

Overview & Scrutiny



SEFTON COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Sefton Council 



Overview & Scrutiny

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Improvement'**

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Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



Councillor Carla Thomas
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management
Board 2023/24

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for 2023/24.

Firstly, it must be noted that I became the Chair of the Management Board late in the municipal year following the appointment of the former Chair, Councillor Christine Howard, to the position of Cabinet Member of the former Regeneration and Skills portfolio. I would like to place on record my appreciation to the great work undertaken by Councillor Howard in her previous position as Chair.

Communication has always been a key consideration for the Management Board and the Board has previously agreed that Cabinet Member reports would be submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee to contribute towards the relationship between the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Members.

Members have welcomed the Cabinet Member update reports and attendance of relevant Cabinet Members at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings; and this process will remain in place during 2024/25.

The Management Board met six times during 2023/24 and considered the following issues:

- Terms of Reference for the Management Board
- Executive / Scrutiny Protocol
- Overview and Scrutiny Training
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to Council
- Update on Working Groups
- Overview and Scrutiny Contribution Towards Improvements in Children's Services
- Broadcasting/Recording of Council Meetings
- Cabinet Member Reports and Questions at Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings
- Public Engagement and Consultation Panel



- Review of the Operation and Terms of Reference for Children's Services
- Update on Called-in Items to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

More detailed information about some of the issues considered can be found below.

Special Management Board Meeting – Children’s Services

The Management Board held a special meeting on 21 November 2023 to discuss governance and wider member support to Children’s Services. The Management Board considered a briefing note from Councillors Hardman and Carlin, Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding), setting out their views on the operation of the Committee and the increased number of informal meetings being held. The briefing note also included views on the following topics:

- Sub-Committee and Working Group format
- Membership of Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- Public participation in meetings
- Work with the Local Government Association
- Recording of meetings
- Joint Committee of Adult Social Care and Health and Children’s Services and Safeguarding

Executive/Scrutiny Protocol

As Members may be aware, the Management Board responded to a request from the Cabinet to develop an Executive/Scrutiny protocol for use in Sefton.

The Management Board was happy to undertake this task as the Annual Survey of the Centre for Public Scrutiny found that the presence of an Executive/Scrutiny protocol made a difference to the quality of the scrutiny/executive relationship; and it was also considered that the protocol could be utilised as a training tool, particularly for new Members.

An Executive/Scrutiny Protocol was subsequently developed and was approved by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet.

In November 2023, following submissions made by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet approved a change to the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol that Executive Directors and Assistant Directors, whose responsibilities fall within the remit of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, be requested to seek the views of the Committees on all strategies and plans prior to submission to Cabinet and Council; and that if it is not possible, due to time constraints, to submit the final strategy or plan for consideration, then an outline or synopsis be submitted to the Committees to allow an oversight of the proposals to be considered and commented upon. This change will strengthen the pre-scrutiny function on Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A copy of the Executive/Scrutiny protocol can be viewed [here](#)



Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) is a national centre of expertise on governance and scrutiny. The Management Board considered a number of newsletters from CfGS providing information on the following topics:

