

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Peter Harvey	Cabinet Member Cleansing & Street Scene	June 2024

Operational In-House Services

Transport & Vehicle Maintenance

The service continues to investigate options regarding the electric charging infrastructure capacity with a view to increasing the amount of charging points we have across our depot sites boroughwide. As the EVC market expands it has resulted in some of the electrical charging points across our buildings and depots becoming outdated and now require removal and/or upgrading. The only 2 that have continued to be maintained remain at Hawthorne Road Depot, Bootle, and Tulketh Street Depot, Southport. Discussions are ongoing with colleagues in H&S to determine the best approach.

The Transport & Vehicle Maintenance Service remain compliant regarding legal obligations to the Traffic Commissioners Office in line with our obligations for the Authority's Operator's Licence. The service has continued to maintain our Operator Compliance Risk Score at the highest level, due to the continuous preventative maintenance programme for the whole of Sefton's fleet.

The service is looking to fill a vacancy for a fitter within the workshop at Hawthorne Road Depot. Recruitment is challenging given the current employment market and external wage gaps. There has been recent recruitment of 2 new apprentices within the service. The first being within the Administration Office and the second is working in the workshop garage and will work alongside our experienced fitters with an aim to be fully qualified within 3 years. The service remains committed and fully invested in the Council's apprenticeship programme.

The MOT testing facility continues to be successful, current operating targets are above the national average for testing. Plans are in place to implement a training programme of current fitters to ensure greater resilience within the MOT facility with an aim to provide the necessary training to ensure a wider cohort of the workforce are qualified MOT testers.

Discussions are ongoing with colleagues in Waste Services regarding fleet, given the potential food waste collection implementation date of 2026.

Specialist Transport Unit – Operations

Following discussions with colleagues in Travel Support & Commissioning, the service has made progress to incorporate additional Adult Social Care (ASC) passengers onto existing SEND routes.

STU have now assessed routes and are awaiting a decision from ASC regarding an implementation date. By incorporating the additional ASC passengers, it would result in a significant saving to ASC as current in-house transport arrangements could be extended and utilised, reducing the cost of a full external route being commissioned.

The service continues to progress procurement of its fleet renewal programme and information has been passed to colleagues in ASC and SEND regarding fleet renewal to progress this matter.

Discussions continue with the Transport Manager to assess options with particular attention to decarbonisation of the vehicles and all EV options.

The current Operations Manager of the service plans to retire at the end of July 2024. The service will be undertaking recruitment for a replacement as soon as possible, to ensure business continuity.

School Crossing Patrol Service

At the commencement of March 2024, the School Crossing Patrol Service recruited an additional 6 patrol staff. There are now 4 remaining vacancies within the service, and we are hopeful to continue to recruit and fill these posts. The latest recruitment drive has been extremely successful as it is always challenging to attract individuals to this role given its unique criteria.

The service is currently undertaking supervisory visits on all established crossing sites in Sefton. The service has completed 60% of eligible sites so far this term. It is on target for 100% by the end of July 2024. The service has provided 97% cover for all established crossings during Quarter 4 2024/25.

As part of the Department for Education's new minimum expectation of a 32.5 hour school week with a deadline for implementation of September 2024, many schools are planning to implement changes to the structure of their school day from September 2024.

Any change of this nature will directly impact the School Crossing Patrol Service, particularly patrols that cover more than one school. If schools alter the opening and closing times it could result in an increase of hours required for the patrol staff. Any increase to daily operating times will need further discussion as this will place a financial pressure on the current revenue budget. The service is looking at requests and will provide updates on cost implications for the service.

Thank you to all patrol staff for the hard work and commitment they have demonstrated past and present, and continue to do so, in keeping the children and pedestrians safe whilst crossing the busy roads in Sefton.

Building Cleaning

The service continues to perform well, both financially and operationally.

The service made a budget surplus in 2023/24 which contributed to the overall financial outturn position of Operational In-House Services.

All schools have re-signed up to SLA's for 2024/25 despite increased costs and the fact school budgets are under significant pressure. Some schools have indicated that they are considering testing the market by putting their service out to competitive tender.

Recruitment of staff remains challenging in certain parts of the borough with some posts receiving no applications, causing operational difficulties.

Catering

Financial Position

The service had to increase charges to schools during 2023/24 as it was set for a large overspend. Understandably, the charges were met with some resistance by schools, especially as they were increased mid-year at a time when school budgets are stretched. However, the service achieved its budget target for 2023/24 which would not have been possible without these increased charges.

All contracts with schools have been retained for 2024/25 but some schools have raised the possibility of putting their service out to competitive tender during the next 12 months.

The price of a school meal to parents was increased in April 2024. This followed consultation with schools and the Cabinet Member for Locality Services as part of the Council's budget setting process. Whilst schools have the freedom to set the price of meals, most follow the recommended Sefton price.

The Council's Obesity Strategy

The catering section is continuing to support the Council's Obesity Strategy. The Service Manager chairs the Live Well subgroup, which is tasked with reviewing and refreshing the Council's work to ensure compliance with Food Active's Healthy Weight Declaration accreditation.

Sefton ARC

Sefton ARC has recently reviewed all of its school SLA's which are now available for schools to purchase via the School Education Portal. The SLA's and associated costs have been fully revised offering greater transparency and a much easier purchase route. The new SLA's began on the 1st April 2024 and will be on a rolling annual contract.

We continue to monitor and work closely with the education services daily to maintain service delivery. Since the introduction of the new transparent SLA's the feedback from school governors has been encouraging and complimentary.

