

COUNCIL - 18 JANUARY 2024

QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Mike Prendergast to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)</u>
	Subject: Suspension of Brown Bin Collections over the Festive Period
	Why was the decision to suspend brown bin collections across Sefton taken so late and communicated to residents so poorly?
	Response:
	"It is not possible to identify whether parking revenue has been lost to the Council as a result of the scheme, as drivers may have chosen to park in other Council provided parking spaces".
2	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Mike Prendergast to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)</u>
	Subject: Suspension of Brown Bin Collections over the Festive Period
	In a recent press release, Sefton Council described the cancellation of the entire brown bin collection service over the whole borough as a 'small number of collections over the festive period'. If the cancellation of an entire service over a festive period is regarded as a 'small number' can the Cabinet Member outline what would constitute a large number?
	Response:
	The service that was suspended was dry recycling (brown bin) collections and residual (grey bin) collections took place. Recycling collections historically have a lower participation rate than residual collections. Had both services been suspended this would constitute to a large number.
3	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Mike Prendergast to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)</u>
	Subject: Temporary Cycle Lanes
	On the basis of figures from 2019/20, parking revenues lost from the installation of temporary cycle lanes on Houghton Street over the last 3 years are in the region of £411,000. Would this amount of money have been enough to cover the cost of the recent Southport Pier survey?
	Response:
	It is not possible to identify whether parking revenue has been lost to the Council as a result of the scheme, as drivers may have chosen to park in other Council provided parking spaces.

4	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Mike Prendergast to the Cabinet Member for</u>
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	<u>Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)</u>
	Subject: Temporary Cycle Lanes
	Does the Cabinet member think that the installation of cycle lanes have been good for businesses along Hoghton Street and Queens Road in Southport and can he name one?
	Response:
	The data shows that almost 3 quarters of all journeys on the route are made by people walking, wheeling or cycling, and that the vast majority of those surveyed were doing those journeys to go the shops, go to work or education, or access services. There are many factors that contribute to a business thriving or struggling, and the last 3 years have been particularly challenging for all businesses. I have not seen any data to demonstrate the extent to which the scheme, in isolation of other factors, has positively or negatively impacted on the performance of businesses on Hoghton Street and Queens Road. We have however listened to the concerns expressed by some businesses and have shown how we plan to address them.
5	<u>Question submitted by Sir Ron Watson CBE to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)</u>
	Subject: Cabinet Meeting Thursday, 7th December 2023 Agenda Item 5 - Sandway Homes
	At the Cabinet Meeting on the 7 th December Members received a report in respect of the above. Sandway Homes as a Company was formed on the basis that it would provide an annual financial dividend to the Council to support the revenue budget. Will the Leader of the Council please confirm the anticipated dividend that was factored into the original business plan and advise how much has actually been received? The Council has since given a significant financial commitment of some £7m to underwrite any financial losses and will he advise that in the event of this being required where such funding will come from and on what terms, including any annual revenue commitment?
	Response:
	An update report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) on Tuesday 16 th January 2022, 6.30 p.m. The information on the anticipated dividend is included on pages 14 and 15 of the report (report linked below): http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s121135/OS%20Outturn%20Review%20of%20Council%20Wholly%20Owned%20Companies%20SHOL%20Jan24%20FINAL.pdf In terms of the loan to support working capital for the company again this is referenced in the December 2023 report on when this will be repaid. Members should be aware that £1m was reimbursed to the council this week.