- Annual Conference 2023: 'Governance and scrutiny fit for the future'.
- The Annual Survey is still live.
- Chief Exec's update from Ed Hammond. Upcoming CfGS free events, for both councillors and officers.
- Long read- scrutiny in committee system authorities.
- A new blog from CfGS Senior Governance Consultants, Helen Mitchell, 'Tales of the Unexpected- Preparing for the Twists and Turns of 2023 election results and how CfGS can help'.Recent blog,
- 'Public Accounts Committees- what are they?'
- BLOG: Health scrutiny and the NHS's current pressures.
- New publication: 10 Questions on Cyber Security
- CfGS Training Offer
- Case Study- Buckinghamshire Council Announcement of Mel Stevens new Chief Executive Officer.
- Ed Hammond's last CEO update.
- Annual Conference 2023: 'Governance and scrutiny fit for the future'.
- Five new publications, 'the review of council constitutions', 'the operation of call-in arrangements', 'the operation of schemes of delegation for decision-making', 'Health Scrutiny- A Short Guide' and 'Scrutiny of Children's Services- A Short Guide'
- CfGS Member Induction, Training and Control Change Offer
- Long read: 'The English Devolution Accountability Framework: first thoughts'
- Blogs- 'Local Public Accounts Committees – You Heard It Here First', 'Devon County Council – Children's Scrutiny and Ofsted', 'Health scrutiny and the Hewitt Review' and 'Failure to Prepare, Prepare To Fail'
- The drumbeat of oversight could be a good thing, The MJ article by our Interim CEO, Ed Hammond
- Case Study: South-West Regional Scrutiny Network: Case Study (March 2023) sent by Howard Bassett – Exeter Council
- Remembering our former Chair, Lord Bob Kerslake
- Reflecting on our Annual Conference
- Our recent attendance at the LGA Conference
- Read our two new publications: Devolution and Good Mayoral Governance White Paper - by Ed Hammond, in partnership with Trowers and Hamlins & Inspecting local authority children's services: Ofsted and the role of children's services scrutiny by Camilla de Bernhardt Lane
- New blogs – relating to 'Training and Development', which includes a helpful, practical checklist; a blog from Michael Hyatt, Professional Practice Lead,



Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, on 'Complaints – a window into their role in good corporate governance and as the driver for improvement', which includes insights into their focus report and annual report.

- an upcoming event centred around finance scrutiny and asset management
- Request for information - governance models in your Local Authority.
- Call out to Governance Professionals! CfGS are looking at holding some Chatham House conversations about life under intervention
- Call for examples of best practice and guest blogs
- New blog- We have a new blog from one of our Senior Governance Consultants, Cath Buckley, on 'Member Officer relationships', the blog includes some key messages about how to improve and enhance these working relationships.
- Free Training- Adult social care scrutiny development sessions for councillors in the North West. These sessions are both online and in-person (which includes a free lunch!) more info below.
- Request for information - Governance models in your Local Authority.
- Call for examples/case studies in relation to making impactful recommendations.
- Latest blogs about improving public participation in Council Committees; and Council chambers.
- A short form piece by Ed Hammond on the new health scrutiny arrangements to start in January 2024.
- Case Study: Stockton-on-Tees, End-of-Term Report: 'A Window into Local Governance'.
- Request for information - Governance models in your Local Authority.'
- Navigating finance scrutiny: a webinar for elected members' to be held on 18 December 2023.
- New blog: Scrutiny of children's services.
- Case Studies: South Tyneside Council, 'Commission on Tackling Poverty in South Tyneside, Final Report and Recommendations' and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority – 'Strengthening the Scrutiny Function'.
- DLUHC Report on 'Financial Reporting and Audit in Local Authorities'.
- Read Ed's latest article in The MJ, 'Curating a good council and government system'.
- Upcoming free events.
- Case studies
- Guidance on financial scrutiny for members
- Guidance on members' rights to access information
- News and blogs
- Annual survey 2024
- Changes to health scrutiny arrangements
- Health scrutiny fireside chat
- Forthcoming free events
- CfGS staff changes



- “Treasure Your Assets” – a publication to advise and guide councils in the management and control of their financial assets
- Unlocking information access - Empowering councillors to support effective oversight
- Forthcoming free events and case studies

The CfGS annual survey provided an opportunity to see how the Scrutiny world was functioning; and any responses to the survey would help CfGS to understand the pressures being faced by the sector and inform their conversations with stakeholders and to shape the CfGS offer to scrutiny practitioners. Accordingly, the Management Board agreed that the link to the CfGS Annual Survey be circulated to all Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members and Substitute Members to provide them with an opportunity to express their views.

