undertake training courses and has allowed schools to switch from term time to 52-week contracts.

Planning for Christmas is well underway. Ward Councillors have been working with the team to identify their Christmas tree and Christmas Lighting needs. Ward budgets will be used to fund Christmas activities.

The following areas are having new cut tree pits installed

Location	Work agreed & ordered
South Rd	Cut Tree Pit to be installed (hard standing)
Birkdale Village	Cut tree pit to be installed (hard standing)
Thornton	Cut Tree pit to be installed (soft standing)

The trees for the sites listed below have been ordered and we are expecting delivery in Mid-November. The table also shows proposed dates of Christmas events.

Location	Tree Size	Funding Agreed	Christmas Event
Birkdale Village	Trader's sourcing tree	Birkdale Ward	End of November TBC
Thornton	26ft Nordmann Fir	Manor Ward	Friday 2 nd December 6.45pm
Crosby Village	26ft Nordmann Fir	B-Sands/Victoria Ward	TBC
South Rd	26ft Nordmann Fir	Church Ward	Thurs 24 th November 4.45pm
Bootle Strand	20ft Nordmann Fir	Derby/Linacre Ward	Friday 18 th November 5pm

Seaforth Village	20ft Nordmann Fir	Linacre Ward	N/A
Bispham Rd	25ft Nordmann Fir	Norwood	Fri 25 th November 5.30pm
Kirkstone Rd	N/A	Ford	Thursday 1 st December 5pm
Marian Sq.	N/A	St Oswalds	Tues 29 th November 6.30pm

Welfare Reform

Food bank

1st April 2022 – 1 st August 2022	South Sefton	Southport
Total Vouchers received	2038	718
Adults Fed	2588	973
Children Fed	1478	560
Total Fed	4066	1533
Crisis Type	Low income – 1458 vouchers presented 2912 people fed	Low income – 376 vouchers presented 780 people fed
Family Type	Single 1186 vouchers presented 58.19%	Single 349 vouchers presented 48.61%
Age group	25-64: 2279	25 – 64: 848

Hate Crime

The Council is working with the Liverpool City Region Pride Foundation and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to consider introducing the “You’re Safe Here” training in Sefton. This training is aimed at making the night-time economy a safe place for LGBT people.

Equalities

The Council have maintained the Navajo Charter Mark after the reassessment interviews which took place in July. The Corporate Equality Group and Cabinet Member are reviewing the assessment report and will be recommending actions to address the issues raised.

The Corporate Equality Group have recommended to Cabinet Member that the Council join the Inclusive Companies network. This is a cross industry network harnessing best practices & innovation to drive inclusion for all. This will build on the work already carried out as part of the Navajo Charter Mark, Disability Confident Charter Mark etc.

A workshop took place on the 26th of September at Crosby Lakeside and delivered the following objectives:

- Raise the profile and reinforce the importance of the CEG (Corporate Equalities Group) and other groups
- Launch and promote National Inclusion Week, Black History Month, and other key events
- Share updates, progress, and actions from the CEG and other groups
- Capture and share good practice and lessons learned from other organisations
- Discuss and inform the shape of a future strategy for Equalities and Diversity

The 26th of September was chosen as the date for this event as it was the start of National Inclusion Week, an event aimed at celebrating inclusion and encouraging employers to create inclusive workplaces. During the week the Council launched its new LGBT and Disability staff support groups, and there was a meeting of the existing Diverse Ethnic Background group.

To support Black History Month a web page was set up which contained information on events and activities that took place across the community. These included the following:

- A performance by Nwoko Arts at The Strand on 15th October to tie in with the World Reimagined globe that was installed there. This was supported by local Ward funds.
- An event at The Atkinson organised by Southport Against Racism on 22nd October, again supported by local ward funds.
- Messages sent out via the Council communications channels
- eLearning courses offered at a discounted rate

In response to Motions recently passed by Council (race equality declaration of intent and tackling transphobia) the actions from both motions are currently being incorporated into the new equalities strategy.

CEG chair Stephen Watson has been liaising with Cabinet Member regarding terms of reference and membership for the proposed Race Equality Monitoring Group.

Officers have continued to promote awareness days and are working with our City Region colleagues on a joint LCR calendar.