6	<p><u>Question submitted by Sir Ron Watson CBE to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Cabinet Meeting Thursday, 7th December, Agenda Item 7 - Financial Management 2023/2024 – 2027</p>
	<p>The Cabinet considered the relevant report from the Officers concerned and the Leader of the Council informed Members that he considered that if the £140m that had been allocated by the Government to help deal with illegal asylum seekers in conjunction with the Government of Rwanda when many of the problems faced by Local Government could be resolved if the funding for this programme went to Local Authorities.</p> <p>Would the Leader of the Council please advise the percentage figure of total Local Government expenditure in the UK that would be represented by £140m and has he taken into account the extra funding that is required to deal with both legal and illegal immigration in respect of Local Authorities?</p>
	<p>Response:</p>
	<p>I don't recall the former Council Leader Councillor Ian Maher mentioning any figures.</p>
7	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Lynne Thompson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills (Councillor Atkinson)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Pontins</p>
	<p>Can the Cabinet Member reassure Ainsdale Ward members that this council will remain in contact with Britannia Hotels, the owner, and either encourage or work towards a solution to what could be a very serious issue with a large site possibly becoming derelict or unused.</p> <p>Whilst never in the best of condition, Pontins provided cheap, low-cost holidays for many years, for many visitors and their spend was important to the local economy in both Ainsdale and Southport.</p> <p>I am aware the Council has already made efforts to contact Britannia Hotels for further information, as well as working with partners to support those made redundant by the park's closure.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet member confirm there has been an initial meeting with the owners of Pontins to discuss their proposals for the future of the site, with a further meeting to follow?</p> <p>Will the Council be questioning the current owners in relation to concerns raised around condition of the site and its facilities after the Fire Authority attended a flooding incident at the site New Years Day.</p>
	<p>Response</p>
	<p>The Council has been pursuing engagement at a senior level with Pontins/Britannia and/or their representatives, for many years.</p> <p>Since Britannia announced the immediate closure of Pontins on 4th January 2024, Council officers have made contact to seek clarity on the position and as an</p>

	<p>immediate priority, offered to provide support to help their staff find alternative employment. We have offered to meet with Britannia and their representatives to discuss next steps. We have requested details of the appropriate contact to signpost other interested parties seeking to take on the site. We have also fielded a number of significant enquiries from other investors within a range of different sectors who have indicated their interest in the site.</p> <p>Whilst there remains over 130 years on the lease that Pontins/Britannia hold, the Council has very little control in day to day affairs, including whether the site remains operational or not. Nevertheless, the Council's property team are managing compliance with the lease, and the condition of the site and buildings (including, but not limited to, the flooding reported over Christmas).</p> <p>Pace of progress is very much dependent upon the aspirations, intentions and approaches adopted by Britannia. As is the potential for imminent or ongoing meetings. There has been no meeting with Pontins/Britannia since the closure was announced, however the Council will continue to seek and remains keen on active discussions. I am reassured by officers that they have endeavoured to secure meaningful contact with representatives acting on Pontins/Britannia's behalf, with senior representatives of the company direct and also to remain open to other parties who retain an interest in this site (of which there have been many).</p>
8	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Budgetary Considerations</p>
	<p>Many Members of the Council will have attended the briefing session on the budget for 2024/2025 held at 5.00 p.m. prior to the Full Council Meeting. Notwithstanding any information that might have been provided at this meeting, would the Leader of the Council please confirm and give the figures where appropriate for the following:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Southport Market - The losses incurred by the Market for the past year but also on an accumulative basis since the refurbishment programme took place? 2. Sefton New Directions - The financial position regarding the situation in respect of Sefton New Directions reported to the Cabinet on the 4th January but where the press and public, including Councillors, were excluded from seeing the relevant figures? 3. Sefton Hospitality – the losses incurred up to date together with the projections for 2024/2025? 4. The Strand - The revenue losses incurred up to date on The Strand and the anticipated revenue losses for the financial year 2024/2025? 5. Southport Marine Events Centre - The extent to which the revenue implications in respect of the Southport Marine Events Centre were due to a shortfall in exterior funding the Council decided to borrow £19.6m over a 40-year period to include a figure for the forthcoming financial year within the provisional timeframe envisaged?

6. Crosby Library - Will the Leader of the Council please provide details of the operating costs of the Library on an annual basis and confirm the annual revenue consequences of the £13.8m borrowed in respect of this scheme as reported at the Cabinet Meeting on Thursday, 7th December, Agenda Item 13?
7. Sandway Homes - Will the Leader of the Council confirm the anticipated dividend that was expected from Sandway Homes in the current financial year and what amount was received and confirm the anticipated figures to take into account when formulating the budget for 2024/2025?

Will the Leader of the Council confirm the overall revenue impact in respect of the council tax for the answers given in respect of these questions and translate that into a percentage increase that may or may not be necessary for the council tax rate in respect of the next financial year?

Response:

1. Updates on the performance of Southport Market are presented to Overview and Scrutiny each year.

Year 1 financial performance was reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) - Tuesday 8th November, 2022 6.30 pm. The relevant information can be found in section 3 (Financial Performance) of the report (report linked below).

