

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Ian Maher	Overview & Scrutiny Cabinet Member Regeneration & Tourism	January 2015

Invest Sefton

Business Start ups

InvestSefton works closely with Merseyside Special Investment Fund in referring new businesses to its Start up Loans fund programme. **To date 31 start-ups have been supported with £213,800 of loan finance.** The fund is delivered as part of the Government's Start up Loans company initiative and is split into two demographics- Under 30's and over 30'. **To date 12 Sefton applicants (under 30) and 19 (30+) have been supported.**

Invest Sefton has continued to support start-ups through financial incentives, most notably the Stepclever Legacy fund which ended in June 2014 having supported 97 new business start ups

Business Growth Grants

InvestSefton continues to work closely in partnership with the LEP and other LA's in delivering the RGF Business Growth Grants programme. The Business Growth Grant is a £15 million investment programme secured by Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and administered in conjunction with the City Region's Local Authorities. InvestSefton delivers the scheme in Sefton.

The programme is starting to gain momentum and InvestSefton has received over 35 expressions of interest from Sefton businesses. Progress to date includes:

- 18 projects at full application and/or appraisal stage
- Total project pipeline of £1.2m of potential investment generating £6.6m of private sector leverage
- Project could lead to the creation of over some 215 new jobs with local employment opportunities being maximised by Sefton@work
- A further 327 jobs will be safeguarded

Case study

Hi-tech robotics company, Aintree. The company develops and integrates machining solutions using industrial robots. The business was originally located in a warehouse in Baltic Road, Bootle and was born out of a scenery and set building business that used robots to produce some of its products. In October 2012 the business moved to new premises at Sefton Business Park in Aintree. This move gave the business the right image to operate effectively in the advanced manufacturing sector. In 2013, the business was identified as one of 250 fastest growing companies in the manufacturing sector by Lord Young and the Business Secretary, Vince Cable. Invest Sefton assisted the business in its £600k capital investment through detailed diagnostics and 1:1 business support. This resulted in

the award of a £10,000 Business Growth Grant to develop and integrate five CNC robotics applications solutions namely: stone machining, plasma cutting, quick tool change systems, laser profiling and water jet cutting. The project will create six new jobs over the next 15 months

Inward Investment

Invest Sefton continues to work directly with potential inward investors and collaboratively with Liverpool City Region LEP and UKTI on maximising investment opportunities for Sefton.

Demand for industrial space, in particular from port related businesses has increased with a significant investment by an occupier leasing over 200,000 sq ft at 'Big Ft 2, Atlantic Park'. Other projects include:

- Turtle Wax have taken just under 5,000 at Alaska House, Atlantic Park for their European HQ
- 500,000 sq ft requirement for Distribution Centre is still live, however there is no longer adequate space on Atlantic Park to accommodate this. Alternative options being investigated.
- Office user negotiating to take 5-10,000 at Alaska House
- Enquiry for large new build office on Atlantic Park
- Enquiry for contact centre to take Caspian House (35,000 sq ft), creating 300-500 jobs.
- Working with manufacturing business to relocate to larger 200,000 sq ft new build premises on Atlantic Park.

Linacre Bridge business grants

InvestSefton delivers the **Linacre Bridge Business Grant** fund which to date has supported 10 businesses with the potential of creating 16 jobs. 7 of the businesses which have been funded are business start-ups. The types of business range from Sandwich Bars & Cafes to Printers and Florists, with the funding being used for a range of activities from supporting the purchase of equipment to helping the business to advertise their services. The total grant fund available is £25,000 over £22,000 has been allocated to date. There is a further application in the pipeline which if approved will utilise the balance of the funding

Partnership working

A **Memorandum of Understanding** has been agreed with Liverpool & Sefton Chamber of Commerce to develop closer working arrangements in the coming year including business growth hub activities. E&T 's Head of Service has been appointed to the Chamber board.