North-West Employers’ Network Events

The Management Board was kept abreast of business conducted at North-West Employers’ Network Events, including the Strategic Scrutiny in Practice Network, and updates were provided on the following matters:

- purpose of the network and the role of the steering group
- appointment of Chair/Vice Chair
- sharing your experience of Scrutiny
- Centre for Governance and Scrutiny annual Conference Update
- open forum
- CfGS Update
- Scrutiny and Finance
- Update on Health Scrutiny
- An introduction to cyber security with the LGA
- Councillor and Care – how councillors can make a difference through scrutiny when it comes to adult social care

Email addresses of the Management Board Members have been shared with the North-West Employers’ organisation so that they can be invited to digital events.

Update on Working Groups/Informal Meetings

The Management Board received updates at each meeting on the current position of on-going Working Groups established by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2023/24 continued with the new way of undertaking short reviews of services at informal meetings of the Committees. The new proposal obviated the need to establish Working Groups as short reviews of services could be undertaken by all Members at the informal meetings.

Details of Working Groups and informal meetings can be found in the individual Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Reports contained within this document.



Preparations for Municipal Year 2024/25

The Management Board kept an overview of the preparations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the Municipal Year 2023/24; particularly the production of Work Programmes and the operation of informal meetings as referred to above.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (LCRCA O&S)

Councillor Howard was appointed as Sefton's Scrutiny Link to the LCRCA O&S for 2023/24. However, on Councillor Howard's appointment as Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills, she relinquished her position as both the Chair of the Management Board and as Sefton's Scrutiny Link to the LCRCA O&S. Councillor Hart was appointed by Council as Sefton's new Scrutiny Link. Updates have been provided on the work of the LCRCA O&S to each Management Board meeting. Sefton's representatives on the LCRCA O&S were Councillors Hart and Desmond; and Councillor Robinson subsequently replaced Councillor Howard. The Chair of the Committee cannot be from the majority group and Councillor Steve Radford, a serving Liverpool City Councillor representing the Liberal Party and Independent Group, was Chair of the Committee during 2023/24.

The Committee continues to have problems being quorate. The quorum for meetings of the LCRCA O&S is 14, two-thirds of the total number of members, 20. This high threshold is not set by the Combined Authority but is set out in legislation.

Overview and Scrutiny Training

A training event for all Overview and Scrutiny Members, "Shaping Successful Scrutiny" was held on 15 June 2023 and attended by 19 Members. The event was facilitated by the Local Government Association and presented by Daniel Archer.

Dedicated support for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) members was also provided over three sessions on topics of introduction to children's scrutiny and work programming, engagement and working with others, and demonstrating value and influence and creating a strong organisational culture.

Finally, dedicated support for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) members was provided on 25 January 2024. The training centred on leading healthier places. The event was facilitated by the Local Government Association and presented by Jonathan McShane and Sarah McIvor.

The Year Ahead

Given the scale of the financial and service challenges facing the Council, the year ahead will be extremely busy for the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Management Board. A key role of Members will be to scrutinise such challenges, including how they impact on the Council's statutory requirement to remain



financially sustainable, provide a wide range of services and the desire to deliver Sefton's 2030 Vision and Core Purpose.

Further updates on the work of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny are anticipated including the full results of the 2023 Annual Survey.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Officers of the Democratic Services Team for all their hard work during the year; and to thank the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and my colleagues serving on the Sefton's Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their on-going input into the work of the Management Board.

Councillor Carla Thomas
July 2024



During 2023/24 the following Members served on the Committees indicated-

Overview & Scrutiny Management Board

Councillor Howard (Chair) subsequently replaced as Chair by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Thomas

Councillor Bradshaw

Councillor Byrom

Councillor Carlin

Councillor Corcoran

Councillor Dowd

Councillor Hardman

Councillor Myers

Councillor Thomas

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)

Chair: Cllr. Thomas

Vice-Chair: Cllr. Myers

Cllr. Brodie-Browne

Cllr. Brough

Cllr. Cluskey

Cllr. Halsall

Cllr. Hart

Cllr. J. J. Kelly

Cllr. Lunn-Bates

Cllr. Robinson

Mr. B. Clark, Healthwatch Representative

Ms. D. Blair, Healthwatch Representative



Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)

