

<b>CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT</b>		
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills – 7 November 2023)</b>		
<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>DATE</b>
Trish Hardy	Communities and Housing	November 2023

**COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM**

Christmas 2023 Update

The order for this year's cut trees has been placed and confirmed, delivery date is expected around mid-November.

Areas that have ordered a cut tree.

- Stanley Rd - Bootle Strand - 26ft+
- Seaforth Rd – Outside Bowersdale Park – 20ft
- South Rd – Rail Terminus – 26ft+
- Crosby – Village – 26ft+
- Netherton - Marian Square Shopping centre – 26ft+
- Southport – Bispham Rd – 26ft+

A new cut tree pit has been ordered for Marian Square that will be installed in the centre of the shopping centre.

Christmas Light Switch on Events

Bootle Together will be holding their Christmas Event on Saturday 25th. Further details will be shared as plans progress.

South Rd Christmas Light Switch on will take place on Thursday 23rd November 1-5pm.

Marian Square, Crosby Village & Bispham Rd have yet to confirm their dates and times.

The Youth team have been approached to support some of the Christmas community activities.

Mayors Toy Appeal and Foodbank Donations

All ward members have been asked to donate towards the Mayors Toy Appeal and to their local Foodbank to support demand over the Christmas period. The deadline for donations is the 31st of October.

The Council Communications team are looking at producing some short videos to promote the Mayors Toy Appeal and all the work that goes into supporting it. The group secretaries have been asked to approach their members and request volunteers to take part.

The High Park Project held their first conference at the Atkinson Centre on September 20th. The event highlighted the work the project has been undertaking over the last few years and had feedback from participants on participation, project themes and outcomes, case studies, impact, legacy and plans for future projects.

A meeting has taken place with Highways, Environmental Enforcement, Traffic Services and the area manager of Shell to discuss issues of fly tipping and bin storage on Shell owned land on Crosby Road. A further site meeting is due to take place with the Area Coordinator and an engineer from Shell to agree a solution.

## Cost of Living/Welfare Reform

### Foodbank

4th April 2023 – 30th September 2023	South Sefton	Southport
Total Vouchers received	3584	979
Adults Fed	4553	1281
Children Fed	2577	643
Total Fed	7130	1924
Crisis Type	Rising cost of essentials –2309 vouchers presented 4581 people fed	Rising cost of essentials - 404 vouchers presented 780 people fed
Family Type	Single 2161 vouchers presented 60.3%	Single 555 vouchers presented 56.69%
Age group	Adults Age not specified: 1109	Adults 35-44: 362

### Sustainable Affordable Living Coordinator

The coordinator has met with Public Health to discuss a project that will increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers. The project will utilise the benefits of a Food Provision network and the Sefton Partnership to build a closer relationship with public health and their partners.

Meols Cop station in Norwood and Birkdale have been identified as possible pilot sites for a project to develop a network of food growing hubs in raised beds on unused sections of railway platforms. A further briefing and Business Case will follow, after discussions with rail providers and the active community food growing groups in these two areas.

### Holiday Activity Fund (HAF)

Summer 2023 HAF was attended by a total of 2807 young people, an increase from 1795 in summer 2022. Of these 2140 were primary aged with the remaining 667 made up of secondary aged young people. Our providers also fed back that at least 410 of HAF funded attendees had special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). 28413 individual sessions were funded summer HAF, or which 26479 places were taken up.

Applications for providers of winter HAF opened on October 9th. As with previous rounds of HAF we expect less providers to apply to deliver during the Christmas holidays compared to Easter and Summer, we anticipate around 23 camps to run. Throughout the summer providers were already thinking about the winter holidays and many are looking forward to family cooking sessions, trips to the pantomime and Christmas parties.

We will continue to support Active Sefton to offer free swimming sessions to young people in receipt of benefits related free school meals with families being eligible for one free swim in the October half term.

### Community Safety

A recruitment process has taken place for the Community Safety Manager position in the team. The successful candidate, Jennifer Currie, will be starting in November.