Invest Sefton is leading on the Merseyside Business Support Programme for the LCR and recently completed a midterm review to help inform future business support strategy under the new European Programme

Business Events

- **10 workshops/forums took place between April-September 2014 attracting 255 business owner/managers.** The majority of workshops have had a maximum number of 15 places available for companies and in some cases the team has had to re- run workshops to satisfy demand. Event topics such as, 'Growing your business' 'Presentation skills' and 'Data Protection' have been covered.
- **Procurement support** – In September InvestSefton hosted five events to support the Council's new procurement policy. The events-, **New Ways of Doing Business with Sefton Council** were attended by **145 business owner/managers** who learned about a new system of Risk-Based Sourcing for Requests for Quotes (RFQ), relating to goods and services from £1,001-£172,514, and works up to £4,332,012. The new system has been designed to make it easier to do business with the Council. Following the events there were workshops for experienced bidders and businesses new to public sector supply on a range of topics.
- **Sefton Economic Forum took place on 25th November 2014** at Aintree Racecourse and was attended by over 176 business delegates. This was a joint event with Liverpool & Sefton Chambers of Commerce and was chaired by Jenny Stewart (CEO). Presentations were received from Margaret Carney (economic update) David Brown (Merseytravel transport update) and case studies from businesses supported by Invest Sefton and Sefton@Work. The event then extended into a series of small workshops on how to do business with Sefton Council, marketing, social media and intellectual property rights.

Tourism

Conferences

- Discussions are ongoing with a number of hotels and the operators of the Southport Theatre and Conference Centre to look at establishing a conference bureau
- The first and second quarter of the 2014/15 financial year saw a total of 38 enquiries generated with a potential economic impact of approximately £16.5m. Eight events confirmed which would see a spend IRO £2.7m.
- There has been a slight upturn in the number of enquiries for large destination conferences with a number of high level events seeking proposals. Likewise, the number of organisers attending site visits seems to have improved over the past few months.

Events

- The events programme for 14/15 has now come to an end, and planning has now already started for the 15/16 season

- The British Musical Fireworks was the most successful to date with over 16,000 people attending over the three day event
- The Southport Air show continues to be the most popular event in our programme and also one of the biggest events in the North West. This year over 58,000 people attended the two day event. Due to the popularity a number of issues arose of traffic access. We will be looking if any new measures can be implemented for the 15/16 event.
- The Tourism Events team have also been working in Partnership with the Southport BID to help formulate and plan new events while also implementing the Southport Christmas switch on event.

Southport Market

- From the 1st of January 2015 Sefton MBC took over complete control of Southport Market due to the withdrawal of Quarterbridge.
- The current occupancy rate stands at 72%, a new marketing approach is being looked at in order to maximise the benefits of the Market

Southport Business Improvement District

- After achieving a Yes vote in March 2014 the Southport BID became fully operational on the 1st of November 2014. A full time manager has been appointed and a private sector board established that also includes Sefton MBC representation
- To date 63% of the levy has been collected, this by far exceeds the collection estimates in the BIDs operational plan

Housing Market Renewal – General

Klondyke

- Bellways Phase 1 site construction to deliver 86 new housing units began last year and is progressing well.
- Bellways planning application for construction of 142 new houses and a new layout proposal including demolition of the existing Phase 2/3 area, was considered by Planning Committee on 18th June 2014, and approval notice issued on 14th July. There has been no legal challenge to this decision.
- The process to procure demolition contractors for the Phase 2/3 area has been completed and demolition works should commence by the end of January.
- Former owners of the Tannery site are pursuing settlement of their compensation claim against the Council via the Lands Tribunal.

Bedford/Queens

- Construction of the Phase 2 site is almost complete. The use of Regional Growth Funding to help fund the development of Bedford Queens Phase 3, and St Winifred's sites was secured and claimed, and progress on site is good.

