

CABINET

**MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM, TOWN HALL,
SOUTHPORT
ON THURSDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER, 2024**

PRESENT: Councillor Atkinson (in the Chair)
Councillors Dowd, Doyle, Harvey, Howard, Lappin
and Moncur

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Sir Ron Watson CBE

33. EVENTS IN SOUTHPORT OF 29 JULY 2024

The Leader of the Council referred to the fact that this was the first meeting of the Cabinet held since the tragic events in Southport of Monday, 29 July 2024, when the lives of Alice da Silva Aguiar, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Bebe King were taken, and others were injured at the dance class in Hart Street. The deepest condolences of the Council were offered to the families of the victims, and thoughts and prayers were with survivors and families affected. The Leader thanked first responders as well as local people who rushed to the scene to help. Sadly, some of those brave individuals found themselves facing anger and violence, in the face of misinformation, a few hours later. This was followed by a show of unity in the joint clear-up and re-build. The Leader thanked local people, businesses, community and faith leaders, Council staff, emergency services and everyone else who responded to events. Since then, the Council's focus had been on the families of those affected and the residents and communities impacted, and that focus would remain in place for as long as it was needed. Everything the Council had undertaken was with the approval of Alice, Bebe and Elsie Dot's families, and the Council would stand by them, the wider community and Southport as a whole, in the long journey of healing ahead. The Council had responded with colleagues in the health and voluntary sectors in dealing with the wider implications and support had been put in place by Family Hubs and the Education Department by working with schools and families to ensure a calm, reassuring return to school for the Autumn term. The Council and other agencies had also reached out to ethnic minority individuals and families who had felt threatened and isolated after events. Local businesses had been engaged with, resulting in the development of the Southport Business Recover Fund, which the Cabinet would approve at the meeting. Despite the terrible and heartbreaking circumstance, the Leader was proud of the way in which the community, Southport and Sefton had pulled together, and considered that despite the efforts of some, the local community remained stronger and united as one. There was unity in heart-felt sorrow and sympathy, unity in commitment to support everyone affected and unity in determination to support Southport together.

The Cabinet observed a one-minute silence, as a mark of respect, in reflecting on the events in Southport of 29 July 2024.

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roscoe and Veidman.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

36. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

37. DAY OPPORTUNITIES CONTRACTS

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director - Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing (Place Director) that sought approval to extend existing Day Opportunities contracts.

A request was made for the contracts extension to be made in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care and Deputy Leader.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the extension of existing Day opportunities contracts for a maximum twelve-month period from 1st October 2024, consisting of an initial six-month extension with the option to extend for a further six-month period, be approved and the Executive Director Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care and Deputy Leader, be authorised to approve any extensions beyond the initial six-month extension period; and
- (1) the ongoing work outlined in the report regarding the establishment of longer-term commissioning arrangements for Day Opportunities be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

1. Day services were places and opportunities for supporting people with an assessed need during the day. They could be offered within a building-based location or within the community.

- 2 They helped people to have a fulfilling life: they provided the opportunity to take part in various interests and activities, make friends, develop relationships, gain new skills and enabled people to make a positive contribution to the community. Day opportunities also provided support to carers by means of creating respite so that they could pursue their own interests outside of their caring role.
- 3 Sefton Adult Social Care currently had thirteen contracts in place with Providers and in September 2023 the Cabinet approved the extension of these interim contracts for a further twelve months whilst a procurement exercise was being formulated.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not extending contracts – this option was rejected as there was a need to ensure that formal contractual arrangements remained in place, despite the historic nature of these contracts. The Council sought to manage and mitigate this by commencing a procurement exercise for a new commissioning framework. The six-month extension was intended to allow the Council time to run a compliant procurement process.

38. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director (Operations and Partnerships) providing an update on the progress and next steps of the [Sefton Child Poverty Strategy](#) by reporting on the following:

- A brief overview of the Child Poverty Strategy's Goals, priorities, and suggested actions.
- A review of progress using the accountability framework.
- Overview of findings and recommendations of the LGA Health in All Policy Team (July 2024).
- Discussion on arrangements for implementation, governance, and monitoring.
- A communications plan to raise the profile of the Child Poverty Strategy.

Cabinet Members welcomed the Strategy.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the progress made to date and support plans to further progress action on child poverty in Sefton, be recognised; and
- (2) the plans set out in the report to raise the profile of the Sefton Child Poverty Strategy and strengthen governance, be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Cabinet had a governance role to provide oversight and support for the delivery and progress of Sefton Council priorities. The report set out information about progress in the year and a half following its launch and plans for its further implementation in 2024 and beyond, including feedback from an independent review by the Local Government Association, and a communications plan.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

An alternative was not considered. The Council's vision and core purpose demonstrated its continued commitment to support the most vulnerable, reduce poverty and its short- and long-term impacts, and to foster prosperity and good prospects for all. Advancing strategic and co-ordinated action on the issue of child poverty was aligned with the Council's responsibilities towards children and had co-benefits across the priorities expressed in the Core Purpose and Council Values.

