

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills – 17th January 2023)

COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Patricia Hardy	Communities and Housing	December 2022

Neighbourhoods and Partnerships

Operation Banger was a success in 2022. Neighbourhoods and Cleansing officers worked in partnership with Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and One Vision Housing to coordinate the removal of potential bonfire sites, and to deliver diversionary activities.

This year there were a reported 23 secondary fires on Bonfire night, an increase on last year but well below the pre covid numbers we were dealing with. There were only three incidents of violence involving fireworks across the period and Anti-Social behaviour was up slightly on last year. The Youth Team successfully engaged with 320 young people and community members across North Park, Derby Park, Irlam Road and South Park during the Bangor period. They also supported Active Sefton with their Bangor period Park Nights across the Borough.

The Neighbourhoods team worked with colleagues in Green Sefton to review the Living Christmas trees across the borough. Unfortunately, the living trees have failed to establish successfully, and we have replaced all of them with cut trees. Neighbourhood officers have worked with ward councillors to ensure that sufficient funds are made available for the installation and lighting of the trees.

New agility equipment has now arrived and is due to be installed near the Lake House, Crosby Coastal Park, before Christmas. This equipment was requested to replace the outdoor gym equipment which had to be removed a few years ago.

Discussions have been on going with colleagues in highways to tackle the historic issue of parking around the beach in Formby in the summer months. Initial ideas are to install bollards on key junctions where double yellow lines already exist to stop parking on the kerb. The aim of the project is to ensure traffic flow around key junctions and roads.

Cost of Living / Welfare Reform

Food bank

1st April 2022 – 1st November 2022	South Sefton	Southport
Total Vouchers received	3946	1181
Adults Fed	4973	1602
Children Fed	2935	865
Total Fed	7908	2467
Crisis Type	Low income – 2910 vouchers presented 5832 people fed	Low income – 631 vouchers presented 1284 people fed
Family Type	Single 2298 vouchers presented 58.24%	Single 577 vouchers presented 48.86%
Age group	25-64: 4376	25 – 64: 1378

Sustainable Affordable Living Coordinator

The newly recruited officer has been out to meet Foodbanks and Pantries to understand their needs and issues. He will continue to build a picture of the support available for residents and identify any gaps in provision. He will be asking groups to share their data so that we can truly understand demand across the borough.

He has started to look at ways that the services can be sustainably maintained and will be organising meetings with possible suppliers soon.

Holiday Activity Fund

New guidance and application documents have been introduced to make the application process simpler and more stringent for providers. There is now a page on the Sefton website where providers and parents/ carers can access information about HAF. Going forward all children will be cross referenced against the free school meal database to ensure eligibility.

Twenty providers were funded to deliver sessions to 1052 eligible children throughout the Christmas holidays. The provision was spread across the borough and ranged from community groups, charities, and schools to sports and performing arts camps. Less providers can operate at Christmas due to staffing etc, but trips and themed Christmas events were funded instead.

Hate Crime

Online training is ongoing. This is free to staff working or volunteering in Sefton. Face to face sessions have also been delivered for Bootle One Stop Shop staff, Sefton Council elected members, and are being arranged for One Vision Housing staff and for service users from New Directions.

Equalities

The new Disability staff group and LGBT staff group have had their third meeting membership is growing. The Diverse Ethnic Background group and Women's Network continue to meet regularly. The Liverpool City Region equality group have met to discuss a calendar of events that will be celebrated by all City Region authorities.

As mentioned in the previous report, the Council is now a member of Inclusive Companies and will be signing up to the Disability Impact Pledge shortly.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The smell of Cannabis in homes is an increasing issue making up almost 40% of the current caseload. The team will be launching an awareness campaign in early 2023 highlighting the issue and how residents can deal with and report their cases to the team. To support this campaign and to help officers gain evidence for prosecution we have purchased some evidence gathering equipment.

Youth Service

SYMBOL had its first Face to Face session in over two years, it was held at Bootle Town Hall and was well attended by young people. The event included work for the Hope Hack project which is partnership work with the Violence Reduction Partnership across the Liverpool City Region.

HOMES FOR UKRAINE PROGRAMME

Homes for Ukraine Scheme

The new Resettlement Team continues to support the community integration of Ukrainian guests in Sefton and maintaining good sponsor/guest relationships. Longer term plans and associated pathways for accommodation are almost complete. This will mean a more consistent approach to how we are working with guests and hosts and ensure we are achieving good outcomes for them.

