

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (Regeneration and Skills)

Councillor Paulette Lappin	Cabinet Member Regeneration, Economy and Skills	25 November 2024
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### **EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING**

Employment & Learning includes the three service areas of Sefton@work, Sefton Adult Community Learning Service and the NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service (NREIS) together with other associated projects including Building Better Customer Experience and Multiply adult numeracy projects.

All activities within Employment & Learning are externally funded apart from NREIS.

#### **Summary Position**

All programmes are currently operating to programme, within forecast and budget including UKSPF, Restart, Multiply, AEB, Town Deal, NREIS, LCR Mayoral Young Peoples Guarantee and LCR Test & Learn. Any risks to project delivery are understood and are being mitigated through robust contract management. At present there is low risk of non-compliance or financial clawback from unfavourable audit or inspection. Quality assurance systems are in place including Matrix assessments, Customer Service Excellence standards, individual awarding body standards and the most recent Ofsted inspection rating for SACL was “GOOD” in 2024.

#### **Recent Headlines**

- Sefton@work continue to work with employers and contractors to identify opportunity for recruitment and training for local residents arising from regeneration projects & inward investment. This includes promotion of the Caring Business Charter.
- Sefton@work is currently part-funded by UKSPF, an extension of which was announced in the Budget at a reduced rate, with the current project ending March 2025. UKSPF solely targets economically inactive people, but in Sefton we have chosen to continue with our “Open Door policy” for any workless Sefton resident seeking support regardless of benefit status.
- LA officers are expecting to participate in negotiations with LCR-CA about the future shape and requirements of employment support which will impact on future funding available to Sefton@work.
- Sefton@work is also engaged in talks with LCR-CA about a recently announced DWP initiative called Connect2work, focused on improving access to work for people who are inactive and in poor health.

- Sefton@work capital project is underway to secure permanent accommodation for operations in Southport. Work is on target for the unit in Cambridge Walk to open before Christmas.
- Funding is secured from LCR Freeport Extension Fund to delivery Phase 2 of the refurbishment works for Cambridge Road Community learning hub and procurement for this will commence early in 2025.
- CEX and Cabinet Member attended an event this month to recognise the role in inclusive growth played by our local employers in delivering opportunities for Sefton@work workless clients.
- The Caring Business Charter held a Careers and Jobs Fair for young people as part of Care Leavers Week. 22 employers/stakeholders attended and 19 young people, 5 of whom were care experienced.
- Recent effort to secure waged placements for care experienced young people engaging with Sefton@work has led to the creation of opportunities with employers. This has made a positive impact on the NEET rate of this group but is funded by UKSPF and will therefore conclude in March 25.
- Work is continuing to track the September Guarantee for all Sefton young people, allowing Career Connect to target support for those who need it most.
- The proportion of our young people with complex needs and deemed 'At Risk of Becoming NEET' has increased significantly, putting extreme pressure on the capacity of this service to meet demands for intensive support needed to re-engage in learning and work.
- Sefton@work has been listed as a national finalist in the prestigious ERSA Awards for 2024.
- Collaborations across the Council work well where these are in place but there is more scope to add value, in particular in relation to the recent recruitment campaign to promote careers in local government.

## **INVESTSEFTON**

### **Southport Business Recovery Fund**

The Southport Business Recovery Fund is supporting businesses forced to close with loss of income/earnings. The fund will aim to reimburse a percentage of these losses. InvestSefton will take a sensitive approach and will visit each business who has been forced to close and gain an understanding of their specific circumstances to ensure that the fund is accessible and equitable. The businesses will be supported throughout the application process by InvestSefton, and the team will ensure that the business owners do not feel overwhelmed by the application process which is overseen by an award panel chaired by the Assistant Director of Economic Growth & Housing.

Four award panels have taken place with 13 businesses awarded funding.

### **Business Enquiries**

Since March 2020 InvestSefton has handled 8,420 business enquiries.

## **Business Events & Workshops**

The Sefton Financial & Professional Network group was held on 16<sup>th</sup> October at Crosby Lakehouse with speakers from the University of Liverpool and Carbon Happy World. Cabinet Member is already aware that Sefton has a good relationship with funding providers, most notably River Capital (Merseyside Special Investment Fund). Given the team's current focus on SBRF the attendance and events itself was extremely good. Summary below: -19 businesses, including 24 delegates attended.