Chair: Cllr. J. Hardman

Vice-Chair: Cllr. Carlin

Cllr. Burns

Cllr. Carragher

Cllr. Evans

Cllr. Howard (Subsequently replaced by Cllr. Harvey)

Cllr. Page

Cllr. Prendergast

Cllr. Richards

Cllr. Spring

Mr. M. Byrne, Healthwatch Representative

Ms. K. Christie, Healthwatch Representative

Mrs. S. Cain, Advisory Member

Mr. S. Harrison, Church Diocesan Representative

Michelle Ravey, Church Archdiocesan Representative

Ms. C Swainbank, Parent Governor Representative

Ms. G Armer, Parent Governor Representative

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

Councillor Dowd (Chair)

Councillor Howard (Vice-Chair) subsequently replaced by Councillor Ian Maher

Councillor Corcoran subsequently appointed as Vice-Chair

Councillor Harvey

Councillor Lloyd-Johnson

Councillor Chris Maher

Councillor McKee

Councillor Catie Page

Councillor Sir Ron Watson

Councillor Webster



Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)

Councillor Bradshaw (Chair)
Councillor Byrom (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D'Albuquerque
Councillor Evans
Councillor Grace
Councillor Killen
Councillor McGinnity
Councillor McKee
Councillor Murphy
Councillor Sir Ron Watson



Adult Social Care and Health



Councillor Carla Thomas
Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
(Adult Social Care and Health) 2023/24

On behalf of the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) it gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2023/24 Annual Report.

During the year the Committee has met six times formally and considered matters relating to Adult Social Care and Health. At the formal meetings there has been a focus on the regular update reports from NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (Sefton) and the updates allow Members to raise questions and scrutinise aspects of the services provided.

Other reports/presentations considered by the Committee related to:

- Domestic Abuse Update
- Vaping Amongst Young People
- GP Patient Survey
- Melling Surgery Closure
- Health Substantial Reconfiguration Proposals
- Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance
- Public Health Performance Framework
- Adult Social Care Performance Data Review
- Winter Planning 2024
- Serious Violence Duty

At each meeting the Committee also received the Work Programme and Cabinet Member Update reports. This enabled the Committee to add/amend topics to be considered to reflect priorities; and to scrutinise the work being undertaken in the Cabinet Member's portfolio.

All agendas and minutes of the Committee can be accessed [Here](#)

The Committee had also agreed to hold informal meetings and considered the following topics:



- North-West Ambulance Service
- Primary Care
- CQC Assessment (Adult Social Care)
- Shaping Care Together Programme
- Adult Social Care Budget
- Public Health Performance Data on Healthy Weight

Draft Quality Accounts

Early in the municipal year, my Vice Chair and I met with the Healthwatch representatives on the Committee to consider the draft Quality Accounts from Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (LUFT) and Mersey and West Lancs NHS Trust. Draft Quality Accounts are reports published annually about the quality of services offered by NHS healthcare providers. They provide a way of illustrating improvements in the services they deliver to local communities and stakeholders. The meeting provided an opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the draft quality accounts and we met remotely to discuss the documents submitted by the two Trusts and provided a feedback letter to each of them.

Cabinet Member Reports

In keeping with previous years and to keep Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Committee therefore received regular Cabinet Member update reports; and I would like to take the opportunity to thank former Councillor Paul Cummins, Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care, and Councillor Ian Moncur, Cabinet Member - Health and Wellbeing – for their attendance at meetings and their regular and informative update reports.

Work Programme 2022/23, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan

At each meeting the Committee considered the reports of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought views of the Work Programme for 2023/24, the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by informal meetings; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and provided an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The pre-scrutiny process referred to above can assist the Cabinet to make effective decisions by giving the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to examine issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.



The Year Ahead

The Committee will continue to make progress on the following priorities over the coming year. The list is not exhaustive and other service operational reports as deemed appropriate by the Committee will also be considered.