Since the motion was passed, we have successfully reassessed for the Navajo LGBT charter mark. We have also established a new staff group for LGBT staff.

Officers are working with the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to investigate rolling out the LCR Pride Foundation “You’re Safe Here” training in Sefton. This is aimed at the night-time economy and ensuring people feel safe.

Hate crime training including transphobia will be delivered to members on the 2nd November.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The table below shows the total number of ASB cases referred into the team since 1st April 2022. Of these 360 referrals, 180 progressed to open cases, and the remaining referrals were either categorised as not ASB or referred to other agencies such as Noise Nuisance.

Incident Category by Year 2022 : Sefton ASB Unit

Sum of Incident Occasions	Category	Animal related problems	Criminal damage / vandalism	Drug / Alcohol Related	Drug / Alcohol Related dealing	Intimidation / Harassment	Litter / rubbish	Noise	Nuisance behaviour	On the grounds of	Rowdy	Rowdy behaviour	Street Drinking	Vehicle related nuisance	Grand Total
Row Labels															
2022/23		4	16	15	15	50	5	126	9	49	17	40	4	10	360
Grand Total		4	16	15	15	50	5	126	9	49	17	40	4	10	360

RESETTLEMENT SERVICES

Homes for Ukraine

School impact

Of the children (aged 2-18) that have arrived in Sefton to date, 73% have been placed at school settings. Of the children that have been placed at a school, there have been no major issues and the schools have been incredibly supportive and accommodating. We are finding that families are requesting schools where other Ukrainian children attend but are equally understanding if we inform them there is no room at that school or in that year group. The remaining 27% of children are mostly either in early years settings or have only just arrived.

Funding to support children in schools through the Department for Education (DfE) has been confirmed. This will provide much needed support to Ukrainian pupils that speak little, or no, English.

Resettlement Team

The Resettlement Team is in place and is responsible for implementing the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Sefton.

A Homeless Prevention Officer, linked from the Council's Housing Options Service, will work with the Resettlement Team to support guests and hosts started in post during October 2022.

The welcome centre in Crosby (Crosby Ukrainian Hub) has become the focal point for Ukrainian refugees in Sefton, and in some cases beyond. The Resettlement Team work closely with the welcome centre and attend multi-agency events there on a weekly basis.

Accommodation

Work is underway in modelling accommodation needs of guests over the next quarter. Some guests have expressed interest in finding their own accommodation, some wish to return to Ukraine, some are comfortable with their current arrangements. The modelling exercise will help determine the level of demand for accommodation in Sefton and where that may be needed in the borough.

The result of this work will help inform how to meet the accommodation needs of guests wishing to remain in Sefton longer term.

Where there have been relationship breakdowns guests are rematched with new hosts. No Ukrainian refugees have had to come through the homelessness route. The Resettlement Team continue to make contact and visit households that have expressed an interest in becoming hosts. Although many households have come forward, we are planning some additional communications to promote new expressions of interest from households.

From 10 August 2022 the Homes for Ukraine scheme was expanded to eligible children to join the scheme and travel to the UK to stay with an adult relative as an unaccompanied minor. The guidance associated with this arrangement requires several pre-arrival checks from the Home Office followed by joint working between the Council's resettlement team and Children's Social Care. The process follows the process for Private Fostering arrangements and joint procedures have been agreed with Sefton Children's Services.

LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

National Portfolio Organisation funding bid submitted

A funding bid to Arts Council England has been submitted to turn the Human Libraries project into an accredited National Portfolio Organisation. The bid is for £200,000 funding each year for a minimum of 3 years and if successful funding would start in April 2023. This round of funding has seen a huge increase in applications and the Arts Council have already received 1700 applications. As a back-up, a follow up bid to the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund is being considered.

Language Exchange Project - Colour Of Pomegranates

Sefton Libraries are working with Venus and the Red Cross to offer sanctuary seeking women a space to practice their English speaking and listening skills with native speakers, through creative activity and conversation.

We are bringing together those learning English for the first time, and local fluent speakers who would like to learn about different cultures and languages and offer friendship and support to women who may be newly-arrived in the UK.