School impact

For the period 1 March to 11 November 232 guests have arrived in Sefton forming 156 household groups. There are 73 children between the age of 3-17 who are part of this group total.

Of the 73 children that have arrived all have offered a place at school or referred to Further Education settings.

Schools that have accepted Ukrainian children under the HfU scheme are located across the borough. Guests often request for their children to attend a school where they have other family or friends already in attendance.

Funding to support Ukrainian children in schools has received by the Education Excellence Department for the Department for Education (DfE) and has been allocated to schools.

Resource Update

The welcome centre in Crosby (Crosby Ukrainian Hub) continues to be a focal point for Ukrainian refugees in Sefton, and in some cases beyond Sefton. A new manager and assistant have begun making some changes to operations there and are looking at increasing the number of activities available there. They are also looking at developing their own English language classes.

Adult Education have provided information about pathways for Ukrainians to become teachers. Many guests are highly qualified and are interested in teaching. There is a programme that open to anyone 19+ living in Liverpool City Region. It will start during December this year and will comprise of the Level 3 Teaching and Education, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and British Values. On successful completion of the programme individuals will have the opportunity to apply for a level 5 qualification, which normally costs £8,000, and if they are successful, the cost will be included as part of the training package.

DWP are looking at opportunities for employment that the Eurovision Song Contest coming to the Liverpool City Region could bring for Ukrainian guests.

The Resettlement Team have taken up their new positions and are receiving additional training to upskill them as part of their induction. The whole team attended mediation training delivered by an external provider during November. This will give the officers new techniques and strategies in mediation, which they can when working with guests and hosts.

Accommodation

Routes to finding longer term accommodation, beyond staying with hosts is underway.

There is increasing demand for information about how to access housing and this is being shared through the hub currently. A new referral process to access advice from the Homeless Prevention Officer has been developed and discussions have taken place with Property Pool Plus about registering guests.

A suite of further assistance for guests moving into their own accommodation is being costed. This may include bond scheme, rent in advance, furniture packages, moving costs, etc. All costs would be covered by the Homes for Ukraine tariff.

Other updates

A top up to the thank you payments has agreed and will be in place in December. This is something that other local authorities have implemented both regionally and nationally to assist hosts with increasing energy prices over the winter months.

LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES

Successful funding application realises £585,000

Following a lengthy funding application, Sefton Library Service is officially Sefton's first National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), awarded by Arts Council England, as part of a three-year national investment in arts and culture. Sefton is one of only two local authorities in the North West to receive NPO status, and the funding secures the program for a further 3 years.

The Library Service will receive £195,000 per year from 2023-2026 to deliver its partnership project — ‘At the Libraries’ — a series of artist-led happenings, events, commissions and interventions in Sefton’s libraries.

Since 2017, the programme has targeted social isolation by bringing artists and other creatives into the library space to rethink the creative and civic role libraries play within our community. Over the years, artists have worked with community members to produce a host of ingenious and wonderful projects, including creating a fully functional ceramic dinner service with Aliyah Hussain; cooking up everything from sauerkraut, to foraged blackberry jam doughnuts with Gregory Herbert and Niamh Riordan, and exploring sound and radio waves with Shortwave Collective and Andrew PM Hunt.

Thanks to its increasing popularity and quirky successful projects, Arts Council England has now awarded the project National Portfolio Status, meaning the project will be able to explore its full potential with local people and expand its work into Bootle, Netherton, Crosby and Southport libraries.

The World Re-Imagined

Sefton Libraries were delighted to be part of the UK-wide art project The World Reimagined, and hosted the six amazing learning Globes made by Sefton schools.

The project invited the public to explore the UK’s relationship with the Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans, its impact on UK society; and how we can take action to make racial justice a reality. There were 10 sculpture trails across 7 UK cities, including one across the Liverpool City Region.

Local schools took part in The World Reimagined learning programme and created small globes as part of the wider sculpture trail. They were display at Crosby Library, from September until the end of October, and then passed back to the local schools who helped design them.

Sefton’s six globes were designed and created by: Christ Church CE Primary, Newfield Primary, Valewood Primary, King’s Leadership Academy (the Hawthornes), Peterhouse School and St Oswald’s CE Primary.