A site visit took place with Sefton ARC, the contractor and Police, with two potential locations for cameras on Kings Gardens identified - one on the far side of the lake at the end of the Victorian bridge in front of the Café - which would cover most of the lake and the area looking towards the pier and the opposite side towards Pleasure land. The other would be located on the town

centre side of the bridge and would cover either side of the path adjacent to the lake - picking up the shelters and benches.

Further discussions will take place with a view to the detail around cabling and associated costs.

Work is continuing around the issue of parking outside Merchant Taylors Boys School during peak times. Coaches are causing obstruction and leaving engines running whilst waiting to drop off/collect students. Colleagues from Highways have discussed this with Merchant Taylors school, and they are very supportive of asking buses to stop idling and will be engaging with the services.

## **Hate Crime**

The Hate Crime Joint Action Group (JAG formerly MARAC) meetings continue to take place monthly. The JAG supported a walkabout in the Seaforth area during National Hate Crime Awareness Week in October.

Various forms of hate graffiti were reported on the bridge on Manley Road. Network Rail were contacted, and the graffiti was quickly removed.

## **Equalities**

Sefton representatives attended the Navajo awards ceremony to accept the award for successfully passing our reassessment.

Sue Logie (Youth Worker) delivered an LGBTQIA+ Workshop to SLB/ELT members as part of National Inclusion Week, Sue used the lived experience workshop that she delivers to young people and other professionals which covers stereotypes, perceptions, use of language and two lived experience stories. It led to interesting discussion points that will support the work of the corporate equalities group in ensuring we are a fully diverse and inclusive organisation.

## **Anti-Social Behaviour**

To tackle the issue of street drinkers we are working with council and police colleagues in licensing and Sefton legal team to develop a process to engage off licenses to help reduce availability of alcohol to the cohorts involved. This will include restricting the sales of single cans, especially cheaper brands.

SASBU are discussing new approaches to tackling ASB involving social housing landlords. The inaction of landlords in ASB cases is proving frustrating and hindering the support that can be given to victims.

## **Youth Service**

The Team engaged with 65 young people face to face in Serious Violence (Your Safety Matters) consultation as part of the Serious violence duty consultation led by the Violence Reduction Partnership. We also shared the online version of the consultation on social media and with our Grant Funded Organisations and other partners.

We are working with our grant funded organisations and partners to ensure information on activities for Halloween and Bonfire night are shared.

## **LIBRARIES**

### **Summer Reading Challenge success**

It was predicted that this year's Summer Reading Challenge was going to do well with early indications of take up exceeding expectations. The initial statistics have now been compiled and show a fantastic result across the whole of Sefton. In general joiners were up by 22% and completers by 35% compared to last year, with 2334 children completing the challenge. In total, 27,206 books were taken out by children taking part in the challenge over the summer holidays. One amazing achievement was at Netherton Library where the number of completers of the challenge was up by 127%.

### **Visit by the Children's Poet Laureate**

Bootle Library has been visited by The Children's laureate Joseph Coelho on the 4<sup>th</sup> October. This was part of his nationwide 'Library Marathon'. Joseph is touring the country championing local libraries and the vital role they play within the community.

This is the second time Bootle Library has welcomed a poet Laureate, as it hosted an event for Simon Armitage, the current poet laureate in 2021.

Local schools came to meet Joseph, and he joined the library, taking a book out.

### **Meadows Library welcomes Hornby enthusiasts**

In August a large 2- day event took place at Meadows Library with help from the Leisure Centre who provided space for the event. The event was a celebration of all things Hornby, with experts on model trains, Meccano and Dinky toys demonstrating the toys and being on hand with advice. The event was part of the libraries Heritage Lottery funded scheme and took place in Partnership with the Frank Hornby Society. Over the 2 days the event attracted over 220 visitors. It was really pleasing to see parents and grandparents with young children attending. During the event the first Frank Hornby Heritage trail walk took place, and the walk has now been produced in a booklet which will be distributed in the community and in local schools.