**39. GREEN WASTE COMPOSTING CONTRACT EXTENSION
2026/27**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director – Operational In-House Services that sought approval to extend the current Green Waste Composting Service Contract with SED Services Ltd for a further two x 1-year periods in accordance with the specification of the contract provision in place. The report indicated that the current contract expired on 31 December 2024 and was a joint contract with the Liverpool City Region, Sefton being the procuring and lead authority on the contracted service provided to all participating Authorities, namely Sefton, St Helens, Knowsley, Wirral, and Liverpool.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) agreement to the two x 1-year extension periods available under current contractual arrangements with SED Services Ltd be approved; and
- (2) it be noted that this extension provides the best value and security of continuing service provision until 31 Dec 2027.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure that fully compliant green (garden) waste composting facilities were available to all the LCR participating authorities until 31 December 2027.

To allow time for any new joint LCR procurement options beyond that day to be sourced, procured and implemented.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

40. SOUTHPORT BUSINESS RECOVERY FUND

The Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director -Economic Growth and Housing advising, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, of the decision of the Leader of the Council to exercise their powers to make urgent decisions because of the necessity to deliver emergency funding to businesses as part of the Council's response to the incident in Southport on 29 July 2024. The Council would aim to provide long-term support to all affected families, communities and stakeholders, in every respect, following the events of 29 July 2024. The Council's priority was immediate and long-term support for those families, in any and every manner required. However, wider support included financial assistance for businesses affected by the events, via the introduction of a Southport Business Recovery Fund. While business and economic considerations might be wider and longer-term as well, the immediate focus was proposed to be on businesses and organisations located in the Hart Street and St Lukes Road areas of Southport.

Cabinet Members thanked the who were staff involved in the support being offered.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the report and the necessity for the Leader of the Council to exercise her powers under the Council's Constitution to make urgent decisions to deliver emergency funding to businesses as part of the council's response to the incident in Southport on 29 July 2024, be approved, including the introduction of a Southport Business Recovery Fund to provide financial assistance, in the first instance, to businesses and organisations located in the Hart Street and St Lukes Road areas of Southport which have incurred losses following the incident in Southport on 29th July 2024;
- (2) the allocation of £0.5m funded via existing Council resources be approved;
- (3) the establishment of the fund, and disbursement of monies be progressed immediately given the urgency with which support is needed by affected businesses, with Cabinet and Council approvals to be secured retrospectively;
- (4) the finalisation of eligibility criteria and associated processes be delegated to the Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Regeneration, Economy and Skills;

Rule 27

- (5) it be noted that the proposal was a Key Decision but had not been included in the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Consequently, the Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) had been consulted under Rule 27 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution, to the decision being made by the Cabinet as a matter of urgency on the basis that it was impracticable to defer the decision until the commencement of the next Forward Plan because it was necessary to provide emergency funding to businesses in Hart Street, Southport following the incident on 29 July 2024 which forced them to close, causing loss of income for the period of closure of up to four weeks.

Reasons for the Decisions:

Support for the affected families remained the Council's priority, alongside support for all affected communities and stakeholders. This included local businesses, their owners and employees.

The Business Recovery Fund was one of many steps of support required to meet the immediate needs of affected local businesses. This formed part of a developing long-term plan, through a community impact assessment, which also must be based on different groups impacted.

The Council would continue to work with partners (locally and in central government) and with those impacted to understand the long term need through the community impact assessment.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Do nothing and refer businesses to available loan finance. This was rejected as businesses affected by closures were struggling to meet financial commitments and additional debt burden would compound their current situation, potentially resulting in closure. This would not reflect the Council's unequivocal commitment to short- and long-term support.

41. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer on the appointment of the Council's representatives to serve on the Outside Bodies named within the report for the remainder of 2024/25.

Decision Made:

That

That the proposed appointments to the Outside Bodies indicated below, for the remainder of 2024/25, be approved:

North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Councillor Richards to replace Councillor McGinnity

Sefton New Directions Limited Board

Councillor Neary to be appointed

Reasons for the Decision:

The Cabinet had delegated powers set out in Chapter 5, Paragraph 40 of the Constitution to appoint the Council's representatives to serve on Outside Bodies.

The Cabinet was requested to approve the recommendation in order for the Council to have on-going representation on the Outside Bodies concerned.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

42. HR AND PAYROLL SYSTEM PROCUREMENT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director Corporate Services and Commercial seeking approval to undertake procurement activity using the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework to place a direct award for the SaaS HR and Payroll system, iTrent. The Preferred procurement option would be to place a direct award with the subcontractor Softcat using the CCS Framework under RM6194. This option would provide service continuity, would give continued stability to the service, and would permit existing development work to continue following the corporate plan to increase managers self-sufficiency and drive automation and a self-service model of service delivery.

Decision Made:

That procurement be made by direct award with the subcontractor Softcat using the CCS Framework under RM6194.

