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**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 13 November 2012

**Subject:** Draft Sefton Economic Strategy - Consultation Response

**Report of:** Director of Built Environment

**Wards Affected:** All

**Is this a Key Decision?** Yes **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes

**Exempt/Confidential:** No

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**Purpose/Summary**

To update Cabinet on the Consultation Response to the Draft Sefton Economic Strategy, and to agree the way forward.

To recommend approval of the Sefton Economic Strategy as Council Policy.

**Recommendations**

- (i) the contents of the report and the consultation response be noted;
- (ii) the final version of the Strategy which includes a completed Equalities Impact Analysis (EIA) be approved; and
- (iii) the Director of Built Environment be granted delegated authority to produce and publish a summary version of the Strategy.

**How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?**

	<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community	/		
2	Jobs and Prosperity	/		
3	Environmental Sustainability		/	
4	Health and Well-Being	/		
5	Children and Young People	/		
6	Creating Safe Communities		/	
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	/		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy	/		

**Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

To adopt the Sefton Economic Strategy as Council policy.

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

**Implications:**

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<b>Legal</b> None	
<b>Human Resources</b> None	
<b>Equality</b>	
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Impact on Service Delivery:**

The Strategy will help provide an organisational focus for delivering employment and business growth in the Borough

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

The Head of Corporate Finance and ICT Strategy (FD 1835/12) has been consulted and has no comments to make on this report as there are no direct financial consequences as a result of it. The Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD 1153) has also been consulted and any comments on this report have been incorporated into it.

**Are there any other options available for consideration?**

No.

**Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet/Cabinet Member Meeting

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**Background Papers:**

The following background papers are available through the Council's website

[www.sefton.gov.uk/economicstrategy](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/economicstrategy)

Sefton Economic Strategy (October Final Version)

Sefton Economic Strategy (Responses Report)

Sefton Economic Strategy (Environmental Impact Analysis)

## **Background:**

1. Cabinet received a report on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012 inviting members to accept a draft Economic Strategy for Sefton and to consult widely on its three main aims:
  - To mitigate the local impact of the recession
  - To reduce the underlying performance gap with the rest of the country
  - To achieve social inclusion through work
2. The report noted the extensive consultation with members, agencies, private sector and neighbouring local authorities that had taken place to produce the draft Strategy, and approved a consultation plan:
  - Document available from Council website on-demand
  - E-mail distribution of Strategy web link to list to 1,000 local businesses
  - E-mail distribution of Strategy web link to list of SCVS members
  - E-mail distribution of Strategy web link to list of Sefton Chamber of Commerce & Federation of Small Business members
  - Set of presentation slides, available for download from Council website
  - Presentation roadshow with lead officer available for events
  - Deposit copies in Sefton libraries

## **Consultation process**

5. The Strategy's Communication and Consultation Plan was approved by the Public Engagement and Consultation Standards Panel. A 12 week consultation period opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.
6. A survey form was sent out to 1,613 individuals and to 80+ organisations who had participated in the Sefton Economic Strategy Stakeholder Workshops.
7. The consultation period closed on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2012. A total of 49 written responses were received.
8. The responses have been compiled in a Consultation Response report which is available through [www.sefton.gov.uk/economicstrategy](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/economicstrategy)
9. A full debrief on methods and outcomes of consultation was presented to the Standards Panel on 21st September. In addition an Equalities Impact Analysis has been produced and approved with the support of Sefton CVS, the Equalities Standing Panel also expertise made available through the Business Intelligence and Performance Division.