### **Atkinson Art Outreach**

On 15<sup>th</sup> August 3 sculptures from the Atkinson Art Gallery were moved to Crosby Library for temporary display. This supports the Atkinson's ambitions to display its collection across the borough and if favourably received by residents, other library venues will be considered. The pieces will be displayed with two of the libraries own heritage pieces stored at Crosby Library: a stone lion from outside the original Waterloo Library, which was bombed in WWII, and a 300-year-old wooden water pipe discovered when Waterloo Town Hall was being extended in 1907.

With the pieces now in place an art trail around the building has been created in the form of a treasure hunt.

### **Update on Library Improvement Fund project funding**

In 2022, the Library Service successfully bid for LIF funding to install 4 sound proofed pods and software to convert them into language labs to support migrant integration. The funding had to be spent by September 2023, and this has been successfully achieved in good time. The pods have proved massively popular, way beyond expectations. With some additional UKSPF funding, the library service now plans to install a pod in Netherton Library, to provide community and council groups with a space for private 1-to-1 meetings.

## **THE ATKINSON**

### **Theatre Programme**

The Atkinson suffered a mechanical failure to its safety curtain just before the sold-out ballet performance of *Swan Lake* on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The situation was handled with utmost professionalism by both technical and front of house teams and at no point was the safety of customers, performers or staff placed in a position of risk. Fortunately, the production company Crown Ballet have managed to reschedule the performance to Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October.

The fault required a specialist repair which meant that the theatre performance of Eric Chappelle's *Ground Rules* 5<sup>th</sup> October was cancelled, as was the first of five scheduled performances of the Helen Forrester adaptation *By the Waters of Liverpool* on 12<sup>th</sup> October.

Understandably the cancellations have caused frustration and disappointment to our customers. Nevertheless, most have been understanding that the decisions were made out of safety compliance, and our box office team have managed the communications efficiently.

### **Exhibitions Programme**

#### **Self Portrait Prize 2023**

Saturday 23 September 2023 – Saturday 16 December 2023

The Atkinson is delighted to have been selected to host this prestigious exhibition. Established in 2011, it is the only art competition of its kind to focus exclusively on self-portraiture. It was inspired by Ruth Borchard, who between 1958 and 1971 created a collection of paintings dedicated exclusively to self-portraiture. It is open to artists of all ages and abilities, and submitted self-portraits can be in any medium.

Selected from over 1800 entries, this year's £10,000 prize was won by Colin Davidson, an internationally renowned portrait artist who lives and works near Belfast, Northern Ireland. Colin's portrait sitters have included Brad Pitt, Ed Sheeran, Liam Neeson, Sir Kenneth Branagh, Lady Mary Peters, Markéta Irglová, Mark Knopfler and Seamus Heaney.

With the support from the Atkinson's Curatorial lead Stephen Whittle, the 2023 Prize's judging panel included eminent members of the art world: Director of the National Gallery, Dr Gabriele Finaldi; Financial Times columnist Melanie Gerlis; former Director of the British Council, Andrea Rose; Prize Winner Lucy Jones; and Ruth Borchard's grandson David Borchard.

#### **Local Roots Project : what do the trees of Sefton mean to you?**

Over the past 3 months, participants from Life Rooms Bootle, students from Hugh Baird University Centre and photographer Andy Yates have been exploring this question through a series of photography and creative writing workshops.

Inspired by an initial visit to see the recent 'The Poetry of Trees' exhibition at The Atkinson, the participants explored trees in green spaces and urban settings in their local area. They created a series of poignant photographs and wrote poems which responded to these environments. Using 'The Poetry of Trees' book as a starting point, the participants also went on to produce a series of small zines which brought the imagery and writing together.

The exhibition in The Atkinson foyer space celebrates the individual and collective work produced by both the Life Rooms and Hugh Baird participants. This project is a co-commission by Open Eye Gallery, The Atkinson and Life Rooms, as part of Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust.

## **Museum programme**

Museum evaluation : each year the Atkinson completes the annual museum survey and the data is collated by the South West Museums development service. The survey gives us a broad estimate of the value of The Atkinson's museum and gallery service to the local economy. Further analysis will be prepared but the initial indications from the data provided this year suggest that with 103,800 visitors Atkinson's museum provides significant economic impact, and performs well when compared with regional and national comparators.