## **Case studies**

InvestSefton's aim is to support business growth and sustainability and the team's outward engagement results in an interesting array of businesses from a range of sectors and sizes. This work is carried out firstly by Business Growth Officers providing an initial triage followed by more detailed diagnostic one-to-one guidance from Business Growth Advisers.

Here is a selection with names anonymised:

**A sole trader business based in Southport** that specialises in biodegradable urns. Following extensive research, the business noticed a gap in the market for this type of urn which is made from calabash from Africa. The business has bought a significant amount of calabash to maintain stock, so does not expect to need to re-order for at least 2 years. The Business has established a website and generated some sales so far but is looking to increase the sale online through various partnerships with undertakers. InvestSefton supported the business with a Website SEO and provided a report suggesting areas of key improvements as well as identifying key markets for the business to target and prioritise where to target first.

**Bootle based business** that delivers online law training providing bite sized lessons to contribute toward both CPD and legal qualifications. The business needs to broaden its catchment area to obtain additional users of the system. InvestSefton supported the business by reviewing potential funding applications and providing access to events to enable the business to upskill and have access to additional contacts and networking opportunities.

**Company that provides specialist engineering and welding services based in Bootle.** The Business has grown rapidly in recent years and has outgrown their existing premises. New premises have been identified but financial support is required to purchase new kit. InvestSefton supported the Business to prepare a Business Plan and projections to enable them to apply for funding.

**Café and outside catering business based in Southport.** The current premises are quite small, and the business now has the opportunity to expand to the unit next door which would enable them to provide an eat in option. The space could also generate additional income by being hired out for events and small gatherings. InvestSefton supported the business with rates review of the additional unit and also researched the use of AI to support marketing activity as well as undertaking a managed referral to the Growth Catalyst programme.

## **TOURISM**

### Destination Marketing

**Destination Campaign** – With the tragedy of 29 July and following riots our campaign was halted then adapted to respond to the mood in the town and across the country. Our agency carefully monitored national and local sentiment, moving from a support message to more overt ‘visit Southport’ message when we/they felt it appropriate. We believe our timing was right as there was minimal negative feedback on the campaign. Autumn saw a return to a more traditional campaign and the Christmas Campaign is underway.

**PR** – our agency continue to produce releases and listicles to support other elements of the marketing campaign. Pick-up on the latest (half term / Halloween) release has been very good with it featuring on Yahoo and MSN as well as with more local media.

**E-newsletter** - Database stands at circa 58,000 with the addition of 2024 data and regular newsletters are sent to this audience (the latest being as part of the autumn campaign).

As part of a partnership arrangement with Northern Rail, we secured 10,000 fully compliant email addresses at the end of the summer campaign.

**Golf** – We continue to work with EGC and receive reports from them for Marketing Southport board meetings. We are currently finalising the ‘England’s Golf Coast’ trademark agreement.

**Marketing Southport** – membership currently stands at 105 (102 this time last year).

### Events

#### **Southport Food & Drink Festival – 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> May & 1<sup>st</sup> June**

- Application forms for street food, bars, producers and exhibitors will be sent out in the coming weeks and will be reviewed after the closing date in February 2025.
- The event will be in the same format as previous years.
- New elements of the festival are being researched.

#### **Southport Air Show – 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> August**

- The Flying Display Management Company have submitted the forms for Military aircraft requests which will be announced early next year.
- Other civilian aircraft are being approached for availability and quotes.
- Due to high tides only a June or the August date was available.

#### **British Musical Fireworks Championship – 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> September**

- The event will take place on Saturday & Sunday this year and not Friday & Saturday as in the previous years. This is due to historic figures showing that the Sunday has predominantly been busier than the Friday.

- 2025 is the Champion of Champions year where the last 6 winners are invited back to compete against each other.

### MLEC

- The demolition contractor DSM have been on site since July 2024. They commenced with soft strip out and asbestos removal and are now moving on to major demolition. DSM will also be responsible for the works on the party wall to disconnect from the hotel. Works are due to be completed in 2025.
- Over the last few months, the procurement process to appoint a main contractor has been progressing and the preferred contractor, pending legal is in the process of being appointed.
- As part of the MLEC Project and leading on Social Value alongside Project Management Consultants Gardiner & Theobald we continue to engage with several sectors of the community with various initiatives and events.