<http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s112565/Southport%20Market%20-%201%20Year%20Review.pdf>

Year 2 financial performance was reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) - Tuesday 16th January, 2024 6.30 pm The relevant information can be found in section 3 (Financial Performance) of the report (report linked below).

<http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s121132/Southport%20Market%20-%202%20Year%20Review.pdf>

2. The purpose of the report on Sefton New Directions presented to Cabinet on the 4th January 2024 was to provide Cabinet with the initial outcome of a services review of the company.

An update on the financial position of the company will be presented to a future meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health).

3. The latest business plan for Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited (SHOL) was approved by Cabinet on Thursday 7th December, 2023 10.00 am. The relevant information can be found in section 4 of the report (report linked below).

<http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s120627/Sefton%20Hospitality%20Operations%20Limited%20-%20business%20plan.pdf>

4. The latest business plan for the Strand Shopping Centre – together with the business case for the Transformation Programme - was approved by Cabinet on Thursday 7th December, 2023 10.00 am. The relevant information can be found in section 2 of the report regarding the projections for 2023/24 to 2027/28 (report linked below).

<http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s120649/02%20The%20Strand%20-%20Phase%201%20FBC%20and%20BP%202023->

Prior year financial performance has been reported previously. These have been summarised in the following table:

Financial Year	Outturn (Surplus) / Deficit £m
2017/18	(1.000)
2018/19	(0.162)
2019/20	(0.031)
2020/21	3.029
2021/22	0.498
2022/23	(2.427)

5. The business case for the Marine Lake Events Centre was approved by Cabinet - Thursday 28th July, 2022 10.00 am (report linked below). The Capital Costs section on pages 4 and 5 of the report sets out the estimated annual cost of borrowing.

[http://smbc-modgov-](http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s111120/Marine%20Lake%20Event%20Centre_v2%20CLEAN%20005.pdf)

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No borrowing has been incurred to date and none is anticipated in the forthcoming financial year. The revenue implications will not materialise until 2026/27.

In relation to external funding, the Council submitted a bid (on behalf of the Town Deal board) for £50m, the maximum amount accessible. £37.5m was awarded, and the Town Deal board prioritised allocation of that grant funding accordingly”.

6. The Outline Business Case for Crosby New Library was approved by Cabinet on Thursday 7th December, 2023 10.00am. The operating costs are included in the Revenue Costs section on page 2 of the report (report linked below). The cost of borrowing is covered in the same section.

[http://smbc-modgov-](http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s120628/Crosby%20New%20Library%20Outline%20Business%20Case%20Update%20002%20Final.pdf)

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These cost estimates will be subject to further review as part of the development of the Full Business Case for the scheme. No borrowing will be incurred until the Full Business Case has been approved together with the associated budgetary approvals in line with the requirements of the Financial Procedure Rules.

7. An update report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) - Tuesday 16th January, 2022 6.30 pm. The information on the anticipated dividend is included on pages 14 and 15 of the report (report linked below).

[http://smbc-modgov-](http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s121135/OS%20Outturn%20Review%20of%20Council%20Wholly%20Owned%20Companies%20SHOL%20Jan24%20FINAL.pdf)

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The revenue implications of all of the above schemes will be built into the Council’s MTFP, and ultimately the annual budget, as and when required and

	will form part of the overall budget considerations in each year including the associated funding streams.						
9	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Pugh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Councillor Lappin)</u>						
	Subject: External Consultancy						
	How much has been spent by Sefton Council on external consultants and consultancy firms in the last two financial years 2022-23 & 2021-2022 and in the current year to date?						
	Response						
	The costs charged against Consultancy are as follows: <table border="1" data-bbox="603 741 1114 875"> <tr> <td>2021/2022</td> <td>£1.832m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022/2023</td> <td>£1.610m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023/2024 to date</td> <td>£1.329m</td> </tr> </table>	2021/2022	£1.832m	2022/2023	£1.610m	2023/2024 to date	£1.329m
2021/2022	£1.832m						
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10	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Pugh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group to the Cabinet Member for Loality Services (Councillor Fairclough)</u>						
	Subject: Refuse Collections						
	Which areas and /or streets received (a) brown bin collections (b) grey bin collections during the period December 25th,2023 and January 5th 2024?						
	Response						
	During the period requested no brown collections where made. As a result of the alternative weekly collections, residual waste was prioritised over dry recycling and collected in the south of the borough. This was an essential collection due to the potential environmental risk posed. However, starting the 3 rd January 2024 the service collected both grey and brown bins across the length of the Borough.						
11	Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Hardy)						
	Subject: Crosby Library						
	The Cabinet considered at their meeting on the 7 th December the situation in respect of the Crosby Library, Agenda Item 13. Would the Cabinet Member please advise the following:- 1. The new library proposals are shown as forming the basis for two submissions to Government for Levelling-Up Funds. These were both rejected by the Government and what assessment and information was given to Members about the total annual revenue costs that would be involved without this level of support? 2. The operating costs are estimated to show a net income of £0.009. Will the						