Reasons for the Decision:

The HR and Payroll software was used across the whole Council and by all employees. As such a system of this scale and complexity should only be considered for change once in a generation to ensure that the best use and development opportunities were exploited. By utilising a direct award this enabled ongoing development and growth to continue and avoided a lengthy and costly procurement, implementation retraining and redevelopment process. The existing contract was coming to an end in December 2024 and following a review of alternative systems available,

using the G-Cloud procurement route, the incumbent was still considered to be the most suitable solution to meet Sefton's requirements and was considerably cheaper than comparative suppliers.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Using the G-Cloud framework, evaluations had been made to consider alternative suppliers who were able to provide a solution with the functionality and scale required by Sefton and these were shown to be substantially more expensive.

A full OJEU compliant procurement exercise was also considered, opening the opportunity up to all potential bidders. This option was rejected as there was insufficient time or available resource to complete a full procurement exercise and would therefore prove extremely costly and open to risk.

43. CORPORATE CLOUD TELEPHONY CONTRACT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial setting out the background to the Council's Cloud Telephony Service and associated contracts. The contracts supply telephony services to the Council were used by staff to conduct their duties and included the Council's Contact Centre for both inbound and outbound telephone calls. The report detailed the associated procurement route available to the authority to renew the current contracts which were due to expire on 18 February 2025.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the use of Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6116 Network Services 3 - Lot 4b Digital Communication Services to award a contract for the provision of the Council's cloud telephony service to 8x8 UK Limited be approved, the proposed term being for an initial period of 2-years, followed by up to two optional 12-month extension periods; and
- (2) the Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services, be granted delegated authority to award the Contract under this framework and any subsequent contract extensions.

Reasons for the Decisions:

On acceptance and approval of the recommendation within the report, the next steps will be to complete a direct award under Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6116 Network Services 3 - Lot 4b Digital Communication Services.

The proposed term would be for an initial period of 2-years, followed by up to two optional 12-month extension periods.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

To explore the market for a new telephony solution: rejected. The current solution provided by 8x8 UK Ltd had been a reliable solution since the Councils conversation away from analogue telephony at the start of this current but expiring contract. It was recognised that a contract of this nature would usually have been awarded for a much longer period, as the cost of change was significant (training, hardware and porting just some examples). However, at the time of contract initiation for cloud telephony there was an urgent need for a solution due to the COVID pandemic and for speed the contract was awarded via G-Cloud, the disadvantage of which was a shorter contract term.

8x8 had established themselves as a market leader in this space for local government with many neighbouring authorities also recently completing procurement exercises, with 8x8 winning on quality and price, including Liverpool and St Helens Councils.

Officers within the within the ICT Client Unit recently conducted a proof of concept looking at further developments in cloud telephony including the potential use of integrated telephony with Microsoft Teams, thereby making better use of existing investments in M365. It was concluded that these alternatives would potentially meet the Councils requirements, but further work was needed to ensure that any business case would be viable in terms of licensing costs and call charges. Consideration would also need to be given to the time needed to switch away from 8x8 for generic telephony and then how Teams would integrate with a contact centre telephony solution as a specialist solution would still be required in this space.

It was therefore recommended to complete a direct award for a period of 2 years with the option of two further 12-month extension periods to allow time for further work to be completed on the Teams proposal.

44. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2024/25 TO 2027/28 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2024/25 – SEPTEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial informing the Cabinet of:

- 1) The current position relating to the 2024/25 revenue budget.
- 2) The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2024/25.
- 3) The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of July 2024:
 - The forecast expenditure to year end.

- Variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members.
 - Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects.
- 4) The measures being taken by the Council to respond to the tragic incident in Southport on 29 July 2024.

Appendix A to the report set out the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27

Decisions Made:

That

Revenue Outturn

- (1) the current position relating to the 2024/25 revenue budget be noted;
- (2) the actions being taken to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced position, be noted;
- (3) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2024/25 revenue budget be recognised and it be acknowledged that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed, and remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved;

Capital Programme

- (4) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme, as set out at paragraph 8.1 of the report, be noted;
- (5) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 July 2024 of £15.781m, as set out at paragraph 8.08 of the report; and the latest full year forecast is £87.038m, as set out at paragraph 8.09 of the report, be noted;
- (6) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.347m for the Northern Forest Grow Back Greener Programme, funded by grant from The Mersey Forest, as set out at paragraph 8.7 of the report, be approved; and
- (7) it be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director - Corporate Services and Commercial to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council, as set out at paragraphs 8.12-8.14 of the report.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure the Cabinet was informed of the current position in relation to the 2024/25 revenue budget.

To provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep Members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2024/25 and agreed allocations for future years.

To progress any changes that were required in order to maintain a relevant and accurate budget profile necessary for effective monitoring of the Capital Programme.

To approve any updates to funding resources so that they could be applied to capital schemes in the delivery of the Council's overall capital strategy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.