

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)		
COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Trish Hardy	Communities and Housing	March 2024

Community Safety and Engagement Team

The Neighbourhoods team facilitated a day of partnership work between our Cleansing Team and Liverpool City Councils Cleansing team to clear detritus/weeds and to sweep the inner gullies of the central reservation on Breeze Hill. LCC worked from Queens Drive up to the boundary with Sefton and provided the traffic management to the junction with Southport Road.

The team and Councillors have received complaints from members of the public about the increasing number of motorists using the pedestrianised area in Crosby Village. In response to the issues raised, the Highways team are considering the introducing an additional waiting restriction that would be enforced by the Parking Services Team. A briefing report would be circulated to all 9 Councillors covering Crosby Village, requesting feedback prior to then being presented to the relevant cabinet member for approval.

The consultation for covid memorials has been completed. 259 residents submitted a response to the consultation with residents in favour of the design and locations, with exception of Bootle. The respondents to the consultation felt Derby Park would be a more suitable location. Green Sefton and the Trees Department are liaising to install the memorials in the 5 chosen areas:

- Bootle – Derby Park
- Crosby – Victoria Park
- Maghull – KGV Park, Meadows
- Formby – Duke Street Park
- Southport – Botanic Gardens

Community Safety

The Community Safety Manager is working with colleagues in the Police to develop a Serious Dog Incident Reduction Strategy for Sefton. Key objectives have been identified with the aim to produce a multi-agency action plan. The draft Strategy has been shared with Safer Sefton Together (SST) committee inviting comments and feedback.

Following concerns raised at the November 2023 SST meeting, an initial Youth Subgroup meeting has taken place. At the meeting it was decided that key representatives from Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP), Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Police were to be invited. The meeting will look at youth provision opportunities with the aim to provide strategic oversight to the SST and ensure collaboration between agencies to best support Sefton's children and young people.

Cost of Living/Welfare Reform

Sustainable Affordable Living Coordinator

In April we will have our first full financial year data from across the sector. This will enable us to analyse look at trends and analyse the information helping us to support providers over the coming year.

The Cost-of-Living Support Uptake Group had its initial Stakeholder meeting. The organisations attending understand the impetus behind training frontline staff for the healthy start offer which will see an increase in take up from eligible residents.

Holiday Activity Fund (HAF)

Funding for the 2024/25 HAF Programme was confirmed in January, Sefton has been allocated. £1,024,090, an increase of £14,000 on the previous year.

Winter HAF was a success reaching 1472 unique young people, compared to 1137 last year, 197 of whom were identified as having additional needs. Young people took part in a wide variety of site-based activities including sports, arts and crafts, dance and drama, cooking, mindfulness, meditation, and fishing. Many providers also organised festive trips including days out to Knowsley Safari Park, indoor activity centres, the cinema, and local pantomimes. Feedback from the clubs was positive and focused on engaging with young people who otherwise would have spent the holidays indoors, providing activities which families may not have been able to afford, maintaining healthy habits throughout the holidays and supporting parents at a stressful time of year.

The offer for free swimming sessions for young people in receipt of benefits related free school meals has been extended into 2024. Eligible young people, including an accompanying adult for under 8s, can access 1 free swim in the Christmas, Easter, and half term holidays and 5 swims during the summer break.

Hate Crime

A walkabout in Southport took place in January, along Eastbank Street. Contacts were made with shopkeepers and business owners, and some agreed to display Stop Hate UK materials.

The Hate Crime Joint Action Group (JAG) is developing a hate crime strategy and action plan and refreshing the JAG terms of reference. Links are being made with the Prevent agenda in accordance with that action plan.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The ASB Officers are scheduled to be on training regarding personal protection and both have attended specialised training in February 24 for "In Court Prosecution Training" provided by Mallard Training, specialists in ASB Training.

In line with the national ASB review the team is reviewing and refreshing the ASB process to make it clearer for residents. As part of this process, we will include 'lessons learnt' information as well as customer/resident feedback. The process will look to provide dynamic scrutiny of the ASB response and the service.