### Salt & Tar

- Our high-profile music event headlined by Tom Jones attracted 11,000 attendees across the space of one weekend, approximately 26% of whom were from outside the Liverpool City Region. Alongside this, our smaller activity throughout the year has drawn custom from across the Liverpool City Region and beyond, opening up Bootle as a viable destination in its own right and changing preconceptions.
- We have also seen the impact our events have had on other local businesses, with neighbouring shopping centre, The Strand, reporting a 15% footfall increase over our event weekends, and their car park seeing a 51% increase in revenue. A local business shared their revenue was up by 30% from pre-gig visitors to their venue.
- After the success of the events held this summer Salt and Tar has been shortlisted as 'Finalist's' for the 'New Tourism Business Award' and 'Entertainment Venue of the Year' at the LCR Tourism Awards along with being shortlisted as the 'Best New Festival' at the UK Festival Awards.
- Announced The K's, the first headline act for the next music festival in 2025 to take place over 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> August 2025 which has already sold over 1,000 tickets in the first day of pre-sale.
- Creating a 2025 Spring/Summer events program scoping, budget forecasting and planning for an Urban Garden Festival, the return of a Comedy Festival 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and a Food and Drink Festival amongst other ideas.

### Sustainability

- The Sefton Visitor Economy Sustainability Task Force held its first meeting on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November. Representatives across accommodation, event venues, and hospitality are attended to form a plan to reduce the carbon footprint of its activities.

## **REGENERATION**

The Regeneration Service continue to lead and support the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme for Sefton Council by helping to deliver a number of key

Council priority projects across Sefton and also assisting where relevant on external partner led projects.

Key Project Updates:

## **SOUTHPORT TOWN CENTRE**

### **Southport Town Deal - Programme Delivery**

A range of projects are being supported through Southport Town Deal and form part of the Southport Town Deal programme for generating economic growth.

### **Marine Lake Events Centre**

- The Marine Lake Events Centre demolition and enabling work progressing with DSM.
- Demolition of Southport Theatre Convention Centre is progressing well and aims to complete in early 2025. The main theatre is demolished and work to salvage historic items such as the projectors, glass dome and other items has been completed.
- The main contractor procurement has been completed and will be announced in due course.

### **Enterprise Arcade**

- Considerable progress on site with contractor Skyline who started in Jan 2024.
- The project will refurbish Crown Buildings for a new business hub and will be the first ever purpose-built workspaces for start-up creative and digital businesses in Southport.
- External works are now complete, and scaffolding has been removed. Works are progressing well internally with the main contract expected to complete early in 2025.
- Operational management options are being explored for the facility, once and discussions are progressing with potential tenants for the facility.

### **Les Transformation de Southport**

- The first phase of transportation improvements, focusing on the area around Southport Market – Kings Street, Market Street, Eastbank Street. Market Street and Eastbank Street is in progress with the main works contract due to be let shortly.
- Stakeholder engagement and liaison is ongoing to ensure disruption is minimised and phasing does not affect business operation.
- Funding for later phases of Les Transformation de Southport is being explored with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority transport funding.

### **Building a Better Customer Experience**

- This key training programme has been operation for a year now and is progressing well.
- 212 Learners have now accessed the programme.
- 22 Business collaborations achieved to date working with Southport College and feedback has been very positive.

- Training for volunteers and workless people through Sefton's Adult & Community Learning service is also proposed Nov/Dec 2024.

### **Southport Cove – The Esplanade**

- Project development work continues following the signing of an exclusivity agreement with GSL the team behind the Cove Resort proposals for the Esplanade.
- GSL are progressing planning discussions and all matters relating to delivery of the project on this site.

## **BOOTLE TOWN CENTRE**

### **Bootle Strand Repurposing**

- Progressing design development and programme for implementation of Phase 1 of Bootle Strand transformation project following approval of £20M by MHCLG.
- The first phase of delivery work, which is building on the Salt and Tar events space will involve selective demolition of part of the centre, provide a new town square and landscaping down to the canal side and involve the repurposing of the former M&S unit for retail, community, health and leisure uses.
- Following appointment of Vinci Build UK as demolition contractor, enabling works and utility diversions are progressing now on site to enable demolition early in 2025.
- The main works planning application for Phase 1 was submitted in October following detailed consultation with over 570 people about the Strand Transformation Project. More details can be found here [Next step for Bootle's transformation unveiled as planning application is submitted](#)

### **Bootle Regeneration**

- Work is ongoing on the Bootle AAP which is expect this to be submitted for examination in 2025. The AAP sets the land-use planning context to inform, direct and permit investment and development the wider Bootle area. People can find out more about the Bootle Strand scheme on the Council's website [Bootle Strand](#) .