- Health Provider Performance
- Public Health Outcomes
- Winter Plans
- Adult Social Care – Vulnerable Adults
- Supported and Assisted Living

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our work over the past year. I would personally like to thank all Members of the Committee, Cabinet Member Ian Moncur and former Councillor Paul Cummins and all of those officers who have attended meetings for their support to me over the past year and provided the Committee with valuable information.

Councillor Carla Thomas
July 2024



Children's Services and Safeguarding



Councillor Judy Hardman
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
(Children's Services and Safeguarding) 2023/24

On behalf of the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) it gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2023/24 Annual Report.

During the year the Committee has met six times formally and considered matters relating to Children's Services, Safeguarding and Education. It has also met on twelve occasions informally to progress the priorities agreed by the Committee at the beginning of the municipal year. These priorities were identified as part of a training programme delivered to the Committee by the Local Government Association, which supported the development of a focused work programme. This input was invaluable in helping the Committee to understand its role in scrutinising and holding to account the Council's improvement plan for services to children and young people.

Priority Areas for 2023/24

The three priority areas for scrutiny were identified as follows:

- 1) SEND
- 2) Health Outcomes
- 3) Safeguarding

A major area for scrutiny throughout the year has been the improvement journey that the Council's services for children are undertaking. At its first meeting of 2023/24, the Committee was advised that the Council would continue to focus on improving practice and of the Improvement Plan key priorities for the forthcoming year namely:

- Stabilising the workforce
- Ensuring the right children are receiving the right support at the right time
- Engaging the workforce and partners in the delivery of the required change.

In addition to the regular updates on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Journey, the Committee also received a report to each meeting that set out performance management and quality assurance information in respect of Children's Social Care.



Work undertaken in formal and informal meetings.

(i) **Formal Meetings**

At the formal meetings, in addition to the focus on the Children's Services Improvement Programme and an overview of Social Work Practice, the Committee has considered other areas of work undertaken by the Council and its partners where these were relevant to the experiences of children and young people.

Reports/presentations considered by the Committee related to:

- Safeguarding Learning and Development Offer
- Education Scorecard
- School Ofsted Inspections
- Vaping Amongst Young People
- Domestic Abuse Update
- Serious Violence Duty
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Joint Commissioning Plan
- Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- Sefton Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
- Review of the Terms of Reference of the Committee (see below)

At each meeting the Committee also received Work Programme and Cabinet Member update reports. This enabled the Committee to add/amend topics to be considered to reflect priorities; and to scrutinise the work being undertaken in the Cabinet Member's portfolio.

All agendas and minutes of the Committee can be accessed [here](#).

Education

The Committee also received regular updates in the course of its formal meetings on School Ofsted Inspections and the Education Scorecard.

Work Programme 2022/23, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan

At each meeting the Committee considered a report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought views of the Work Programme for 2023/24, the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by a Working Group(s) or at informal meetings of the Committee; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and provided an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



Cabinet Member Reports

In keeping with previous years and to keep Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee covered the portfolios of the Cabinet Member – Education and Cabinet Member – Children’s Social Care. These form a regular part of the agenda at every formal meeting.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Councillors Roscoe, Cabinet Member – Education and Councillor Doyle, Cabinet Member, Children’s Social Care for their regular attendance at meetings to update Members on issues associated with their portfolios.

Pre-Scrutiny – The Key Decision Forward Plan

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has also been given the opportunity to pre-scrutinise items from the Council’s Key Decision Forward Plan. The Forward Plan is submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the Work Programme update. The pre-scrutiny process assists the Cabinet to make effective decisions by giving the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to examine issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.

(ii) Informal meetings

Alongside its formal meetings, the committee met informally on 12 occasions to gather information about services, and to hear directly from children and young people, parents and carers and staff who work with them. This meant that the Committee was able to explore in greater depth issues arising from formal reports. The topics considered during informal sessions were as follows:

SEND Review

- SEND Ofsted Inspection Readiness
- 3 Meetings with Sefton Parent Carers Forum
- SEND The Graduated Approach
- Visits to Primary and Secondary Schools to discuss SEND provision.

