

## COUNCIL – 12 APRIL 2012

### ITEM 6 - QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1) **Question from Councillor Parry to the Leader of the Council  
(Councillor P. Dowd)**

"Will the Leader of the Council be mindful to award our elder councillors, who have served more than 40 years as a councillor, with the title of Honorary Alderman on their retirement from Council service, in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee."

**Response:**

"In principle there are no significant objections to the position of Honorary Alderman for those people who have given long term service on the Council. As you know many authorities have a similar position of one sort or another in place. Given this, I cannot see any substantive reason why the introduction of a Honorary position such as the Alderman would not get the support of the Council. Clearly, there will be a need to tease out the criteria for such a position before such a Honorary conferment and I look forward to establishing when and how we can introduce such a position. I appreciate that nominations from the Parties may come in due course."

2) **Question from Councillor Brennan to the Cabinet Member –  
Children, Schools and Families (Councillor Moncur)**

"Would the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the rise in youth unemployment across Sefton."

**Response:**

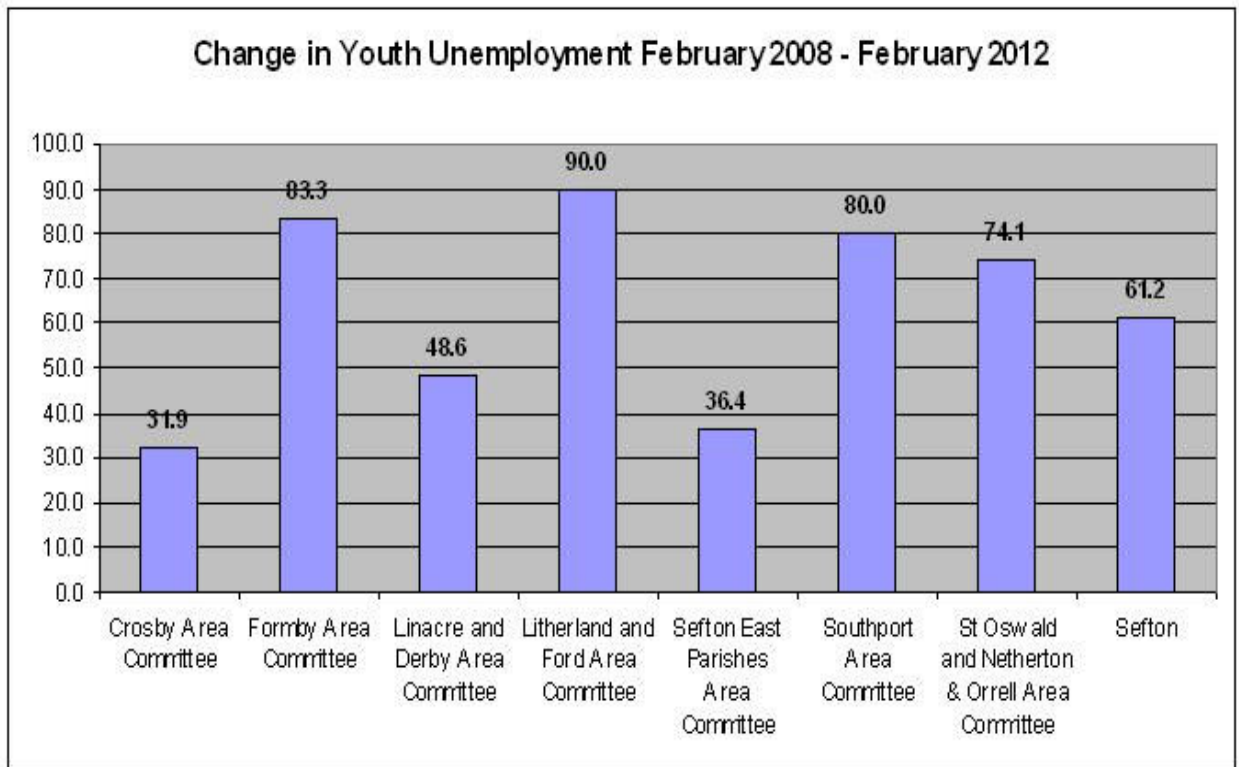
Youth Unemployment 18-24

Based on the figures available in February 2012 the number of young people claiming job seekers allowance (JSA) continues to rise and there are 2,900 young people claiming JAS, which is 12% of all 18-24 year olds in the Borough. **The level of long term unemployment for this group is now 210% higher than it was 12 months ago.**