	<p>Cabinet Member please advise the basis on which this figure was arrived at?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Cost of Borrowing – this is estimated at £13.8m at an annual cost of £0.902. How will this be revenue funded? 4. Design Fees – the report indicates that if the scheme is not approved then it will not be possible to capitalise the design costs. Will the Cabinet Member please advise the relevant figures and clarify the amount which the report indicates will need to be funded from revenue sources? 5. Capital Costs – this again refers to the £13.8m to be borrowed and reference is made to the need to consider inflation. What estimates have been made and how is this identified in the OBC?
	<p>Response:</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the time of the submissions no assessment was carried out to identify the possible borrowing cost associated with the projects as this was not the basis on which delivery was being pursued. There was no commitment to delivery at this stage without securing the external funding necessary in meeting capital costs in full. 2. Operating costs within the OBC were based on a model built-up of information across a range of associated expenditure and income lines using a number of validated sources both internal and external. 3. The updated Outline Business Case for Crosby New Library was approved by Cabinet on Thursday, 7th December, 2023 10.00am. The estimated cost of borrowing is included in the Revenue Costs section (Cost of Borrowing) on page 2 of the report (report linked below). http://smbc-modgov-03/documents/s120628/Crosby%20New%20Library%20Outline%20Business%20Case%20Update%20002%20Final.pdf <p>These cost estimates will be subject to further review as part of the development of the Full Business Case for the scheme. No borrowing will be incurred until the Full Business Case has been approved together with the associated budgetary approvals in line with the requirements of the Financial Procedure Rules.</p> <p>The revenue implications of the scheme will be built into the Council’s MTFP, and ultimately the annual budget, as and when required, and will form part of the overall budget.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The commitment on design costs to the end of RIBA Stage 3 and in addition the cost of the Full Business Case work is £698,895 for design split over two financial years 2023/4 & 2024/5 (2023/4 - £421,214 and 2024/5 – £277,681). The cost of the Full Business Case development is £30,000. 5. The OBC states that the analysis is based on point in time data and as such subject to change. The market is changing all the time but is currently significantly more stable than in the recent past. The viability of the scheme and analysis will be regularly updated and ongoing work with the Full Business Case

	will do exactly this. The FBC will again consider detailed costs and these will be built up through the design process and validated by our specialist consultants working on the Development Management of the project”.
12	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Chairman of the Cabinet (Councillor Atkinson)</u>
	Subject: Sefton New Directions
	<p>Members of the Council have not been allowed to see some 15 pages of the situation regarding Sefton New Directions:-</p> <p>In the public section however, particularly under Item 2, there are recommendations which indicate that in order for Sefton New Directions to be affordable, viable, sustainable and to provide quality services a significant transformation programme of work will be required across both Health and Social Care Partners, with a stronger focus on the role of Community Partners within the review of services which will be delivered in the design of 18 new service specifications.</p> <p>This clearly indicates that this is not the current position but many will take the view that Councillors are entitled to know the reasons for this situation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will the Leader of the Council therefore advise both the financial details and an indication of the action that must be taken in view of what is clearly a very serious issue for the Council?
	Response:
	The information to respond to the first section of this question is already in the public domain via the published accounts for New Directions. The content of the January Cabinet report sets out the proposed response and further updates of progression of this transformation will be taken as required.
13	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)</u>
	Subject: The Strand
	<p>Will the Leader of the Council provide inclusive answers to the following points:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There were 251 pages of a report on The Strand which were classified as ‘exempt’ out of a total of 368. Will the Leader of the Council please explain how it is possible for Members of the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee and of the Audit and Governance Committee, in particular, to judge the validity of any decisions made when the majority of the information that is highly relevant has only been made available to Cabinet Members? 2. The summary on page 421, paragraph 3, Agenda item 14, this states that the purpose of the acquisition of The Strand was for regeneration purposes. The same point is made on at least 4 other occasions in the text of this report. <p>The Leader of the Council will know that this is not an accurate representation of the background as Elected Members were assured at the time of purchase that this would be a revenue generating project and it was entirely on this basis that the Council agreed to go forward with a purchase price of £32.5m. The last valuation received showed that the capital value figure was now estimated at £13.08m. The Strand is valued for the Council accounts at the end of each</p>