Health Outcomes

- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services
- A joint Meeting with Overview and Scrutiny (Adult Social Care and Health) to consider the Public Health Performance Framework with a focus on Healthy Weight for Children and Adults in Sefton.

Safeguarding

- Feedback from an Ofsted Monitoring Visit
- Partnership Working and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Visit to Social Work Teams at Magdalen House



- Improvement Board Update

Review of the Terms of Reference of the Committee

The Committee has considered, throughout the year, ways of making its work more transparent and ensuring that it takes account of the views of people with lived experience of services. The Committee is recommending to the Council that it introduces a short question time as part of the regular formal agenda, and a formal subcommittee so that parents and carers are more easily able to contribute to discussions about the services provided to Sefton's children. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the Democratic Services team for their support and hard work in this.

The Year Ahead

The Committee will continue to make progress on the following priorities below over the coming years. The list is not exhaustive and other service operational reports as deemed appropriate by the Committee will also be considered.

- Changes to the Front Door and Family Hubs
- Childrens Services Improvement Programme
- Children's Social Care Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement
- SEND Dashboard
- Ofsted Inspections
- Education Scorecard
- Establishing the Children's Services and Safeguarding Parents / Carers Subcommittee.

Finally, and on behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our work over the past year. We have driven our agenda forwards at some pace, and this has demanded considerable input from Members and officers alike. We owe it to Sefton's children that we expect continual improvement to services and that we maintain a high level of challenge to ensure this. I would personally like to thank all Members of the Committee, Cabinet Members and officers who have attended meetings and provided the Committee with valuable information for their commitment to improving children's outcomes and for their support to me over the past year.

Councillor Judy Hardman
July 2024



Regeneration and Skills



Councillor Liz Dowd
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny
Committee (Regeneration and Skills) 2023/24

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Sefton Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) Annual Report 2023/24.

During the year the Committee met six times formally and once informally. Reports and presentations considered by the Committee related to:

- Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People – Migration Update
- Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority – Service Delivery Plan 2023/24
- Domestic Abuse Update
- Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Programme
- Winter Maintenance Policy and Operational Plan
- Executive/Scrutiny Protocol
- Bootle Regeneration Strategy – Presentation
- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Annual Report
- Green Sefton Annual Review 2023
- Update on the Progression of the Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Serious Violence Duty
- A Cultural Strategy for Sefton
- Southport Market - 2 Year Review
- Sefton Economic Strategy Updates
- Sandway Homes - 2022 / 23 Outturn Review of Council Wholly Owned Companies
- Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited (SHOL) - 2022 / 23 Outturn Review of Council Wholly Owned Companies
- Housing Standards Team - Damp Mould and Condensation
- Social Value and the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme
- Refuse and Waste Recycling



All agendas and minutes of the Committee can be accessed [here](#)

A special meeting of the Committee was also held on 19 February 2024 to consider two items that had been called-in. The two items related to decisions taken by the Cabinet Members for Planning and Building Control and Locality Services in relation to the Adoption of Hesketh Road Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (with boundary change) and the North South Active Travel Route in Southport – Next Steps respectively.

Working Groups/Informal Meetings – New Way of Working

At the first meeting in the municipal year the Committee agreed to continue the approach to its operation during 2023/24 by arranging additional informal meetings. This proposal obviated the need for the Committee to establish Working Groups as short reviews of services could be undertaken by all Members at the informal meetings. One informal meeting was held on 15 January 2024 to review the topic of refuse and waste recycling. Members undertook a site visit to the Gillmoss Recycling Discovery Centre; then returned to Bootle Town Hall to hold an informal meeting of the Committee. The informal meeting agreed the recommendations set out below that were subsequently approved for implementation by the next formal meeting of the Committee.

