

COUNCIL - 11 JULY 2024

QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Sammon to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Highways (Councillor Viedman)</u>
	Subject: Sandway Homes
	Can the Cabinet Member tell us: A) How many homes have been built by Sandway Homes since the company was incorporated in 2018? B) How many were built with solar panels installed on the roof?
	Response:
	A) "To date 78 homes have been completed, with a further 63 on site and another 53 with planning approval, going for Cabinet approval on 25th July. There is also a pipeline of sites of circa 500 homes. B) None to date but all 45 homes at Buckley Hill will have photovoltaic panels on the roof and 18 apartments are off gas, have electric heaters and heat pumps".
2	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Halsall to the Chair of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (Councillor Byrom)</u>
	Subject: Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
	1) Does he as chair believe fire appliances can be safely manned with 3 crew members? 2) Will he as chair commit to working more closely with the Fire Brigade union and allow them to meet directly with all elected members? 3) Will he commit to not using the MSL legislation?
	Response:
	1) "The proposal to be considered, as part of the community risk management plan process, seeks to improve public safety without any compromise whatsoever in the safety of Firefighters. Whilst it has been suggested that the Service intends to respond to life risk incidents with three firefighters this is absolutely not the case - the Authority's plan clearly states that it WILL NOT send frontline fire engines with three firefighters to house fires or any structural fires where Breathing Apparatus could be required. The proposal responds to occasions where a fire engine would become

	<p>UNAVAILABLE due to last minute sickness or the granting of emergency leave.</p> <p>On these occasions it is proposed that the Service will keep that fire engine available for low level incidents ONLY - redefining it as a Small Incident Unit (SIU) (the Authority has previously used Small Fire Units (SFU) on a similar basis during periods of peak demand) until we have moved/detached staff into the station to enable it to be deployed to life risk incidents again.</p> <p>What is being proposed actually protects the Services 'life risk' response making it quicker to respond under certain circumstances because it avoids sending a frontline fire engine from a neighbouring area to deal with a low-level incident such as a person locked out or to gain entry for the ambulance service - which would leave two station areas without a fire engine with which to respond should a life risk incident occur - this is totally unnecessary, and as such puts the public at avoidable risk".</p> <p>2) "The Merseyside fire authority is a Labour controlled authority and we always seek to foster good working relationships with trade unions and representative bodies, but there is a proper process for negotiating terms and conditions and this does not include seeking to bypass the process by briefing directly to members of the authority.</p> <p>We have already had the formal response from the FBU, a private briefing note and have offered for the lead members of the authority to meet with officials of the FBU, local secretaries have also had a technical and professional briefing from the chief fire officer and are fully aware that these CRMP proposals do not involve sending frontline fire appliances to house and other such structural fires where Breathing Apparatus could be required, no compromise to fire fighter safety is a given".</p> <p>3) "I'm delighted to say that there is now a Labour Government and in my discussions with the designated fire minister, he has confirmed to me that the new government intend to repeal the minimum service level legislation.</p> <p>Merseyside fire authority already having confirmed that it has/had no intention of utilising this unnecessary legislation, this information has been communicated several times to the general secretary and local secretary of the Fire Brigades Union and I have had a reply of appreciation back".</p>
3	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Sammon to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills and Deputy Leader (Councillor Lappin)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Floral Hall, Southport</p>
	<p>In June yourself and council officers responded to my emails on the Marine Lake Events Centre (MLEC) contract and demolition of the Floral Hall in Southport. I was advised that the procurement process is still live, expected to be finalised in July with an aim for the work to start on the new development in 2025. I was informed that Sefton Council are not holding off the demolition until a contract signed to build the MLEC. Therefore, I am concerned that we could be left with an unsightly empty building site, for potentially years if a contract cannot be agreed for the build, or if there are delays in the commencement or completion of works.</p> <p>Can you update me on the stage we are at with the procurement process and if there is a practical completion date being negotiated?</p>