This programme follows the Xenia model of holding a space for exchange between women, and therefore is a women-only session to allow women from all cultural backgrounds to participate. The first session took place at Bootle Library where participants practiced their language skills by exchanging recipes with native Bootleians.

Alongside the language exchange we have been offering creative sessions, led by artists including Jessica el Mal and Ibukun Baldwin, as well as our library and project team.

The sessions are run on a Saturday morning at Bootle Library and currently have 30 regular attendees

The Summer Reading Challenge

Over the summer Libraries took part in the annual Summer Reading Challenge with this year's theme being 'Gadgeteers'. This year staff have worked hard to re-invigorate the project following two disappointing years in lockdown and post-lockdown.

This year 2670 children took part in the summer reading challenge across our six library sites. The children had to read at least six library books and make four visits to the library to earn their certificate and Children's University points. Along the way children were gifted book bags, stickers, pencils and bookmarks. The numbers taking part exceed the pre-pandemic 2019 total, which library staff are delighted about!

Libraries hosted 162 activity sessions for families, including FizzPop science sessions, interactive storytelling sessions and all manner of craft making session. Crosby library welcomed 75 children to a Slime making session, only stopping when they ran out of ingredients!

Communications

Events promoted via the Council website, The Atkinson website, The Atkinson social media, through the press and Liverpool City Region

THE ATKINSON

Theatre Programme

Helen Forrester *Twopence to Cross the Mersey* - adapted from the author's million-selling autobiography this stunning period drama tells the story of local life during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The show will feature 6 performances commencing from Tues 1st Nov.

The Atkinson is also delighted to announce that TV and Film celebrity Patsy Kensit will star as the Genie of the Lamp in our Christmas pantomime production of *Aladdin*. This will be the third season of working in association with LHK Productions and the cast will also feature some familiar favourite performers from previous shows.

Museum Programme

This November will mark the hundredth anniversary of Howard Carter opening the tomb of Tutankhamun in Egypt's The Valley of the Kings. A series of events will celebrate the occasion and promote our **Goodison Egyptology Collection**. Activities will include talks, tours, family friendly activities and Egyptology classes. There will also be the chance to 'meet' the amazing Mrs Goodison herself in the guise of a role-playing performer/teacher.

Exhibitions Programme

The Unselfish Selfie Art Exhibition 8 October 2022 – 4 March 2023

The Atkinson is working with guest curator and artist Nahem Shoa to present the exhibition. Alongside historic self-portraits, the exhibition shines a light on self-portraits by contemporary artists, who traditionally have not been given an equal voice and remained largely invisible, particularly women artists and artists of colour.

To discuss the wider themes of exhibition Nahem Shoa will deliver a talk on 9th November entitled 'Why Do Artists Paint Themselves?' His presentation will explore the meaning behind some of the greatest Self Portraits, from the 14th century to present day, discovering why they remain fresh and relevant, even now in the 21st Century.

Southport Library

The Atkinson celebrated **National Poetry Day** on Thurs 6th October with a special event linked to the art exhibition 'The Poetry of Trees'. Set amidst the fine art collection the evening featured readings from poet Gillian Floyd. She revealed how trees and nature have offered her inspiration over the course of her writing career.

Other news

Book of Condolence: The Atkinson supported the Council's contribution to 'Operation London Bridge' by hosting a Book of Condolence throughout the period of national mourning. Collectively the Atkinson team provided a space for intimate reflection within the foyer of the building and offered a respectful welcome to those residents wishing to record their thoughts and feelings at this poignant time. A total of 1,101 entries were made across the period.

Communications

Events promoted via the Council website, The Atkinson website, The Atkinson social media, through the press and Liverpool City Region

HOUSING

Housing Strategy (2022 – 2027)

Sefton's Housing Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 3rd November 2022. This new document will help to build upon the previous housing priorities and address the significant local and national housing challenges that Sefton's residents face over the coming years.