## **Southport Library**

The library has begun a new initiative with a **Ukulele project**. The launch event on 6<sup>th</sup> October saw approximately 50 participants performing in the library spaces. Working in partnership with two regional community groups, library patrons have been invited to loan a ukulele as you would a book! Starter courses will be held in the library, encouraging people to learn together – further evidence of Sefton's libraries as fun and engaging spaces. All 18 ukuleles were donated to the library by project partners The Ukulele Project and Ukelele Buddies, and are now out on loan with participants signed up on the courses.

## **Other news**

### **Southport war memorial re-dedication**

On 29<sup>th</sup> September the Atkinson hosted a reception for the visit of HRH Princess Anne to the re-dedication of Southport's war memorial. The event was enhanced with a wonderful display of artwork from local schools in the Atkinson foyer. The curatorial team also prepared a bespoke exhibition within the reception studio to reveal stories from local families at the time of the war, including historic film footage from the original dedication event. To support the occasion the Atkinson's Technical team delivered the sound engineering for the ceremony itself, to ensure that the public address system could work effectively within the designated outdoor space.

After the event the Chairman of Southport Royal British Legion wrote to the Atkinson to pass on their gratitude for supporting the event:

"The attention to detail that was displayed by all of your team was exceptional and ensured the overall success of the event. On behalf of our President, myself, our committee, and our members please accept our heartfelt thanks for supporting our branch, our Armed Forces Community, and our town. To have built this relationship between us is important as it allows us to continue our much-needed work within the community."

## **HOUSING**

### **Property Pool Plus Implementation Update**

By the time we next meet as a committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> November the new PPP system should be up and running, with a planned 'go live' date of the 6<sup>th</sup> November.

The new system is the culmination of 2 years of work to update the Property Pool Plus Policy and IT system to ensure that it remains 'fit for purpose' for our residents, and in line with new legislation and best practice which has emerged since the joint waiting list first came into operation.

The change over to the new system has meant that the list has been closed to new applicants since the 7<sup>th</sup> October, however, I can assure colleagues that provision has

been made in the planning to ensure that priority cases are still proceeded and offered the housing assistance that they require.

## **Homelessness**

The Homelessness Act 2002, requires every Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review in its Borough every 5 years, to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on this review and to consult with other statutory and voluntary organisations.

Sefton commissioned Imogen Blood and Associates to carry out the Homeless Review in early 2023. Since then, 32 professionals (council, partners, providers, CVS) have been interviewed; two focus group discussions at Homelessness Forum meetings have been carried out; wider services survey has been done with 27 responses received; 40 people with lived experience have been interviewed in visits to a dozen services; a snapshot survey of supported housing residents were done in July with 161 responses received; analysis of quantitative data, both published and directly supplied; attendance at Sefton's Consultation & Engagement Panel in July with an interim Equality Impact Assessment completed.

A draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy has now been produced, which is now subject to a 12-week consultation in order that a shared strategy is produced by all partners who influence homelessness.

The suggested strategic priorities for homelessness in Sefton by the consultants are:

1. Continue to improve accommodation and coordination of support for people with high health and/or care needs.
2. Implement housing-led oversight within the supported housing pathway and improve data reporting so this can be used to monitor whole system performance.
3. Continue to improve the quality of emergency bed and temporary accommodation provision and associated support.
4. Develop alternative housing models and pathways for those who are in or close to work, including younger people.
5. Improve access to affordable housing, with housing strategy and development decisions to be informed by intelligence and priorities from the review.
6. Further improvements to the coordination of homelessness prevention activities across sectors, to include a focus on 'hidden' homelessness, tenancy sustainment and pre- eviction protocols.
7. Sustain, further promote and seek to expand floating support, tenancy sustainment and dispersed schemes, especially where there is potential to convert to general needs.
8. Continue to implement, evaluate and develop new approaches to delivering Housing Options services across the whole system.

Following the 12-week consultation, a report will be taken to Cabinet in early 2024 to approve the new strategy and action plan.