## Summary of consultation findings

10. It is important to start off by saying that the overwhelming majority of respondents accepted and supported the main thrust of the Economic Strategy.
11. They wanted to see an active and purposeful local authority working in partnership with businesses, trainers and colleges, VCF organisations and with the support of the Local Enterprise Partnership and central government to inspire and facilitate growth.
12. While recognising the difficulties and obstacles presented by the liquidity crisis, depressed demand and the need for public deficit reduction and expenditure cuts, the respondents were insistent on the need for a realistic local growth agenda.
13. A number of respondents asked how the higher-level objectives could be translated into realistic growth projects that they could engage with. The Strategy supplied some evidence of where this was happening but did not go far enough.
14. The main focus for respondents was the balance between fostering growth and **developing skills and employability**. Respondents called for a clearer partnership involving the Council, trainers, colleges and growing businesses and sector development bodies. They wanted to see more explicit recognition of the role of FE and HE Colleges and other training providers in equipping working age adults (especially 16-24) with the skills and experience that employers require. This needed to be employer-led, and with explicit mechanisms for harnessing employer demand for skills replacement and recruitment to the supply of those skills.
15. This relationship should start early – respondents wanted to know how the Strategy would support **enterprise and entrepreneurship in schools**, and what Sefton’s strategy was for **Apprenticeships** and the transition of young people into the labour market.
16. There was recognition that the wider effects of **public expenditure reduction** have yet to be felt by the general public, and that not all the implications of policy change are yet understood. However, the cumulative and growing impact of **welfare reform** on the working age population was considered to be a significant challenge for both neighbourhoods, the business community and central government.
17. There were concerns about being able to maintain **Southport’s** visitor destination offer, and that the Strategy should emphasise the wider **Sefton Coast** offer.
18. Respondents noted the importance of **town centres** to the overall vitality of Sefton, and asked that town centre management and

renewal, and the need to protect town centre jobs, could be given greater weight.

19. It was requested that more reference is given to the role of **sustainable transport** and to the importance of **transport infrastructure** in supporting the economy. This included Mersey Travel as a stakeholder and the Local Transport Plan.
20. Finally, the close relationship between **housing**, economic activity and prosperity was noted, referring to the role of **Registered Social Landlords** as investors, providing housing choice, local job creation and their work with communities.
21. A fuller account of all the consultation responses and officer comments upon them can be found in the Report of Consultation.

### **Revising the Economic Strategy**

22. About a year has elapsed since the draft Strategy was prepared, and much has changed since then.
23. At some point the document will have to be “frozen” as we move onto the next stage of implementing it. Therefore it is not proposed to maintain the Strategy as a “living document” and to constantly update it with new information.
24. The comments received above have been edited into the final text, and where further work is required that has been noted. But adopting the Strategy should not be delayed until this further work is completed.
25. Cabinet are asked to approve the full Strategy statement which includes the Equalities Impact Analysis as Council policy [www.sefton.gov.uk/economicstrategy](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/economicstrategy)

### **Dissemination**

26. The full 120 page version of the Strategy remains a valid statement of our perspective and all the reasons for choosing it. However, it is a technical document of limited wider appeal.
27. The main tool for popularising it and communicating the Council’s approach to a wider audience will be a shorter summary with high production values and an emphasis on readability and accessible to a wide variety of audiences.
28. Economy & Tourism will, in conjunction with Corporate Communications, arrange for the publication and dissemination of the summary, using website, mailout and face-to-face events and networks to raise its profile.

## Next Steps

29. Taking into account the revisions described above, we can be confident that the broad thrust of the Strategy is soundly based in evidence, and corresponds to stakeholders' considered views on feasible levels of jobs and prosperity given current conditions.
30. The next step is to focus down on the smaller number of key initiatives that translate the Strategy into action. Further reports will be brought to members on the headline opportunities facing Sefton, but they can be briefly summarised as follows:
  - Launch of the new **InvestSefton Business Support** programme and **Stepclever Legacy Fund** this autumn
  - Commencement of the £35m **Mersey Channel Dredge Project**, and the job & supply opportunities associated with the parallel construction of **Liverpool 2 river berth** at Seaforth
  - Studies and plans for receiving port-centric logistic and port-related investment in the "**L5**" zone
  - Advanced planning and procurement of up to £40m of superfast **broadband provision** for "white areas" without internet access in Sefton and across Merseyside
  - Completion/extension of **REECH**, investment in decentralised **energy generation** in the Port estate, and the development of plans for the **Green Deal**, a major national programme of investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy
  - Exploring the potential of a **Business Improvement District** for Southport town centre and seafront, and developing a **Destination Management Organisation** dedicated to the town
  - A regeneration prospectus for **south Sefton**, connecting port, energy and digital investment in Bootle, Seaforth and Netherton in an exciting and dynamic economic cluster for the future
  - A regeneration prospectus for **Southport**, connecting seafront assets, new cultural attractions in the town centre, and edge-of-town development at Kew and the Commerce Park, refreshing and stimulating a diverse and resilient economic base
  - Job and training opportunities created by all of the above will be identified, captured and concentrated by a renewed **employment and skills partnership for Sefton**, that offers entry to employment for the working-age population, pathways to employability for those with multiple disadvantages, and a substantial engagement with the learning and development needs of Sefton's 7,500 businesses.