## **AINSDALE ON SEA**

### **Ainsdale Coastal Gateway - Ainsdale Beach Improvement Works**

- Following conversations with residents, community groups and previous wider consultation on this area, the Council appointed specialist planning and development consultancy Turley's, to undertake a feasibility study for the coastal gateway. The study looks at all the assets at this site including The Sands, Toad Hall, Council operational bases, and options for their development and delivery. The work is under consideration and development options being considered for this area.
- **Ainsdale Toilet Refurbishment and Changing Places Toilets** completed this year and is now operational.
- **Ainsdale Neighbourhood Centre, Sandbrook Way** – Work continues to buy in the remaining interests in this site following February 2023 Cabinet decision

to bring this centre into full Council ownership. A further three properties have recently been acquired and efforts are ongoing to bring the remaining ownerships into Council control. Parallel to this process, agents have been appointed continue to market the site to support the Council's ambitions for change and redevelopment of this site. Expressions of interest are continuing to come forward and consideration is being undertaken of the enquiries received.

## **MAGHULL**

### **Maghull Health Park**

- MerseyCare are continuing to work with Sefton Council to develop plans for a Mental Health Digital Research and Innovation Centre at Maghull Health Park. Building on the significant investment in the site to date by MerseyCare to this site - Europe's largest concentration of complex secure mental health services and sector leading clinical excellence for serious mental illness. Phase 1 of this health park development will look to bring forward a world class Mental Health Digital Research Centre, a landmark centre of excellence for digital mental health research in Sefton.
- The proposals under development include plans for a business park of 320,000sqft for medical research, technology and data occupier space which will anchor the development of a new regionally significant 10 ha Health Park.
- The site forms part of the successful LCRCA bid for Life Sciences Investment Zone funding approved in March 2024 to develop and life sciences cluster in the region and will safeguard 1800 jobs currently on site and develop 1270 new jobs, training, research and product development opportunities as well as attracting private sector investment.
- The Investment Zone status offers a number of tax reliefs to business looking to locate within the Health Park, making it a more attractive investment location.

## **PROPERTY SERVICES**

The Property Services Department are a multi-Disciplinary team delivering various services, professional advice and initiatives across the Borough of Sefton. Below are some examples of ongoing pieces of work throughout the department.

### **Asset Management**

- Ongoing work to deliver approved Asset Disposals with further phases being developed for approval.
- Developing an overarching disposal proposal.
- Assisting with the SEND programme.
- Ongoing work supporting Growth Board projects.
- Ongoing work in connection to lease agreements.

### **Maintenance Management, Building Services & FM**

- Facilities Management (FM) moved under the management of Maintenance Management and building Services to improve operational working.
- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Corporate Buildings.



- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Education Capital & SEND programme.
- Delivery of reactive maintenance and statutory compliance services to Corporate and Educational buildings.
- Professional advice and support on a broad range of regeneration programmes.
- Phase 1 essential maintenance delivery plan for corporate buildings progressing with works nearing completion.
- Phase 2 essential maintenance – Funding secured with programme being developed.
- Asset survey delivery plan in train alongside the essential maintenance (this is funded under the essential maintenance programme).
- Delivering services in support of major adaptation to vulnerable and disabled residents.
- Looking at accommodation options to include reception function.
- Developing a phase 2 Corporate Landlord proposal.

#### Project Management

- Provide professional support to Growth Board on several projects.
- Project delivery for various Education capital & SEND schemes.
- Provide support to other teams on Asset Disposal, Building Maintenance, Asset Management, Energy and Statutory Compliance colleagues.

#### Energy Management

- Sefton Council Retrofit programme – Providing insulation to privately owned properties.
- A programme of work to support schools (after large energy price rises) is ongoing.
- Sefton have transferred electricity provider. Post 1 April, all Council buildings and streetlights are 100% renewable energy powered – monitoring new contract.
- Energy prices (gas and electricity) continue to be high, due to the government support having been removed. Efficiency savings being considered.
- Work on the next phase of the Climate Emergency programme is progressing.
- Delivering services in support of affordable warmth to residents.