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

The Committee will also consider holding informal meetings to give consideration to the topics of:

- the provision of housing for former looked after children who were now care leavers; and an invitation will be extended to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) to take part in the informal meeting
- 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

Cabinet Member Reports

In keeping with previous years and to keep Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Committee therefore received regular Cabinet Member update reports; and I would like to take the opportunity to thank former Councillor Hardy, former Cabinet Member – Communities and Housing, Councillor Moncur, former Cabinet Member - Health and Wellbeing (Green Sefton element), Councillor Veidman, former Cabinet Member – Planning and Building Control, former Councillor Fairclough, former Cabinet Member – Locality Services and Councillor Atkinson, the former Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills and Councillor Howard, the former Cabinet Member, for their attendance at meetings and their regular and informative update reports.

Work Programme 2023/24, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan

At each meeting the Committee considered the reports of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought views of the Work Programme for 2023/24, the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by informal meetings; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and provided an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The pre-scrutiny process referred to above can assist the Cabinet to make effective decisions by giving the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to examine issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.

The Year Ahead

The Committee will continue to make progress on the following priorities over the coming year. The list is not exhaustive and other service operational reports as deemed appropriate by the Committee will also be considered.

- Flood & Coastal Risk – Annual Report
- Review of Winter Service and Operational Plan
- Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority – Service Delivery Plan 2024/25
- Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan
- Update on the progression of the Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Update on Operational Activities delivered via Locality Services
- Leasehold House Sales
- Green Sefton Annual Review 2024
- Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Pilot
- Domestic Abuse Update



- Southport Market Update
- Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited (SHOL) - 2023/24 Outturn Review of Council Wholly Owned Companies
- Sandway Homes Limited - 2023/24 Outturn Review of Council Wholly Owned Companies

As mentioned above, the Committee will also continue with the arrangement of holding informal meetings to undertake short reviews of services.

As part of the Committee's pre-scrutiny function all Executive Directors and Assistant Directors, whose responsibilities fall within the remit of the Committee, will be requested to seek the views of the Committee on all strategies and plans prior to submission to Cabinet and Council; and that if it is not possible, due to time constraints, to submit the final strategy or plan for consideration, then an outline or synopsis be submitted to the Committee to allow an oversight of the proposals to be considered and commented upon.

Given the scale of the financial and service challenges facing the Council the year ahead will be extremely busy for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise such challenges, including how they impact on the Council's statutory requirement to remain financially sustainable and the desire to deliver Sefton's 2030 Vision and Core Purpose.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our work over the past year. I would personally like to thank all Members of the Committee, Cabinet Members Councillors Atkinson, Howard, Moncur and Veidman and former Councillors Fairclough and Hardy and all of those officers who have attended meetings for their support to me over the past year and provided the Committee with valuable information.

Finally, I would like to extend my best wishes to Councillor Hart, the newly appointed Chair of the Committee, for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

Councillor Liz Dowd
July 2024



Regulatory, Compliance, and Corporate Services



Councillor Sue Bradshaw
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
(Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate
Services) 2023/24

On behalf of the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) it gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2023/24 Annual Report.

During the year the Committee has met six times formally and considered matters relating to financial issues and updates associated with the 2023/24 revenue and capital budget and financial management across the Council. As is the usual practice, a Special Meeting of the Committee was held prior to Budget Council to scrutinise budget options and proposals.

Other reports/presentations considered by the Committee related to:

- Debt Management
- Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Reference Group – Updates were submitted to each meeting of the Committee to keep Members abreast of the scale of the problem in Sefton; and the measures being taken to alleviate them
- Customer Contact Centre Activity – Presentation
- Levels of Disciplinary, Grievance, Dignity at Work and Sickness Absence
- Executive/Scrutiny Protocol
- Update on Progress of Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Corporate Communications Update
- Air Quality Update 2023
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base for 2024/25 and Review of Council Tax Premiums for Long-Term Empty Properties
- Annual ICT Update Report
- Taxi Issues in Sefton

At each meeting the Committee also received Work Programme and Cabinet Member update reports. This enabled the Committee to add/amend topics to be considered to reflect priorities; and to scrutinise the work being undertaken in the Cabinet Member's portfolio.