Youth Service

The post 5 team are delivering open access sessions at Linacre Mission, SPACE, and community by nature. They are planning a new open access session to be delivered at Netherton Activity Centre.

The youth bus has been deployed to Derby Park, Park Lane Estate, supporting the Clear Hold Build project, North Park, and South Park.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

Sefton has received feedback from the Home Office on a number of DHR reports. Once these final amendments have been made, the reports will be published, where appropriate. There are 3 DHR's currently underway or about to start and sadly, I have approved a request to proceed to a DHR for a murder that took place in November 2023. This will become DHR18 for Sefton and will commence after the criminal trial in Spring 2024. Information gathering was underway with regards to another, potential new DHR following a notification from Merseyside Police in January 2024.

Domestic Homicide Review Local Oversight Mechanism Pilot

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) is exploring how learning from DHR's can be identified in a more coordinated way. Several pilot areas have been identified to trial the Domestic Homicide Oversight Mechanism; in Merseyside, the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) will run the pilot.

The purpose of the Domestic Homicide Oversight Mechanism (DHOM) is to bring independence to the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process post publication of reviews to ensure that there is local and national accountability for the implementation of DHR recommendations, as well as identifying common themes and trends and supporting change at a national level. This includes ensuring that learning is shared nationally, improving the effectiveness of DHR recommendations, and demonstrating where there is change following DHR recommendations. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's, 'Domestic Homicide Oversight Mechanism' seeks to add value, provide consistency, and improve the quality of DHR processes.

The purpose of the local oversight pilot is to test and learn the best way for the DAC to oversee the implementation of recommendations and actions within DHRs, and to inform the development of the oversight mechanism for roll out nationally. This will provide an opportunity to understand the capacity and resource required to conduct effective oversight, the needs of local areas and how oversight can best support local implementation of recommendations and evidence impact.

Sefton will be required to share all learning from completed DHRs over the last 3 years and submit 6 monthly returns to the OPCC informing them of progress against the action plans that accompany the DHRs that have been completed.

Domestic Homicide Reviews to be Renamed

Following government consultation in 2023, Domestic Homicide Reviews are to be renamed Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews. This change will be brought into law via an amendment to the Victims and Prisoners Bill and will better recognise the often-hidden victims of domestic abuse who die after suicide, coercive and controlling behaviour, and economic abuse.

LIBRARIES

Regional success with the Summer Reading Challenge

The north-west figures for the Summer Reading Challenge have now been published and Sefton has done particularly well. Sefton had the highest completion rate of all authorities in the north-west, with an amazing 70% completion rate. Sefton also had the 3rd highest take up in the

region, both numerically and by percentage with 12% of all 4–11-year-olds taking part. Only Manchester and Cheshire West had a higher take up, both vastly larger local authorities. Across the Liverpool City Region Sefton had the highest uptake, and completers. The figures for take up demonstrate the high performance of Sefton with double the number of children taking part than St Helen's and 6 times greater than Knowsley:

Sefton	2982 (children taking part in the challenge)
Wirral	2388
St Helens	1477
Halton	704
Liverpool	609
Knowsley	497

New partnership with the Tate Liverpool

With the Tate in Liverpool closing for two years for a major refurbishment, an opportunity recently surfaced to work with them to distribute furniture, exhibition cabinets, kitchen equipment and other building related materials from the now closed Tate.

The Tate approached the library service due to our NPO status with a view to working with us on some new projects while they are closed and acting as a distribution point to Sefton community groups who may want any of the Tate's furniture. Following discussions, the Tate distributed equipment and furniture from Crosby Library to community groups in January, the same day the CEO of Arts Council England visited to see our NPO work in action.

Tate staff will also be running workshops from the library and community groups who work with them will be showcased in a new exhibition on how the Tate worked with local groups during their refurbishment and how their old equipment was passed around the LCR (Liverpool City Region) boroughs in an environmentally friendly way.

Sefton Libraries is the only library service the Tate is working with on this basis, and it is hoped to be the start of a fruitful partnership.