financial year but in view of the significant loss that has already been made and which will have to be funded entirely by Sefton Council taxpayers would you agree that an up to date valuation now would be essential?

3. On page 427, second paragraph, a number of statements are made without details as to how many of the issues identified will be met. Will the Leader of the Council confirm that when The Strand was put up for sale by the previous owners there was no interest at all from any element of the private sector that has experience in this retail field?
4. Business Plan – this is shown on page 428 where paragraph 2.2 makes a series of generic statements that can best be described as ‘opinion’. Will the Leader of the Council not agree that an independent assessment to take into account all the various component parts should not be undertaken before any further losses are made?
5. On page 433 of the same report under the section ‘Commercial Value’ there is a statement that The Strand will become financially sustainable in the long term and that the value of the ‘asset’ will see the decline in the value improve over time. What timescale is envisaged and what estimate has been made of the annual revenue financial loss to be funded during the unspecified period of time?
6. On page 455, 3.5.5 – Education. This refers to a new Town Centre Education Campus amongst other things the facility ‘could’ include;- virtual reality, ‘could’ flight simulation, ‘could’ media suites, ‘could’ digital development spaces, ‘could’ the development of a digital innovation hub. The paragraph also states that a new campus ‘could’ revitalise the Town Centre etc, etc.

These would all appear to be generic statements and will the Leader of the Council advise the basis on which they are made and what evidence is there to support the proposition that these ‘could’ take place? By the same token would you not accept that at the very least this wish list should have included a phrase ‘might’ or ‘might not’ which is a true reflection of the actual position?

7. In order that Members may be fully aware of the significant annual financial revenue consequences of what is proposed does the Leader of the Council agree that the following information should be produced in a clear and simple format as below?
 - (a) The financial loss incurred by Sefton projected to the end of this financial year since The Strand was first purchased.
 - (b) The capital value based on a re-assessment to be undertaken now.
 - (c) The annual revenue costs for the proposals which we have to assume will be outlined in the information denied to the majority of Elected Members and how this is to be funded.

Response:

1. The reasons for exemption of part of this report are outlined within the Cabinet papers.
2. The acquisition referred to above was for regeneration purposes, as referenced within the report, and any suggestion to the contrary is inaccurate.
3. The Council is unable to speculate on levels of interest or offers from other

parties for the Strand in 2017.

4. The project team includes external parties with industry experience and expertise to support with management and operation of the centre, and development and delivery of the vision and project for the future of the centre.
5. The Cabinet reports of December 2023 include the forecast five-year business plan to the financial year 2027-2028 – future annual updates of the business plan will report against timescales beyond 2028. Revenue implications will be built into the Council’s MTFP, and ultimately the annual budget, as and when required and will form part of the overall budget considerations in each year including the associated funding streams.
6. The repurposing of the Strand is an ambitious project for the future of Bootle town centre. The project team is evaluating, and will continue to evaluate, a range of options and opportunities that support diversification of uses in some parts of the centre, measured against financial, economic, social and environmental objectives and outcomes.
7. The latest business plan for the Strand Shopping Centre - together with the business case for the Transformation Programme - was approved by Cabinet on Thursday 7th December, 2023 10.00 am. The relevant information can be found in section 2 of the report regarding the projections for 2023/24 to 2027/28 (report linked below).
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14 **Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Councillor Lappin)**

Subject: Elected Member Mandatory Training Programme

1. Will the Cabinet Member confirm both the numbers and the percentage of Elected Members who have completed what are being described as ‘mandatory’ courses?
2. Would the Cabinet Member show this information by Political Party?
3. The courses were provided in most instances by the LGA and as such there was no direct cost to Sefton Council. However, would the Cabinet Member please ascertain which organisations provided which courses to the LGA and did they in turn require a fee for the course provision and if so what were the amounts

involved?