**The number of Job Centre Plus vacancies in Sefton has fallen in recent months and the ratio of claimants to vacancies is now 12.2; the highest rate on Merseyside.**

Analysis of young people as a proportion of the overall JSA numbers varies from 20% in Dukes Ward to 45% in Harrington Ward and averages at around a third for Sefton as a whole. Youth unemployment has increased significantly since the recession began in

2008 and the following table shows the % change in youth unemployment for each Area Committee area from February 2008 to February 2012:



### Youth Unemployment 16-18

Although the vast majority of young people in Sefton (more than 90%) progress from school at aged 16 into Education, Training or Employment with Training. A small proportion (relative to the cohort numbers) do not progress at this stage and become what is known as NEET (not in education, employment or training). This group are often over represented by special needs, looked after children, young offenders and others from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. The numbers of NEET then normally grow over the year, as “drop out” increases by the age of 17 and long term NEET (over six months) increases for 17 to 18 year olds in this group. The current annual NEET figure for 16-18 year olds in Sefton is 7.89%, which is a rise of over 1% since this time last year.

**3) Question from Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)**

Does the Leader of the Council agree with me that the decision by the Coalition Government to make available a £100,000 to Sefton to help support retail activity following on from the Portas Report is to be warmly welcomed and would the Leader of the Council outline the procedure, timeframe and criteria to be adopted to determine the distribution of these funds

**Response:**

“Given that the Coalition Government have unfairly taken £75.5m pounds from the people of Sefton in less than 2 years, Councillor Watson will forgive me if I don’t join him in the supine backslapping of the Tory/Liberal Democrat coalition government which he wishes me to engage in.”

**4) Question from Councillor McKinley to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)**

“Has the Leader of the Council been assured with the release of the new Planning guidelines that there will not be inappropriate or disproportionate development on green space/green belt?”

**Response:**

“Regrettably, the Government planning framework has created more confusion than clarity. It is impossible to say with any certainty at all how the National Planning Framework will impact upon the green spaces and green belt across the borough. Unfortunately, I suspect that planning decisions rather than being made at a local level will either be made by the Planning Inspector or even in the courts.”

**5) Question from Councillor McGinnity to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)**

“At a recent Select Committee hearing, John Mann MP asked George Osborne if it was true that he had instructed Treasury officials to look for further cuts to the Social Welfare budget.

The Chancellor replied that he had given instructions for officials to find £10 billion pounds of further "savings" for 2016-2017.

Does this not show the ideologically driven policy of this coalition government and gives further credence to the idea that they are hell bound on the complete destruction of the welfare state which has been a bulwark of many British people against poverty and neglect.”

**Response:**

“Sefton has one of the highest elderly populations per capita in the Country. Sefton’s budget decisions for this financial year put into stark relief the stresses and strains that local authorities are under. The Government’s continued attempts to cut back even further from the most vulnerable are in stark contrast to the Chancellor’s millionaire give away budget.”

**6) Question from Councillor Veidman to the Council’s Representative on the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority (M.I.T.A.) (Councillor M. Dowd – Chair of M.I.T.A)**

“Would the Chair of the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority comment upon the Deputy Prime Minister’s views, namely that free bus passes for our elderly persons should be means tested.”

**Response:**

“I was shocked when I heard this and I think it is outrageous and quite frankly a disgrace that older people seem to be the latest victims of the Government’s far too fast cuts policy.”