Funding secured by partner to work in Bootle Library

Our NPO partner Rule of Threes has secured £10,000 of European Challenge Funding to run activities related to issues associated with debt. Using the funding they will design actions and resources that support residents living with debt providing information & practical skills to make small but cost-effective changes; regaining confidence & optimism.

Sessions are being hosted at Bootle library with activities including:

- Practical support: money-management advice sessions with expert support; information on energy-saving & benefits; access to computers, free Wi-Fi, and data.
- Creative activity: we know the power of making together. Practical hands-on sessions that develop skills & support money-saving will bring people into conversation on the issue in a way that is non-confrontational, encouraging the sharing of experiences, building confidence and connection.
- Collective futuring: through creative workshops with expert arts facilitators, we will generate relevant actions & offers to be embedded into the library. These may include ways to shift the mindset about living with debt; peer-led support systems; "small change" actions; collaborative artworks; awareness-raising; shared reading sessions & book displays; and potential proposals to tackle community debt through campaigning or new creative social enterprise.

Extension of the Library NPO funding

Last year the Library Service successfully applied for National Portfolio Organisation status with Arts Council England (ACE) and is now one of a handful of library services to have this prestigious status. The award came with £585,000 funding over 3 years to deliver the At the Library programme. ACE have decided to extend the NPO status for a further year due to the challenging economic conditions facing arts-based organisations. This means that Sefton will receive an additional years' worth of funding and the At the Library Programme will now run for 4 years rather than 3 years.

Increasing take up of community activities

Some analysis has taken place on the take up of community activities taking place in libraries compared to the previous year. The first 3 quarters of 2023/24 has seen an increase of 13.5% in the number of people attending activities in libraries compared to the same period for the previous year. Of those who attended this year, 55% (17,553 attendees) were children, and 45% (14,297 attendees) were adult. Netherton Library saw the biggest jump in attendees being up 32.8% compared to last year. Netherton Library has been targeted in the last 12 months to improve usage, and this approach is bearing fruit.

THE ATKINSON

Theatre Programme

The theatre programme continues to enjoy success with ticket sales of January's ballet, musical, theatre and panto performances all approaching maximum capacity in the auditorium and studio.

The annual *Love Folk Festival* was held over the weekend 9th&10th February, with performances from popular bands such as Merry Hell and The Magpie Arc, and emerging new artists performing on the FATEA Busk Love Folk acoustic stage.

Exhibitions Programme

The Atkinson has been given two important paintings by prominent artists of the Northern school. Wigan born Lawrence Isherwood, who lived and worked in Southport for many years, painted colourful, expressionist views of Southport beach as well as scenes of Wigan street-life. His painting 'Rain, Cap and Shawl' is an excellent example of his work and is an important addition to the permanent collection. Roger Hampson's 'Path to Cleworth Colliery' is an atmospheric scene of miners setting off to work in the Tyldesley area. Both artists were friendly with L.S. Lowry, who owned examples of both of their work. The donations enhance the Atkinson's reputation for curating one of the best collections of Northern art in the country, with key examples by L.S. Lowry, Theodore Major, Harold Riley and Sheila Fell.

Museum Programme

Echoes of Ages: Ukraine's Storied Past and Indomitable Spirit

This powerful and moving exhibition explores the rich culture and history of Ukraine, from its legendary past to its present-day struggle for freedom. Events are being held every Saturday in February, engaging arts and crafts to reveal and celebrate Ukrainian heritage and identity. The display also features artwork created by Ukrainian children expressing their feelings about the war in their country, along with details of the people on the frontline. The celebrations commenced on 3rd February with craft, baking, and storytelling workshops. Dressed in traditional costumes, Ukrainian nationals welcomed visitors to the centre with gifts of braided bread, *Korovai*.

Southport Library

On 7th February, the library hosted PLACED, a Liverpool City Region (LCR) consultation event engaging residents to discuss their perceptions of the local area and share ideas for future spatial development across the city region.

