



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(REGENERATION AND SKILLS)

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT
ON TUESDAY 5TH MARCH, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Dowd (in the Chair)
Councillor Corcoran (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Harvey, Ian Maher, McKee, Catie Page
and Webster

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Howard

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Lloyd-Johnson, Christine Maher and Sir Ron Watson (and his substitute member Councillor Prendergast).

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests or personal interests were received.

45. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

46. HOUSING STANDARDS TEAM - DAMP MOULD AND CONDENSATION

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) that updated on the work of the Housing Standards Team in response to issues of damp and mould in residential properties in the borough.

The report indicated that following the death of a two-year old child, Awaab Ishak, from a severe respiratory condition due to prolonged exposure to mould in his home in Rochdale, and the subsequent Coroner's inquest, the Chief Executive of the Regulator for Social Housing wrote to all registered providers of social housing requesting information on the provider's response to managing damp and mould cases in their homes.

The report advised that the Housing Standards Team (HST) was responsible for housing enforcement activity, including on vacant homes, and managing the Council's mandatory, additional HMO and selective landlord licencing schemes and that this was primarily based on the

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Housing Health and Safety Rating System, and that the majority of the damp and mould caseload managed by the HST related to privately rented properties; and detailed how action could be taken to alleviate problems, including the use of the Council's Landlord Licensing Scheme. In the Social Housing Sector, the legal duty and responsibility for resolving complaints was imposed by the Regulator of Social Housing direct onto social landlords (i.e. not with the Council in the first instance).

The report detailed that in response to the Awaab Ishak case, a number of actions were carried out relating to the Council's management of damp and mould cases in the borough via:

- Housing Enforcement Policy
- Website updates
- Communication campaign
- Staff training and equipment
- Data analysis
- Staff guidance
- Engagement with registered providers

The report concluded that the death of Awaab Ishak had raised awareness of the dangers of mould in residential properties and that the reaction within the housing sector, particularly the social housing sector, had been significant; and that although the approach to damp and mould issues in the Sefton had been subject to review, both by senior managers, and through internal audit, the HST continues to look for improvements and opportunities to supplement the current approach.

Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- The inspection and enforcement regime employed by the Council, under the terms of the Housing Act 2004, to combat the Category 1 and Category 2 hazards associated with damp and mould in properties; and problems experienced due to differing expectations of landlords and tenants as to the satisfactory resolution of such hazards
- Concern was expressed at the Category 2 damp and mould hazards being found in in 30% of privately rented homes in Sefton; and how this figure compared with other comparable local authorities
- the legal duty and responsibility placed on the social housing sector for resolving complaints, as imposed by the Regulator of Social Housing direct onto social landlords, was acknowledged and data was sought on the satisfactory resolution of complaints
- in respect of the Communication Campaign around the issue of damp and mould, using the Council's communications channels over the winter period when damp and mould issues were at their most acute, was referred to; and questions were asked on the format of the

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campaign, and whether an evaluation/feedback exercise had been undertaken to gauge the campaign's success

- it was noted that the approach to damp and mould issues in the borough had been subject to review, both by senior managers, and through internal audit, and that the service continued to look for improvements and opportunities to supplement the current approach; and information was sought on whether Sefton had collaborated with Liverpool City Region or other north west local authorities on this matter and on efforts to identify additional funding to continue to make a sustained impact in this area
- the use of case management systems to enable housing officers to spend more time on inspection and enforcement duties in the field rather than having to continually return to their office base
- the use by landlords of Section 21 notices to evict tenants from their homes to enable extensive renovations of property to be undertaken; the implications of this to the Council when families then presented themselves as homeless; and what type of accommodation was available for rehousing families in such circumstances
- the success of the multi-agency approach whereby council and public health had a number of staff members who regularly visited resident's homes (for example health visitors and social workers) to ensure that the opportunity to identify damp and mould cases was maximised.

RESOLVED:

That the approach in response to issues of damp and mould in residential properties in Sefton be endorsed.

47. SEFTON ECONOMIC STRATEGY UPDATE (MARCH 2024)

Further to Minute No. 33 of 16 January 2024 the Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) that updated on the refresh of the Sefton Economic Strategy (the Strategy); and the production of a Sefton Inward Investment prospectus.

The report indicated that the Strategy refresh would ensure that it remained fit for purpose in terms of its objectives and alignment with the emerging Liverpool City Region Economic Opportunities framework that would serve as a sounding board to help drive, amongst other economic activities, new inward investment activities across the city region. The report also identified the base review and analysis, the first phase of which being the methodology and review of the strategic context, examining current and developing strategies and frameworks; an analysis of sector specialism in Sefton and skills analysis.