The new housing strategy recognises and acknowledges that the Council has an intrinsic role to play, by ensuring that housing provides 'a secure foundation for individuals to live the lives they want to live. Finding the right home, in the right place, can be an essential platform for people seeking to support their families and sustain work'

The key themes and housing priorities from Sefton's previous strategy have been reviewed and continue to remain relevant in this new version. This ensures a measure of continuity in delivery and helps to advance our successful outcomes, previously achieved. Over the period of this strategy our housing priorities include:

- *Driving housing quality in communities and neighbourhoods;*
- *Meeting people's housing needs;*
- *Enabling people to live independently;*
- *Tackling barriers to obtaining suitable housing for the most vulnerable and ensuring equal access to housing services;*
- *Effectively utilising Council assets to support housing delivery.*

The themes outlined above are broad and a key next step is to develop an Action Plan which will specifically outline how these priorities will be delivered, making it clear the timescales and who is responsible for this. The Action Plan will be published on the Council's website and reviewed annually to track progress against the targets that are set out.

Cost of Living Crisis

As colleagues will be aware the Council has been delivering an ambitious retrofit programme for some time and the latest phase of this, the Local Authority Delivery 2 (LAD2) scheme is due to be completed at the end of September with all targets met. In total work has been done to 222 properties through the LAD2 scheme, saving residents on average £551 per annum. The Energy Team continues to bid for external funding to carry out further retrofit work with work underway in the borough under the Sustainable Warmth Programme which includes LAD 3 and Home Upgrade Grants. The work takes a 'fabric first' approach with a focus on improving the thermal efficiency of properties through insulation upgrades.

The service has recently been successful in an external grant application which will allow 2 additional specialist Housing Compliance Officers to be employed for 12 months to take enforcement action against Private Landlords who do not comply with the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations which establish a Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) for privately rented properties.

In addition, in preparation for what is anticipated to be a challenging winter period for residents the service is engaging with registered housing providers operating in the borough to understand what they are doing to help Sefton residents so that the Council is better able to signpost residents to the help that is available.

Extra Care Housing

Work continues to progress in relation to delivering several Extra Care Schemes to enable us to meet our target of 1306 units across the borough by 2036. I am pleased to report that progress has been made on several potential schemes across the borough. In particular, I am pleased to report that a scheme to develop 91 Extra Care Homes and 67 for Affordable Rent is about to commence on a site off Hawthorne Road in Bootle, and that the proposed development of 90 Extra Care Homes, 40 for Affordable Rent and Council facility providing 8 short-term assessment units at Sandbrook Road in Ainsdale has now secured planning consent.

To support the provision of extra care housing Sefton's first Extra Care Nominations Policy, process and system has now been drafted and will be going to the Public Consultation and Engagement board in November and will be presented to Cabinet for approval summer 2023 with a view to being implemented from September 2023.

Children's and Adults Social Care Support

The Housing Service is working closely with colleagues in the Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care Services to meet the housing need for more specialist type of accommodation in the borough.

The following work is currently underway:

- 1) Monthly meetings between Strategic Housing, Children's Social Care, Adults Social Care and Commissioning.
- 2) Weekly update with Children's commissioning specifically around housing
- 3) Quarterly strategic meetings are being held with key housing partners within the borough around all housing needs across the borough including specialist social care needs
- 4) Advanced discussions are underway with a registered provider to bring forward emergency children's accommodation
- 5) A review of council assets and accommodation to ascertain if any would be suitable in meeting the identified needs
- 6) Bid to DfE for capital funding to support the redevelopment of a council owned property, anticipated decision in principle week commencing 24th October 2022

The Housing Service is also working with colleagues to develop a Specialist and Supported Housing Prospectus to better engage the market around specialist housing need in the borough with a view to generating innovative approaches to assisting the Council to meet its duty's.

The prospectus is currently in draft and includes an assessment of our current accommodation profile, future housing needs and requirements including location and type, and aims around partnership approach to meeting these demands. The document also ensures that the 'voice of the child' is heard in relation to future housing requirements.

Private Sector Housing

Enforcement and Licencing

On 6th October Cabinet approved the re-designation of both the Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing Schemes for a further 5 years until end Feb 2028. The current schemes that come to an end in Feb 2023, have proved successful.