Libraries become warm hubs

To support council activities to provide warm hubs for residents in need, each library will provide teas/coffees and soup 1 day at week on a rota basis. The service is utilising council warm hubs funding to purchase consumables and any equipment needed to provide the hubs. Library staff have agreed to organise the hubs at their sites until March 2023.

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

Literary influences have characterised recent theatre highlights – productions have included the dramatisation of Helen Forrester’s novel *Twopence to Cross the Mersey*; a staged radio play of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*; the hilarious recreation of Julia Donaldson’s children’s book, *Room on the Broom* and Chapterhouse Theatre’s rendition of the Dickens favourite, *A Christmas Carol*.

Aladdin brings some Christmas magic to our Theatre: the Atkinson’s pantomime season enjoyed great success with its production of *Aladdin*, featuring Patsy Kensit as the Genie. Building on the success of previous years, the whole schedule sold-out. The Atkinson Development Trust funded tickets for a small selection of local groups - organisations across Sefton in receipt of tickets included Talbot Street Wellbeing Centre, Fostering with Sefton and the Ukrainian Welcome Centre.

Museum Programme

Ganzflicker: during November Edge Hill University funded a 10 ten-day event at The Atkinson, as part of the annual *Being Human* festival. Event organiser Dr Reshane Reader created a series of interactives to explore the Ganzflicker phenomenon. Ganzflicker is a way of inducing hallucinations by looking at a flickering image. Reshane's exhibition enabled visitors to experience Ganzflicker imagery in several different ways, including on screen, through mechanical interactives and 'hypnobuckets' and she recorded people's experiences as part of her research.

Tate Liverpool Project: the LCR Culture Working group and Tate Liverpool are co-ordinating an offer of educational artwork sessions through a regional tour of their Art Explora mobile museum. The infrastructure at Netherton Activity Centre meets the technical requirements for the vehicle, and local schools in the Netherton area will be invited to visit during Spring 2023.

Exhibitions Programme

GROUND - Young Artists project

The Atkinson is supporting a creative opportunity for Young Artists aged 16-24 living in the Liverpool City Region. Entitled 'Ground', the project will explore young people's opinions and feelings around Climate Anxiety. The project will be produced in partnership with Theatre in the Rough, a multi-disciplinary producer of original artistic works.

Ten young artists have been invited to create new work in collaboration with the non-human world. This project will result in a new collaborative film installation to be shown at The Atkinson in March 2023, alongside a publication of participants' original work.

Southport Library

The Library continues to welcome new visitors as part of Sefton's Warm Spaces programme, offering hot refreshments and friendly conversation in support of people in need.

Other news

Southport BID Christmas Events & Activities: the Atkinson was a landmark on The Gingerbread Family Trail, hosting a giant gingerbread model called 'Daina', who was named by Holy Trinity Primary School to celebrate the diversity of their school.

Late-Night Shopping: the Atkinson held a Late-Night Shopping event on 1st December featuring a showcase of stalls from local makers & independent artists, in addition to its own shop gifts. The wonderful Atkinson Wellbeing Choir serenaded visitors with a selection of carols in the foyer, whilst a curatorial "arty-party" tour of the galleries offered an insight into our permanent collection and visiting exhibitions. Festive treats were provided at the Great Little Place Café and further performances delivered by Southport Strings.

Culture Awards: an art therapy group based in Sefton has been shortlisted in the Liverpool City Region Culture & Creativity Awards 2023. Creative Balance offer workshops targeted at young children and deliver sessions across the Borough. They have been shortlisted for the People's Choice and Arts Organisation of the Year categories with the winners announced in March.

Bees: *Lancashire Life* published a feature on a new project which has seen the installation of bee hives on the Atkinson's roof.

Wi-Fi: Replacement WiFi points have been installed to provide more reliable public internet access in key areas such as the foyer, café, library and galleries.

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HOUSING

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Damp Mould and Condensation (DMC)

I am sure colleagues will have been saddened to learn about the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of Awaab Ishak from mould inhalation whilst living in a property rented by registered provider Rochdale Boroughwide Housing.