	Response:
	<p>“Tender submissions for the main contract have been received and evaluation is ongoing. Work on site is ongoing, and demolition activity will commence later this year with the appointed demolition contractor. This is intended to enable quicker progression of the new build works with the main contractor.</p> <p>Finalisation of the main contractor procurement process will provide an updated construction programme and target practical completion date”.</p>
4	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Sammon to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)</u>
	Subject: Telegraph Poles in Southport
	<p>I have been informed by the pole objections team at Openreach that there are discussions on going at a senior level within Openreach and yourself on the telegraph poles being installed in Southport. These telegraph poles are deeply unpopular and are the single most frequent issue I have been contacted about by residents since being elected in May. I have been working hard with residents and cross-party with members of this council to oppose them. Please can you give a report on your discussions with Openreach?</p>
	Response:
	<p>“The Council is aware of the concerns of residents in relation to the erection of telegraph poles in Southport by Openreach. However, the legal basis for the Council to oppose such apparatus is significantly limited. This is because such apparatus is classified as permitted development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Part 16 “Communications” Class A.</p> <p>Some types of communication infrastructure permitted under the development order require ‘prior approval’ by the Council (such as mobile phone masts), however, broadband infrastructure (poles, cabinets and cables) do not require such approval. Condition A.2 of the Order states that the siting and appearance of such poles must be minimised so far as is practicable, and whilst the Council can raise concerns about the impact of such proposals on the harmful effect on the street scene and character of the area they cannot insist on less intrusive infrastructure being installed, whilst other requests can be ignored by the operator if it is felt unreasonable. A recent example of this is where the Council contacted Openreach about their proposed poles in Southport, asking them to try and install underground cables. However, Openreach responded by saying it was too expensive to do this due to the lack of suitable underground infrastructure, and so it would not be practicable. The Council could not therefore take this any further.</p> <p>The Order does not specify that consultation should be carried out with the Council. This is set out the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulation 2003, which requires operators to give the Local Planning Authority 28 days notice. This provides an opportunity to raise concerns, but as explained above, these can be largely ignored if it is felt that the LPA’s requests are unreasonable. The Regulations do not require operators to consult with residents. However, the Government’s Cabinet and Poles Siting Code of Practice states that companies should consult with residents, although this is entirely voluntary. OFCOM</p>

	<p>cannot enforce this advice.</p> <p>Although such apparatus is classed as permitted development in planning terms, operators still need to obtain a license from the Highway Authority when siting them on highway land, in Sefton operators are requested to display a site notice before a license is issued. However, there are limitations to what Highways can do in restricting the issuing of a licence particularly if the concerns relate to visual amenity only.</p> <p>The Council recognise that Southport has a unique Victorian seaside townscape which has been largely free of any overhead cables or above ground apparatus for many years. This has allowed Southport to enjoy a visual amenity of its streets and townscape by having very few telegraph poles and overhead cables which would normally create a ‘spiders web’ spoiling the visual amenity of its street.</p> <p>The view of this Council is that the current arrangement is unacceptable in that both the Council and residents seem powerless to exert any control over such matters due to the flexibility given by the various Acts and Orders. Whilst it is recognised that telecoms is a high Government priority, it is felt that changes should be made to require operators to properly and openly consult with residents and the Council and to act on concerns identified, where this would help minimise any harm created by them.</p> <p>I have previously written to the department for Science, Innovation and Technology Operators in May 2024 seeking improvements to the way operators consult with Local Councils and residents and to promote better ways to provide infrastructure that is less intrusive such as underground installations. Furthermore, I wrote to Openreach to pause works in order to allow discussions to be had on ways to improve proper and more open consultation with residents. A meeting was held between the Council and Openreach in May 2024 relating to the street works permitting process and to better understand their programme for improved community engagement. This meeting was positive and whilst Openreach continue to pursue the installation of poles across Southport, they have agreed to meet via the Southport Operational Group to further improve communication and understanding of Openreach’s programme for the rollout of faster broadband in the Southport area.</p> <p>In addition to the above, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Highways has written to the new Secretary of State to request that consideration be given to an improved process for dealing with the installation of broadband infrastructure within the Development Order. As a bare minimum the Local Planning authority suggest that they make the requirement to notify the Council of their intentions and to give an opportunity to determine whether their approval is required prior to the installation of such poles, and to evidence any argument they put forward to suggest it is not feasible. Such changes would represent a significant improvement to the current system if it were to be agreed”.</p>
5	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Lloyd-Johnson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Second Deputy Leader</p>
	<p>What is the strategic thinking behind appointing a second Deputy Leader of the Council and why was it felt necessary now?</p>

Response:

“In order to respond to the changing role of local government, the renewed and refreshed ambition in the new Sefton Council corporate and transformation plan, the evolving role of the Liverpool City Region combined authority and recognising the need to influence and shape policy and services regionally and nationally, Cabinet has been reshaped with significant portfolio change - the first time this has happened in just under a decade.

These portfolio changes are designed to ensure strong political leadership in the Council, across the borough, and a strong voice for Sefton regionally and nationally. Specifically, this has led to reduction in the number of Cabinet Members through increased clarity of accountability with a single Cabinet member for Children, Families and Schools, and a refocusing of a number of portfolios in line with new priorities which in all cases will ensure improved delivery.