Almost 3,300 licences have been issued under the current schemes, which is 130% of the number estimated to require a licence at the start of schemes almost 5 years ago. The team continue to enforce against those landlords that have still failed to apply for a licence and against landlords that are in breach of licence conditions and have served 14 Final Civil Penalty fine notices since 1st August 2022. The licensing schemes have proved invaluable in providing an up-to-date source of data to enable the Housing Standards Team to contact private sector landlords quickly and efficiently if and when needed, and has enabled us to target our activities.

There have been 84 requests for service relating to poor housing standards issues since 1st August 2022 . The majority have been dealt with informally, however 14 cases have resulted in formal action. 2 properties have been closed with the service of 1 x Emergency Prohibition Order and 1 x Prohibition Order. 12 other properties have required formal notices in relation to serious health & safety hazards.

With regards to vacant properties the team has started 'enforced sale' action on another long-term vacant property and one long-term vacant property (which had been a problematic HMO until the Housing Standards Team enforced its closure) has been sold at auction with a view to it now being renovated to provide good accommodation.

Management of the Council's Gypsy and Traveller site continues, and officers have attended 7 Unauthorised Gypsy & Traveller encampments in August and 5 in September. A Condition Survey has also been completed on the Council's Gypsy and Traveller site and work to address the issues that were highlighted has been programmed.

Rough Sleepers & Homeless services

The number of presentations to the Housing Options Team is still high and more households are presenting due to being served an eviction notice. Housing Options received approximately 680 telephone calls per week during Quarter 1 in 2022, an increase of 12% from the previous quarter.

Each year each Local Authority is obliged to advise the DCLG as to the extent of Rough Sleeping in the borough on an annual basis, and this is done through a Rough Sleeper Count. I am pleased to report that during the count which took place in November 2021 no rough sleepers were observed in the borough. Planning for this year's Rough Sleeper Count has started and the 'typical night' chosen for the estimate is the evening of the 9th November to the morning of the 10th November. Two spotlight count teams will carry out a physical count within south Sefton and north Sefton focussing on those areas of interest to the Rough Sleeper Outreach Team.

I would also like to report to committee that a recent visit by DLUHC's Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Advisor, Alastair Reeves, to Sefton to inspect the homeless service providers was particularly successful, with Alastair providing the following comments on Sefton's commissioned homeless services:

'Overall, I was so impressed with all the services and people I met. Clearly it is no accident that you have managed such a significant reduction in the number of rough sleepers seen out regularly in recent years and it felt to me that there was a real commitment to making sure the interventions were as sustainable as possible, which should mean that entrenched rough sleeping can be a thing of the past in Sefton.'

The two hostels in Bootle run by Bosco were both impressive resources I thought, and the new crash bed area in Bosco House particularly is looking good and is exactly the sort of change that we are supportive of. As a wannabe gardener I was super impressed with the garden area as well, which is the best maintained one I have seen!

It was really good to sit and chat with Carlie and Mary at the Venus Centre, which is such a fantastic project and takes such a forward looking, psychologically informed approach that is exactly the sort of thing we try and encourage more of across the country. I know from talking to Jason how impressed he was with the way in which the Everyone In project was run which applied those principles during such a challenging time and it is fantastic to hear some of the positive stories that resulted from that period, especially given the challenging winter that it feels like is ahead of us.

The 2 New Start projects were also excellent, really smart, high quality and forward-looking projects that are a credit to the managers, staff and commissioners. Part of my job is to highlight good practice across the country and all the Sefton accommodation projects I saw would be great examples for others to follow.

I thought the Excel project we visited in Southport was also a great example of dispersed accommodation for vulnerable adults and the staff were really impressive. It was interesting to hear of some of the challenges with shared Housing First clients and I'll take that away to discuss with commissioners of that service.

Finally, I thought the staff at the Light for Life Hub were really impressive and clearly take as holistic and preventative approach to working with rough sleepers as is possible. Having all the services that are delivered out of that building in the one place is, I think, the best way to offer a joined-up service and it clearly works.'

Council Housing Programme

Work on the new Council Housing Programme is progressing well and consultants are working with the Housing Service to develop a Business Plan for the programme, alongside making arrangements to procure a Management Agent to help manage the first of the Council's new housing stock at Buckley Hill in Netherton. Procurement of the Management Agent is expected to commence next month and the Business Plan will be brought to Cabinet before the end of the year.