## **Housing Standards Team**

The new 5 year Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing Schemes commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023. As at 3/10/23 we have received 2,025 licence applications, which is 58% of the expected number of applications. 455 licences have been issued and 211 compliance inspections have been carried out with many landlords seeking to apply for property accreditation.

The team have been successful at a further Housing Tribunal appeal where the Landlord appealed against their Civil Penalty Fine for failing to licence a property during the previous scheme.

The Civil Penalty was upheld with an agreed reduced fine from £3750 to £3000. There are a further 4 appeal cases pending against Civil Penalty Notices served for failure to licence properties, breach of licence conditions and breach of HMO Management Regulations.

101 requests for service relating to poor housing standards or poor housing management have been received between 25 July and 6 Sept 2023. Where landlords fail to comply with informal action, the team continue to take formal enforcement action. During August & September this has included the service of 1 x Emergency Prohibition Order, 1 x Prohibition Order, 5 Notices for failure to have smoke alarms fitted and 2 for failure to have the required Electrical Safety Certificates.

Work to reduce the number of long-term vacant homes has continued, with responses to 8 new Service Requests relating to problematic empty homes and commencement of a further Enforced Sale of a long-term vacant property. CM will note from the KPI's that the proportion of long term vacant properties in the borough has declined from 3.77% to 3.55% since the last update in April.

Management of the Council's Gypsy and Traveller site continues. There have been 6 Unauthorised Gypsy & Traveller encampments in Sefton during August & September.

### **Strategic Housing Commissioning Group (SHCG)**

The Housing Service is relevant to a number of departments across the council and during the preparation of the recently adopted Housing Strategy I asked officers to ensure that the service was fully integrated in order to reflect wider corporate priorities relating to housing. The Housing Strategy, and the Action Plan which accompanies it was developed following extensive consultation and joint working with a range of stakeholders.

The SHCG was convened in late 2021 so that the housing team could meet regularly with colleagues in both Adults and Childrens Social Care during the preparation of the Housing Strategy. Now that the strategy has been adopted the group has been refreshed and expanded. The group brings together colleagues from Childrens Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health and Housing Options to consider specialist housing need in the borough. The group also considers accommodation offers from providers to ensure that we are prioritising opportunities at a corporate level.

Of particular importance is the work that the Housing Services does to support Children's Social Care and work continues with to understand their housing needs and updates are being provided to Corporate Parenting Board in relation to this.

### **The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act**

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act became law on 29 August 2023. This new legislation will affect supported housing providers by setting a framework for new systems for supported housing and the older person's housing sector including sheltered and extra care.



The [Supported Housing \(Regulatory Oversight\) Act](#) is a Private Members' Bill which aims to tackle problematic exempt accommodation whilst being committed to avoiding unintended consequences for good quality providers of supported housing.

It will aim to improve the regulation and oversight of 'supported exempt' housing (Supported exempt housing is a subset of supported housing which is exempt from the benefit cap and housing benefit limits in welfare regulations).

*What will the Act mean for supported housing providers?*

The Act will:

- Requires local authorities to review exempt provision in their areas and to publish a local Supported Housing Strategy
- Gives the Secretary of State power to publish national standards relating to exempt accommodation
- Includes powers for the Secretary of State to make licensing regulations to be exercised by local authorities (with consequences for non-compliant providers, including removing or restricting Housing Benefit entitlement); and
- Amends s191 of the Housing Act 1996 to clarify that where someone leaves exempt accommodation due to poor conditions of care or standards of accommodation, they will not be deemed to have made themselves intentionally homeless.

The Act will require **secondary legislation to implement many of its proposals.**

*Next steps*

In the autumn, the government will publish a formal consultation on the detailed implementation of the new system. The first round of consultation will review the new provisions in the Act, as well as a review by the DWP on the definition of 'Care, Support and Supervision'. A second public consultation will take place in 2024 and will include the draft regulations developed by DLUHC and the DWP.

Over the next few months there will be formal consultation with DLUHC and DWP officials. This consultation will look at:

- The scope and nature of the licensing scheme.
- The Housing Benefit rules.
- The potential National Supported Housing Standards.
- The strategic plans and transition to the new system.