Alongside these changes to individual Cabinet roles, there is a need to change the Deputy Leader role, to redesign it to reflect transformation internally, and the additional challenges and opportunities the council faces across the borough, in the city region and nationally.

Both Deputy Leaders will take on these additional responsibilities in addition to challenging Cabinet roles and will have an enhanced level and range of responsibility. Both Deputy Leaders will have delegated responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the Leader in the Leader’s absence to ensure pace of delivery is maintained at all times. The details of the additional and different responsibilities of each post are as follows:

Deputy A - additional external political leadership capacity

Deputy A will attend, vote and negotiate for Sefton at the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Local Government Association, working directly with the Leader’s authority with national government departments and with private sector and infrastructure bodies. The role will involve driving the devolution agenda in conjunction with the Leader. They will provide the required additional capacity to enhance regional and national relations and promote Sefton as an ambitious borough for investment and growth.

Deputy B - additional internal political leadership capacity

Deputy B will represent the leader internally within the council and will drive policy and strategy to ensure there is a clear focus on our residents and our towns, ensuring that the Cabinet (and therefore the council) is greater than the sum of its individual parts.. The role will involve working closely with partners such as health, police, schools and will hold partners to account for input and delivery.

Given the clear and additional workloads, and the focus of speaking on behalf of and across the Cabinet whether that is internally or externally, the proposal is set out as a reduction in Cabinet Members with their clear focus on accountability and delivery in their area, and in terms of an additional Deputy Leader which in both roles will work across portfolios to the benefit of Sefton residents.”

Furthermore, this is less costly than the previous structure.

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6	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Pugh (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) to the Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills and Deputy Leader (Councillor Lappin)</u>
	Subject: Southport Pier
	<p>At the Sefton Council meeting 16th November 2023 following a debate on the Pier the Council agreed to “write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up requesting a firm commitment to cover both capital and maintenance costs”.</p> <p>Given the recent change in government is it the Council’s intention to seek that commitment from the incoming Secretary of State and ensure that she responds in a timely way to that request.</p>
	Response:
	“As previously, the Council has engaged with all relevant stakeholder and Government departments regarding the funding required for Southport Pier, as part of its ongoing work to ensure readiness for delivery when funding is secured. This engagement will continue on an ongoing basis. I have repeatedly stated our willingness to work with anyone to secure the funding required to reopen the Pier, and that has not changed and will not change”
7	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Mike Morris MBE to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)</u>
	Subject: Southport Marine Lake Events Centre
	<p>Would the Leader of the Council please confirm that the Council is still committed to completing the Marine Lake Events Centre?</p> <p>Can the Leader also confirm that the new Labour Government have no intention of ‘clawing back’ levelling up monies already received? and if it did, can she confirm that the project would still go ahead or be dead in the water?</p>
	Response:
	<p>“Yes”</p> <p>“There is no suggestion coming from government that this funding will be clawed back”.</p>
8	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Prendergast (Leader of the Conservative Group) to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Atkinson)</u>
	Subject: School Places
	<p>1. Would the Leader of the Council please confirm the number of primary and secondary school places that will be available to students for the September term?</p>

	<p>2. Will the Council Leader confirm the cost on an annual and individual basis of the cost of each place for students from September?</p> <p>3. What is the current number of children within Sefton who are taught in state schools within Sefton with EHCP's?</p> <p>4. How many children within Sefton are currently taught in private schools?</p> <p>5. Of those children within Sefton who are taught at private schools, how many have EHCP's?</p>
	<p>Response:</p>
	<p>1. The number of primary and secondary school places that will be available throughout the borough for the term starting in September of this year, For the normal years of entry, Primary – starting school in reception and Secondary - starting in Year 7 (transferring from Year 6 in primary school), the total number of places made available for September 2024 entry are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary = 3,155 ▪ Secondary = 3,322 <p>2. The cost per student in both categories on an annual basis: The 'Basic Entitlement' agreed for pupils at the key stages for 2024/25 are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary (Years Reception to Y6) £3,564.45 P Pupil ▪ Secondary (KS3 - Years 7 to 9) £5,039.28 P Pupil ▪ Secondary (KS4 - Years 10-11) £5,686.03 P Pupil <p>A pupil may also attract additional funding for a variety of factors.</p> <p>3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mainstream - 1288 ▪ Maintained Special - 778 ▪ Maintained PRU - 15 ▪ ASD Maintained Base - 253 <p>4. 432</p> <p>5. 21”</p>