The report also identified that the production of a Sefton Inward Investment prospectus, to assist in promoting the borough as part of LCR Combined Authority national and international investment activities and events, would also assist the council in its own inward investment and

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regeneration led activities; and set out list of sites identified for the prospectus; and the alignment of sites with sector opportunities.

The report concluded that the completed work would enable the Council to have a full suite of key investment opportunities which could be easily updated and added to; and that the intention was for them to be used for both strategic events such as the International Market for Real Estate Professionals and the UK Real Estate and Investment and Infrastructure Forum amongst others, while officers would also have access to 'off shelf' material in response to business growth and new inward investment enquiries.

Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- The comparison of figures for Sefton's hospitality sector with other comparable areas of the country
- The methodology used to estimate the increase in visitor numbers (both day and staying) to Southport
- The strategic objective of "Employment and Opportunities for Work" contained in the action plan was referred to and in particular, the success of Sefton should be acknowledged regarding the Rate of NEET and Not Known in the borough across our 16 and 17 year olds being the best in the City Region for this period and being ranked 3rd in the country out of 150 LAs.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress with the Sefton Economic Strategy refresh and production of a Sefton Inward Investment prospectus be noted; and
- (2) the Executive Director of Place be requested to provide information on the methodology used to estimate the increase in visitor numbers (both day and staying) to Southport.

48. SOCIAL VALUE AND THE GROWTH AND STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director (Place) on the Social Value Outcomes from the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme (the Programme) that comprised a range of projects across all parts of Sefton, of a wide range of types, sizes, funding sources and delivery models. The report indicated that the objectives of the Programme, and the projects therein, were consistently intended to balance economic, financial, social and environmental outcomes; that each project was developed with wider aims to support with delivery against strategies and policies in other areas of the Council beyond regeneration; that the aim of the report was to provide visibility of the work that had been undertaken, was being undertaken, and was planned, on projects across the Council's Programme that demonstrated "social value",

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which for the purposes of this report, was defined as the wider value created by capital projects beyond the economic and financial.

The report also provided information on the Caring Business Charter, launched in 2022 and operated through Sefton@work, which recognised that many young people who had experience of being looked after may have additional barriers to address when they were looking to starting their lives as adults and enter the world of work; the establishment of the Child Friendly Sefton methodology to ensure that all programmes and projects had children and young people at the heart of their development and implementation; and future opportunities and action areas for 2024 and beyond to ensure continued incorporation of social value into the Growth and Strategic Investment programme, and the inclusion of particular emphasis on children and young people, ensuring they were at the heart of everything the Council did.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

1. The Strand – Social Value Report 2023 (published December 2023)
2. Marine Lake Events Centre – Social Value Report December 2023 (published March 2024)
3. Vinci Social Value Plan for Strand demolition and construction project 2024 (published March 2024)
4. Safer School Streets project overview (January 2024)
5. Sefton Council, Social Value (Employment and Skills) from development, Supplementary Planning Document (published May 2023)
6. The Sefton Beacon (published February 2024)
7. Safer School Streets – Child Friendly Projects Analysis (February 2024)

The report concluded by seeking feedback on key issues and opportunities arising from the Programme, and on areas of potential interest for further review and focus in future years.

Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- The active consideration of employment related opportunities for local care leavers and the emphasis placed on this by the Council's Employment and Learning Team
- The appearance of Tom Jones at the Salt and Tar Music Weekender in August 2024 was referred to and suggestions were shared about how best to showcase how Sefton was successful in securing such an international artist to appear at the festival; and how this would help not only with one of the Council's leading priorities for the regeneration of Bootle, but to the wider Sefton area
- The importance of the Strand acquisition for regeneration purposes and the current repurposing of the shopping centre as another investment project with a strong emphasis on social value and the positive impact this would have on the local community

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- The importance of the establishment of the Child Friendly Sefton methodology to support ensuring that all programmes and projects had children and young people at the heart of their development and implementation
- A statement was made that employers engaged wholly or mainly in construction industry activities (in other words, when construction activities took up more than half of the total employees' time (including subcontractors)) should be encouraged to join the Construction Industry Training Board levy programme; and that CITB provided grants for construction industry employers who provide training for their workforce
- The engagement with young people to seek and use their views in Growth and Strategic Investment Programmes, including the Sefton's Borough of Culture programme

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report on the social value outcomes from the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme be noted; and
- (2) the Executive Director of Place be requested to submit future annual reports on the social value outcomes from the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme.