In the wake of these tragic events I have directed officers to carry out a review of housing enforcement in the borough:

- Review of the Housing Enforcement Policy – the policy will be update to ensure that it is clear that it covers all tenures, rather than being solely related to private sector
- Review of the 'service request pathway' – the Housing section of the Council Website is being updated to ensure that Registered Provider tenants are clear on how they can make a service request
- Communication Campaign – a comms campaign using the Council's comms channels will be run over winter, linking to the guidance on the Council's website and other resources that will help. This will be repeated every winter in subsequent years.
- Staff Training and Equipment – all staff training relating to the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS) and equipment requirements have been reviewed by the Service Manager and found to be up to date. Should there be staff changes HHSRS training will be provided as a priority as has always been the case. We are also seeking to identify specific training relating to DMC where this needs to be strengthened.
- Data – officer are currently reviewing data from the last 3 years relating to DMC cases and looking at how these were dealt with at the time to see where improvements can be made, including how cases are recorded on our system.
- Registered Providers – In addition to above we are also asking the major Registered Providers in the borough to feedback on actions they have taken in response to the Rochdale case.
- Risk Based Approach – in order to better manage future service requests during periods of peak demand we are mapping previous DMC hazards to identify property hotspots across the borough. There is also the potential to look at including something specific to DMC in the private sector stock modelling survey due to be done next year.
- Staff Guidance – the Council and CCG has a number of staff members who regularly go into resident's homes, for example health visitors and social workers. In order to ensure that we are making the best use of all opportunities to identify risks relating to mould we propose to issue guidance to frontline staff.

Housing Strategy (2022 – 2027)

Following approval of Sefton's new Housing Strategy by Cabinet on 3rd November 2022 work is progressing to finalise the Action Plan which details all of the actions which will ensure that we deliver against the objectives and vision set out in the strategy document. The Action Plan 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.

As colleagues are aware the new strategy carries forward the key themes and housing priorities from Sefton's previous strategy which have been reviewed and continue to remain relevant in this new version.

- *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.*

This continuity ensures that the new strategy builds on the success of the previous one, however, our communities face a number of key challenges which have emerged since the adoption of the previous strategy. This is where the Action Plan plays a critical role in outlining the specific initiatives to meet the vision for housing in the borough in the challenging operating environment that we are currently seeing. I will be meeting with officers early in the new year to review the draft Action Plan document which will ultimately be published on the Council's website so that all our residents and stakeholders are clear on the commitments we have made.

In order to monitor delivery of the new strategy I have directed officers to produce an Annual Monitoring Report that will also be published on the Council's website.

Extra Care Housing

As colleagues are aware the Council has a target to deliver 1306 new Extra Housing units before 2036. Work continues to progress on a number of schemes, including a scheme to develop 91 Extra Care Homes and 67 for Affordable Rent which has now commenced on a site off Hawthorne Road in Bootle. Following the granting of planning consent 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 is progressing well.

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.

Over 3,600 licences have now been issued under the current schemes, which is 600 more than the estimated number of properties that would 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 7 Final Civil Penalty fine notices since our last report (fines averaging at £2,200).

There have been 80 requests for service relating to poor housing standards issues since 21st October 2022 . The majority have been dealt with informally, however 13 cases have resulted in formal action. 1 property has been closed with the service of an Emergency Prohibition Order. 12 other properties have required formal notices in relation to serious health & safety hazards (6 regarding electrical safety issues and 6 lacking smoke alarms). Awareness raising and enforcement of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations (MEES) has commenced within the Selective Licensing area. Following a data cleansing exercise, 62 privately rented properties have been identified as failing to meet these Regulations by being rated F or G on their Energy Performance Certificate. The owners of these properties are currently being contacted to inform them of their legal duties. Enforcement action will be the next step if the premises are not thermally improved to meet legal requirements.

Management of the Council's Gypsy and Traveller site continues, and there have not been any unauthorised encampments since the previous update report.

Rough Sleepers & Homeless services

In December 2021, Public Health approved funding that would see one of Sefton's commissioned homeless hostel's Sit-Up areas transformed into separate bedrooms with ensuite facilities. Sefton operates a nightly Crash Bed and Sit-Up service across the entire year to prevent and relieve any rough sleeping in the borough. It is one of Sefton's ambitions to move away from using communal dormitory spaces to a position where each person can be offered their own bedroom for the evening. This was particularly important during the Covid pandemic and as a result of Public Health being given funding to transform services in order to make them more resilient to future pandemics, Sefton's homeless services were granted funding in order to transform the Sit-Up room in Bosco Society's House on Merton Road.