All agendas and minutes of the Committee can be accessed [here](#)

Financial Scrutiny

The Committee received regular budgetary update reports during the year and a Special Meeting of the Committee was held on 6 February 2024 prior to the budget meetings of both Cabinet and Council. At this Special Meeting the Committee considered reports relating to: Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy 2024/25; Prudential Indicators 2024/25; Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2024/25; Capital Strategy 2024/25; Robustness of the 2024/25 Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves – Local Government Act 2003 - Section 25; and Revenue and Capital Budget Plan 2024/25 – 2026/27 and Council Tax 2024/25.

At this meeting the main report for consideration was the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that explained that on 8 February 2024 Cabinet would be asked to recommend to Council a Budget Plan for 2024/25; and that on 29 February 2024, the Council would be asked to consider and approve the Budget Plan for 2024/25 – 2026/27 and the level of Council Tax for 2024/25; The report provided the Committee with:

- an assessment of the Council's current financial position and approach to the 2024/25 Budget Plan and preparation for the additional two-year budget period 2024/25 to 2025/26
- an update on the Government's announcement of resources that were available to the Council for 2024/25
- the Council's current financial position and the assumptions built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan
- the proposed Budget for 2024/25; and
- the proposed Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2026/27

Attached as appendices to the report were the individual school budgets 2024/25; budget saving proposals; draft Council budget summary 2024/25; and the Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27.

Work Programme 2022/23, Scrutiny Review Topics and Key Decision Forward Plan

At each meeting the Committee considered a report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought views of the Work Programme for 2023/24, the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by a Working Group(s) or at informal meetings of the Committee; the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan; and provided an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



Cabinet Member Reports

In keeping with previous years and to keep Members informed, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed for relevant Cabinet Member Reports to be submitted to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee covered the portfolio of the former Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Councillor Lappin, former Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services for her regular attendance at meetings to update Members not only on issues associated with her portfolio but also on the Members Welfare Reform Reference Group.

Pre-Scrutiny – The Key Decision Forward Plan

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has also been given the opportunity to pre-scrutinise items from the Council's Key Decision Forward Plan. The Forward Plan is submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the Work Programme update. The pre-scrutiny process assists the Cabinet to make effective decisions by giving the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to examine issues beforehand and making recommendations prior to a determination being made.

The Year Ahead

The Committee will continue to make progress on the following priorities below over the coming year. The list is not exhaustive and other service operational reports as deemed appropriate by the Committee will also be considered.

- Review the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- Disposal of Surplus Council Owned Land/Asset -Management Strategy
- Members' Welfare Reform Reference Group – Updates
- Air Quality Monitoring
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and Sickness Absence Monitoring
- Update on Progress of LCR Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Annual ICT Update Report (Performance of Agilisys)
- The consideration of budget proposals in preparation of the Budget Report 2025/26 to 2028/29 and savings and the Medium-Term Financial Plan
- Corporate Communications Update

I envisage the forthcoming year to be extremely busy and challenging for the Committee and the Council due to the difficult budgetary position and financial savings that have to be met in Sefton. The Council has an excellent record regarding financial management over the last 14 years, however, it is now estimated that there will be residual financial pressures between 2025/26 and 2026/27 of at least £19.247m (before Council Tax increases), which may need to be met by implementing service delivery options additional to those approved at Budget Council in February 2024. This shortfall will have to be met on top of the significant budget reductions that have been implemented since 2010. Further work has



commenced this financial year to develop the Medium-Term Financial Plan and refine the budget gaps, including to reflect the requirements of Adult and Children's Social Care within the context of the overall financial envelope of the Council. This budget gap will require the development of budget / savings proposals over the first half of 2024/25

Finally, and on behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our work over the past year. I would personally like to thank all Members of the Committee, Councillor Paulette Lappin, former Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services and officers who have attended meetings for their support to me over the past year and provided the Committee with valuable information.

Councillor Sue Bradshaw
July 2024