49. REFUSE AND WASTE RECYCLING

Further to (Minute No. 5. (2)) of the meeting held on 27 June 2023, the Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking approval of recommendations arising from an informal meeting of the Committee, in respect of refuse and waste recycling.

The report indicated that the Committee had previously agreed that a review be undertaken on the topic of refuse and waste recycling and in respect of this matter, that a visit be arranged to the Gillmoss Recycling Discovery Centre); that an informal meeting of the Committee be held following the visit; that the visit and informal meeting took place on 15 January 2024; and that the informal meeting made a number of recommendations.

The report concluded that the informal meeting of the Committee had no formal decision-making powers and, accordingly, for decisions of the informal meeting to be actioned, formal approval was required by this Committee.

A Member commented that any proposals for the introduction of communal bins should be given careful consideration as public opinion on this matter was mixed.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) be

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requested to investigate measures that could be introduced as part of the Selective and Additional (HMO) Licensing Schemes to compel landlords to have a level of control over their tenants to alleviate the anti-social actions of littering and dumping rubbish in rear entries;

- (2) the Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing) be requested to investigate the inclusion, within the Local Plan, of the need to provide recycling/community recycling facilities in development proposals; and
- (3) the Assistant Director of People (Operational In-House Services) be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee on methods to increase Sefton's recycling rates; the introduction of communal bins; and wider waste containment issues.

50. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24, SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS AND KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought views on the Work Programme for 2023/24; the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by informal meetings of the Committee; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and updated on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (LCRCAO&S).

In respect of the membership of the LCRCAO&S the Committee was updated that at its meeting held on 29 February 2024 the Council had appointed Councillor Robinson to serve as Councillor Howard's replacement and Councillor Hart had been appointed as the new Scrutiny Link.

Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- The role of registered social landlords in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 2029
- Information was sought on the opportunity, through collaboration with colleagues in Children's Social Care, for a focus on care leavers as part of the Council Housing Governance and Management Arrangements
- Information was sought on the role of registered social landlords to help meet the capacity challenges associated with the procurement of temporary accommodation
- Potential topics of care leavers and housing; and the formal and informal processes for engagement between officers at the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) and at Sefton Council, relating to the review, approval, funding, development and implementation of strategies, policies and projects. This relates to both regionally-led (LCR CA-led) and locally-led (Sefton Council-

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led) proposals to be the subject of reviews at informal meetings of the Committee

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (2) in respect of the selection of topics for review at informal meetings of the Committee:
 - (A)
 - (i) an informal meeting of the Committee be arranged to consider the topic of the provision of housing for former looked after children who were now care leavers;
 - (ii) an invitation be extended to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) to take part in the informal meeting;
 - (iii) representatives of care leavers, the Corporate Parenting Board and registered social landlords be invited to the meeting; and
 - (iv) the informal meeting take place on either the 15 or 19 April 2024 and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be requested to liaise with Members to secure the most mutually agreeable date and time for the meeting; and
 - (B) an informal meeting of the Committee be arranged in the new municipal year to consider the topic of the formal and informal processes for engagement between officers at the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) and at Sefton Council, relating to the review, approval, funding, development and implementation of strategies, policies and projects. This relates to both regionally-led (LCR CA-led) and locally-led (Sefton Council-led) proposals;
- (3) the briefing notes in respect of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029; Council Housing Governance and Management Arrangements; and Procurement of Temporary Accommodation be noted; and
- (4) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

51. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS - JANUARY 2024 TO MARCH 2024

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The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that included the most recent reports from the Cabinet Members for Communities and Housing; Health and Wellbeing (Green Sefton element); Locality Services; Planning and Building Control; and Regeneration and Skills.

Councillor Howard, Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills referred to Sefton@Work's relocation to new premises in Bootle Strand; that planning was underway to host a celebration event on 14 March 2024 to mark the official launch of the new premises and celebrate 20 years of delivery of employment programmes to Sefton residents; and invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to attend the event.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing; Locality Services; Health and Wellbeing (Green Sefton element); Planning and Building Control; and Regeneration and Skills reports relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (2) Members of the Committee be invited to the celebration event on 14 March 2024 to mark the official launch of Sefton@Work's relocation to new premises in Bootle Strand; and
- (3) Councillor Howard be thanked for her attendance at the Committee.