I am pleased to report to colleagues that the work to the former Sit-Up room is largely complete with only the drainage for the ensuite left to complete. The rooms themselves are now in use with Housing Options or the Rough Sleeper Service able to refer any people found sleeping rough, or at risk of rough sleeping, into them on a nightly basis.

As you can see from the below photographs, each room has a fold-away bed, which allows for the rooms to be fully cleaned each morning. Each room has its own window allowing for natural ventilation to take place in order to prevent airborne transmission.



Rough Sleeper Initiative funded Hospital In-Reach Service

One of the initiatives that Sefton received Rough Sleeper Initiative funding for was the Hospital In-Reach service. This service will look to deliver a borough wide model that works across the two major hospitals that cover the borough and provide support to those people.

The aim of this service is to provide support to clients placed within hospitals in order to;

- engage with and assess those patients who have presented as homeless and ensure that there is accommodation wherever they need to return to, whether that is Sefton, or elsewhere.
- training for key hospital staff in Homeless Reduction Act and what local homeless resources exist (to make the hospital staff Homeless Champions).

- ensure that follow-up appointments are kept, which therefore reduces further presentations at A&E, where there are further clinical needs on discharge
- attend Frequent Attenders meetings across Southport/Aintree hospitals with the aim of reducing volume of presentations from our client group.

This service is delivered by Light for Life and the overall success of the health model used by Light for Life is due to the 'physical' presence of Light for Life services in the hospital. This is a service not delivered by email or telephone, as with some other services who use the same title, but in person.

This model allows the Light for Life staff to form a 'relationship' with the patient before they are discharged. As such 'contact' is not by way of a phone call or an email or in some other depersonalised virtual model but by being 'present' with the hospital staff and 'present' with the patient.

This model both engages and enables the client to have the confidence to continue this therapeutic relationship once they have left the ward which, based on the data available, stops their repeated readmission of this, perhaps their most 'complex and costly clients'.

Feedback from Southport hospital is that the service has been extremely well received as hospital staff aren't caught dealing with people's homelessness issues and the service prevents future presentations at A&E.

Council Housing Programme

Business Plan – A draft of the Business Plan has now been reviewed by officers and comments returned to the consultant with an updated draft expected before Xmas. The Business Plan focuses on an initial 3-5 year phase to build a sustainable initial stock of Council owned housing through working with Sandway Homes, with a medium to long term options for growth beyond this point. I look forward to the document coming to Cabinet for approval early in the New Year.

Management Agent – The final parts of the Tender Documents are being completed before the Christmas break with a view to starting the procurement of the Management Agent early in January. It is anticipated that the Management Agent will be in place by April and will then shadow the onboarding of the first properties at Buckley Hill Lane in January 2024.

Buckley Hill Lane – Officers from the Housing Team have been liaising with Sandway to update the valuation reports for the properties to be acquired at Buckley Hill Lane. This is required in order to make a grant application to Homes England to deliver affordable homes on the site. The updated scheme proposal will be brought to full Council in the Spring.

Brownfield Land Funding

There are currently two brownfield land funding opportunities available to bring brownfield sites forward for residential development:

Funding Stream	Administrator	Amount	Delivery Requirements
Brownfield Land Fund	LCR Combined Authority	£60m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start on site required by March 2025 • Benefit Cost Ratio of 1 or above • Grant Rate £15k per unit
Brownfield Land Release	One Public Estate	£160m (nationwide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release for housing by

Fund 2			March 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit Cost Ratio of 1 or above • Grant Rate £10k per unit • Council owned land only
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Brownfield Land Fund (BLF)

As reported in my last report Sefton has had projects totalling **£7,072,409** previously approved for funding in the borough, and a further three schemes with a total additional grant investment in the borough of **£4,755,000** were approved by the Combined Authority in November.

This means that there has now been a total of **£11,827,409** of Brownfield Land Funding allocated in Sefton and if these schemes are brought forward over 800 new homes that wouldn't have otherwise come forward will be built.

Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 (BLRF2)

As I reported in my last update the next bidding window for the BLRF2 will open in the spring 2023 and I have asked officers to look at what council owned sites can be put forward for support to ready them for sale for new housing. Officers have met with the Combined Authority and One Public Estate about the fund and potential sites for inclusion in future bids.