Other news

Following the conclusion of the 5-year Hope Streets youth project, the Atkinson is developing its action plan for ongoing engagement with young people aged between 14 and 25. A series of curated workshops have identified the following priority themes:

1. Inviting young people to work with The Atkinson as artists and curators
2. Supporting and learning from young people as potential workforce and volunteers
3. Nurturing young people as audiences and visitors

The activities will build on existing partnerships with young people's organisations and develop the role of young volunteers in shaping and supporting our programmes.

HOUSING

Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29

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 & 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. Better accommodation and coordinating 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. 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. **Improve 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 novel approaches to delivering **Housing Options** services across the system.

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

Council Housing Programme

Phase 1

Approval of the revised scheme proposal at Buckley Hill Lane has now been fully supported by full Council. The grant application and associated Investment Partner application is in the process of being prepared and finalised ready for submission to Homes England. A decision is expected around 6-8 weeks after the bid has been submitted subject to capacity at Homes England's decision-making clinics. The commencement of the Buckley Hill Lane site is an exciting milestone for the Council Housing Programme, and I very much look forward to welcoming our new tenants once their new homes are completed.

A great deal of work to facilitate the handover of properties is still progressing behind the scenes. Legal consultants Freeths are supporting the Council on a range of matters, including the drafting and preparation of the Development Agreement with Sandway for the purchase of the properties at Buckley Hill Lane which is making progress. In my last report, I updated that an exciting next step is for Freeths to help us draft the tenancy agreement we will use for our new council housing stock. I am pleased to report that a draft has now been prepared and officers are currently in the process of reviewing the agreement.

Work to onboard our Managing Agent is progressing well and a detailed policy review is underway. A suite of housing management related policies will need to be in place to comply with a range of legislative and regulatory requirements and work is progressing to draft these policies alongside developing proposals for our future governance and tenant engagement approach. It is important that we ensure that the voice of the tenant is heard, and they have opportunity to challenge and be part of the decisions taken in the management of their homes. Details of the governance proposals will be brought to Cabinet later this year.

Housing Standards Team

The new 5 year Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing Schemes commenced on 1st March 2023. As of 31 January 2024, we have received 2280 licence applications, which is 66% of the expected number of applications. 789 licences have been issued and 346 compliance inspections have been carried out with many landlords seeking to apply for property accreditation.

We have successfully defended another appeal at the First Tier Property Tribunal for failure of a landlord to licence properties within the Selective Licensing area. This takes the total number of Tribunal decisions to uphold our Civil Penalty Notices to 5 and a further 2 have been settled through mediation. There are 3 further appeal cases currently pending.

73 requests for service relating to poor housing standards or poor housing management have been received between 14 December and 30 January.

Where landlords fail to comply with informal action, the team continue to take formal enforcement action. Since 14 Dec 2023 this has included the service of 1 Emergency Prohibition Order, 1 Improvement Notice, 2 Notices for failure to have smoke alarms fitted, 3 Notices for non-compliance with Electrical Safety Standards Regulations, including a Civil Penalty Fine for one of those.

Work to reduce the number of long-term vacant homes has continued, with responses to 8 new Service Requests relating to problematic empty homes. One property subject to enforced sale, was sold at auction in December and will be brought back into use.

Management of the Council's Gypsy and Traveller site continues. There have been no unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampments in Sefton during December and January.

Extra Care Housing

As colleagues are aware the Council has a target to deliver 1306 new Extra Housing units before 2036. To support this and ensure that Sefton residents with care needs are allocated to schemes accordingly cabinet have now approved our first Extra Care Allocations Policy. Work will now commence on the implementation plan to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved. Work continues to progress on several schemes across the borough:

Sandbrook Road (Riverside 90 x Extra Care, 40 General Needs, 8 Learning Disability)

- Demolition and site clearance is commencing over the coming weeks with a PR opportunity also arranged.

503 Hawthorne Road (91 x Extra Care, 67 General Needs Onward/Housing 21)

- The provider is currently in the process of discharging the pre-commencement planning conditions and the intention is to start on site early in the coming months.