4. The experience up to now clearly indicates that many of these courses were not designed for Elected Members but for Officers and will the Cabinet Member advise what alterations are to be made – or have been made – to ensure that they are relevant to the position of Elected Members?

Response:

1.

	Course Title	Numbers completed	Percentage completed
1	Information Compliance Sharing and Guarding	37	56%
2	Safeguarding Adults Awareness	33	50%
3	Safeguarding Children and Young People	34	52%
4	Equality and Diversity Awareness	35	53%
5	Corporate Parenting	48	73%
6	Annual Planning Committee Training Session	46	70%
7	Annual Licensing and Regulatory Committee Training	15	23%

2. By Political Party:

	Course Title	Numbers and Percentage completed Labour	Numbers and Percentage completed Liberal Democrat	Numbers and Percentage completed Conservative	Numbers and Percentage completed Independent	Number and Percentage completed Formby Action Group
1	Information Compliance Sharing and Guarding	31 (61%)	4 (44%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2	Safeguarding Adults Awareness	27 (53%)	3 (33%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3	Safeguarding Children and Young People	27 (53%)	4 (44%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4	Equality and Diversity Awareness	30 (59%)	1 (11%)	4 (80%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
5	Corporate Parenting	38 (75%)	7 (78%)	2 (40%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
6	Annual Planning Committee Training Session	37 (73%)	4 (44%)	4 (80%)	0 (0%)	1
7	Annual Licensing and Regulatory Committee Training	12 (24%)	2 (22%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

3. This request would require extensive research which relates to LGA contractual relationships and as such is beyond Sefton Council's remit. I would suggest Councillor Sir Ron Watson contacts the LGA.

4. Unfortunately, Sefton Council doesn't have the extra funding required for specific and bespoke courses that both officers and members are both required to complete. Members, as are officers, are quite capable of applying the information required in the courses to their individual roles.

The course content and the learning outcomes for all courses are relevant to all staff and Elected Members. Some of the eLearning courses for example, Safeguarding Adults and Children do include examples that are not necessarily tailored to Elected Members, however, the principles are the same. For example, everyone needs to know how to spot the signs of abuse and how to report this. For Information Compliance, everyone needs to know how to maintain accurate information, the dos and don'ts when working with information, storage, and security of information and how to deal with information incidents etc. The same applies to our other eLearning courses.

15 **Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)**

Subject: Merseytravel New Rolling Stock

The Leader of the Council will be very well aware of the fact that there has been a significant investment of some £500m in new rolling stock to be used on the Merseyrail Network. There has however been some difficulties and it would be helpful if the Leader of the Council, possibly through Sefton's Representative on

	<p>Merseytravel, could advise details and comment on the following:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the time of the preparation of this question the new rolling stock does not appear to be operating on the Northern Line from Southport to Hunts Cross. May we have an explanation as to what has caused the delay and a new anticipated timeframe? 2. There was an inclusive consultation process that took place prior to the commissioning of the new carriages and there was a good response from the public. The consultation exercise indicated that the majority of people were not in favour of what is usually referred to as 'airline' style seating. Would the Leader of the Council please explain why this appears to have been ignored and this type of seating is a major part of the new format in the carriages which is not popular? Can you advise if our Representative on Merseytravel drew attention to this and made any efforts to seek to ensure that the wishes expressed by the public were met? 3. The new seating arrangements overall are that the seats are closer together, of a reduced width and are much harder than those on the existing stock. This means that the journey itself is much less comfortable than previously applied and there is a particular difficulty with the airline seating as if a passenger sitting at the window seat needs to exit if there is a person next to them they have to get up and move into the middle corridor so that the person can get passed and this is hardly a welcome development. Whilst it is acknowledged that some changes, notably more designated areas for the disabled and cycles and there is a security advantage in being able to see right through from one end to the other all the carriages, the overall journey experience has been reduced. Does the Leader of the Council think that this represents good value for money and is there any provision for a review of the seating arrangements after a given period of time?
	<p>Response:</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There have been Class 777 trains operating from Southport to Hunts Cross since December 2023. The fleet rollout programme will see the Class 507/8s largely retired from service and replaced with 777s over the course of the next few months. This doesn't represent a delay. 2. The research into passengers' preferences for features of the new trains including seating, commissioned by Merseytravel and undertaken by Transport Focus in 2013/4 showed a clear preference for two styles of seating layout. These were "pod" seating as has been provided for decades on the Class 507/8s and "airline" seating which had not previously been employed on Merseyrail but is commonplace on many rail networks. There was a clear lack of support for "longitudinal" seating which is employed on services like the London Overground. The Class 777s feature a roughly equal mix of pod and airline seating. Since the Class 777s entered service, both styles of seating have been well used by passengers and no complaints about this mix of seating have been received by Merseytravel. 3. The Class 777 seats are all 450mm wide which is the minimum width required for