One of the biggest changes to the SLA's is the removal of the patrol service. With wider interventions for security, such as CCTV being high on the list of most schools across the borough, the requirement for a physical patrol service has reduced. Sefton ARC will now provide a response service, which has been welcomed by the schools and has allowed the

service to significantly reduce the cost and pass this saving directly onto the schools. The Patrol Service can still be purchased separately if required.

This has been a huge success for the team at Sefton ARC who have worked closely with the Sefton Education team and has been met with positive feedback from the educational services with the new SLA offering options of value for money whilst continuing to provide a comprehensive service. The service has now managed to secure a total of 118 school SLA's, an increase of 25 compared to the previous financial year.

Whilst a number of new town-centre cameras have recently been upgraded, further exploration of funding opportunities continues to secure maintenance agreements.

Our electrical team are currently recruiting for 2 apprentice electricians, through education studying at Hugh Baird College, following the previous apprentices gaining full qualification and moving into full time roles within the Sefton ARC team. This has proved a huge success in providing career opportunities.

We are currently working with North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) and ASC to explore the potential option of introducing a welfare response service and a lifting service for residents throughout Sefton. This will mean fewer people requiring emergency service response and going to hospital.

We have introduced a new 12-hour rota pattern for our ARC responder roles. This has helped the service improve, with each responder now working alongside an ARC operator for a full shift to enable greater efficiency and consistency. Staff have also welcomed this change to help achieve a better work/life balance.

Sefton Careline:

Careline call response time for 99.3% calls answered within 60 seconds

In this period, the Careline answered a total of 16,563 calls, of which 99.3% were answered within 60 seconds, exceeding the TSA accreditation target (97.5%)

Referrals and installations

A total of 324 referrals were received by the Careline over the last quarter with an average of 68 installations per month. This figure is inclusive of requests from social services, hospital discharges and OT's (Occupational Therapists) and includes additional appointments for visits to test, replace and review equipment.

Lone Worker option

Following a two-week trial, the Lone Worker option for Sefton employees is now available for across the council.

Analogue to Digital Switchover A2D

The analogue telephone network will cease to operate by the end of 2027 when all telephone lines across the UK will switch to a digital network. The A2D switchover will have an impact on all Telecare Services across the UK. It is essential that we transition our existing service users onto digitally enabled Lifeline products.

This will also impact our Public Realm CCTV. Meetings have taken place with the current provider BT and an increase for the line rental is expected in April 2025. A scope has been

drafted and meetings held regarding transitioning from legacy fibre cables onto new digital WI-FI to bring the ARC and its infrastructure up to current standards. External funding is currently being explored and eventually the market will be explored through procurement to carry out the project requirements.

To date, the service has successfully secured £135,000 from the DFG Fund and expects to secure further funding this year. The equipment will be distributed to our existing Careline Service Users to replace their analogue lifeline. Lifeline equipment is provided on a rental basis and, as such, equipment is continually re-purposed. Existing service users are currently being reviewed and equipment is being replaced as required.

New equipment

Testing with two new suppliers of TECS equipment is now complete and the service will now start to distribute new digital devices as part of the Careline packages currently available. This is a significant step forward for Careline who are now able to work with four market leading suppliers.

The service will continue to keep abreast of any new technical developments within the TECS (Technology Enabled Care Service) industry to ensure we continue to provide our residents with the best equipment to suit their individual needs.

Public Conveniences

A contract for a further 6 months is now in place for DANFO LTD to continue to provide the service, maintenance and reconciliation of coinage for the public convenience facilities within the borough. Sefton ARC are currently working with the procurement team to put in place a long-term contract for the service maintenance offering value for money to the council through a framework. The new specification will also take into consideration the requirement to upgrade current facilities where required, and the necessity for disabled public toilet provision.

Burials and Cremations

Business as usual within the service in terms of day to day operations. Investment opportunity is still progressing and an update will be provided in due course.

Waste Management

The service is continuing to move in the right direction, and it has recently undertaken a recruitment drive with vacancies on the collection teams going out to advert. This will continue to build resilience within the service and has enabled resolution of long-standing issues around staff holidays.

On-going project work to look at wider waste containment options for properties that still receive a sack collection are ongoing. Possible solutions to challenges regarding infrastructure and storage issues continue to be explored .

Strategically, the Assistant Director continues to attend the LCR Strategic Waste Partnership for future planning regarding the implementation of the waste related aspects of the Environment Act 2021 such as the implementation of weekly food waste collections scheduled for 2026. DEFRA have also announced the requirement for councils to collect a

wider range of dry recycled material and all authorities across the LCR are working with MRWA to ensure that future disposal facilities will be in a position to accommodate the wider range of waste streams.

The service will shortly be recruiting for a Waste Minimisation Officer to join the team. The main focus of this job role will be education and behavioural change with the aim of increased recycling across the borough - with specific targeted campaigns on areas of low participation in addition to supporting the wider service with waste related projects.

Street Cleansing

The weed control programme is now in the second of four sprays for the season. There is also a programme of high-speed road weed clearance (dual carriageway locations that require traffic management) which will receive three visits during the growing season from April – September.

Officers carry out sample inspections to ensure evidence of 'die back' of weeds approximately 10-14 days following scheduled spray. If the weeds remain green, this is reported back to the weed control contractor for re-visit. It has proved to be a successful process in the previous 2 seasons and ensures the 3rd party contractor is appropriately performance managed.

Rear entries continue to cause concern across the borough. The service is working closely with colleagues from the Environmental Enforcement service to clear fly-tipped waste. The service is currently undergoing a recruitment drive which will see a number of vacancies filled over the next few weeks and will add much-needed resilience to the current operation.