	<p>priority seats. The Class 507/8s have a mix of 450mm wide priority seats and a majority of seats which are 440mm wide. There are spacer panels between some of the 440mm wide seats which create an impression on increased width but which significantly reduce the width of the aisle down the centre of the train (to below 600mm), significantly impeding passenger circulation. The Class 777 minimum aisle width is 800mm which enables two adults to pass each other with comfort. The Class 777s feature significantly improved legroom at all seats, thereby providing additional comfort and ease of access for passengers seated both on the aisle and by the windows. The Class 777 seats are firm but comfortable and are suited to the relatively short (up to an hour) journey times on the Merseyrail network. The features of the Class 777 seating are; increased width, high back with a narrow headrest, increased legroom and good lumbar support. These choices were informed by the original 2013/4 and second phase of passenger research undertaken by Transport Focus in 2017/18”.</p>
16	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Shaw to the Cabinet Member for Loyalty Services (Councillor Fairclough)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Refuse Collections</p>
	<p>The Cabinet Member is no doubt aware of concerns about household bins collections over the recent Christmas/New Year period. This included both the large gap in collections (4 weeks for many residents) and communication (eg the Council's website giving conflicting information about collections).</p> <p>Does the Cabinet Member consider that there are lessons to be learnt for an improved service next Christmas, and assuming he does how is this to be achieved?</p>

	<p>Response:</p>
	<p>As part of the cost saving measures the Council operate a 4-day shutdown closure over the festive period for all staff. The Waste Collection service has historically relied on volunteers from the service to work during this period. The service has struggled increasingly over time to garner sufficient staff to cover the extent of service delivery and Christmas 2023/New Year 2024 was the most challenging year to date in terms of limitations of resource. Having an unstable resource to deliver the service impacts upon clear messaging in advance of the collection period as deployment decisions are adapted based upon resource availability.</p> <p>Officers are reviewing the current service delivery provision and will bring forward alternative models for consideration to provide an improved service for Sefton residents.</p>
17	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Lynne Thompson to the Cabinet Member for Loyalty Services (Councillor Fairclough)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Bin Collections Over the Christmas Period</p>
	<p>Earlier this year I suggested any issues around bin collections could be better publicised. For example, stickers on bin lids. I am told Council have used this method previously and several local authorities (including Liverpool City Council) still do so.</p> <p>The recent decision to pull recycling collections for the Christmas period appears to have been a very late one, with Ward Councillors receiving a confirmation a few days before the festive break.</p>

	<p>Would Council consider bringing back this simple but effective means of communicating collection changes?</p>
	<p>Response:</p>
	<p>Whilst other Councils have and do make use of the sticker method, it has proven not only costly but often ineffective when distributing information, certainly when changes to collections take effect and there is a requirement to update, for example changes to holidays, reduced collections etc. Sefton have used this method in previous years but felt that digital inclusion would be far more productive.</p> <p>As members will be aware that Waste Management and Street Cleansing staff are required to take unpaid leave as part of the council wide shutdown arrangements.</p> <p>Historically the service has relied on volunteers to come forward to agree to work during this 4 day period. This year a number of staff preferred to take the time off.</p> <p>Officers are considering alternative service delivery models and appropriate staff negotiation will be undertaken.</p>