Housing Options Service

- The Local Authority partners have completed a Review of the common Property Pool Plus Allocations Policy. A revised policy has been the subject of consultation with stakeholders and public, which ended in April. The responses have been considered and an amended Policy agreed by the 5 local authority partners. This Policy was approved by Sefton's Cabinet on 11th September, and also by the Cabinets of the other Local Authorities. Following staff training on the operation of the new policy, it will begin to be implemented in January 2015.
- The number of homeless clients approaching the service for help, especially vulnerable single people, has increased over the last year, and there is little likelihood of this increase slowing over the coming months and years.
- We have also seen a year-on-year increase in the number of people Rough Sleeping in the Borough despite the introduction of the No Second Night Out project. However, numbers are relatively small, increasing from 4 cases in 2010, to 9 in 2013 and 11 in 2014.
- The Council have been working with Emmaus and Riverside Housing, to develop proposals for a new combined homeless accommodation and training facility in Seaforth. The scheme obtained Planning approval in February, and began on site in April 2014. Emmaus hope their scheme will be opened by April 2015.
- Proposals to introduce a 'Gateway scheme' are being taken forward with homelessness agencies. This is an action contained in the Council's Homelessness Strategy, and would see all agencies who provide temporary accommodation adopt a common assessment process, and prioritisation of homeless applicants in need of their accommodation. This should result in those in most need securing any available temporary accommodation and support service. The new arrangement began to be implemented in December.

Private Sector Housing Standards Service

- The Housing Standards Team have both an enforcement and advisory role dealing with Private Sector Landlords, tenants and owner occupiers. The Council has a legal duty to take action where a Category 1 Hazard (most serious hazard) exists. The vast majority of cases involve privately rented premises. We dealt with 1048 reports of hazardous housing

conditions in 2012-13, and 1039 in 2013-14. There has been a significant increase in the demand for the service over the last 4 years. This level of increase in demand has surpassed the national increase in demand, which was reported by the charity Shelter.

- A Landlord Accreditation scheme was launched in July 2013. We have accredited 268 properties in the first year of operation. We continue to promote the scheme and encourage more applications.
- There is continued focus on dealing with empty homes, with staff taking enforcement actions on long term empty homes. This has resulted in 3 enforced sales of long term empty homes being completed in June. As well as improving the prospects of these houses being returned to occupation, approximately £90,000 of debt was repaid to the Council. Action is ongoing in another 3 cases, which should also result in a further £10,000 of debts recovered. Further cases will be recommended to Cabinet Member to approve action.
- Riverside Housing have received funding under an empty homes initiative; 'Clusters of Empty Homes'. They are seeking to purchase, repair and then sell properties under their Own-Place scheme, mainly in the Knowsley Rd & Peel Rd area of Bootle. Officers are helping to identify suitable properties. Two properties on Dryden St are the first to have been completed, and work has commenced on site with a further 4 houses at Hermitage Grove and Cinder Lane (Klondyke).

Home Improvements Team and DFGs

- The Team and DFG Budget delivered home adaptations for 257 disabled households in 2012-13, and a further 314 have been completed in 2013-14.
- 2415 clients have received minor adaptations works in 2013-14

Housing Strategy

- The Council was successful in it's application for circa £300,000 of funding from the HCA, to improve the Council's Gypsy & Traveller site at Formby. Work involved upgrading the utility blocks [for bathing and laundry] and the addition of 4 new family pitches within the site, to meet growing demand. Works has recently been completed and the new are now occupied.
- The Homes and Communities Agency launched their Affordable Homes Programme for 2015-18. This is the opportunity for housing associations to bid for grant funding to help build new affordable homes over the next 3 years. The Council provided a Strategic Needs framework to help inform housing associations of it's priorities. Four schemes bids on named sites were submitted by housing associations, all of which have been approved for funding. There will be opportunity for HAs to submit further bids up until May 2016, under the HCAs 'Continuous Market Engagement' arrangements. A small number of further scheme bids have recently been submitted by OVH.

- The Council commissioned a piece of research, looking at meeting the housing needs of its older citizens. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment research suggests that 14% of all future new-build homes should be 'specialist properties' for older people. The research will help inform the Council as to how these needs might be met. The final report was provided at the end of November. A launch event will be organised for all stakeholders who participated in the work, to share the results.

Kew Housing Site Southport

- David Wilson Homes have now tendering their civil engineering and remediation works for the site. They have needed to negotiate with the contractors to bring the submitted tender to an acceptable figure for inclusion into the project cost appraisal. The Full cost appraisal is now in the hands of the Council's appointed consultants Keppie Massie to review the specific elements outstanding. It is expected that disposal of the site will complete during January 2015.

5. Home Improvements Team and DFGs

- The Home Improvements Service are responsible for delivering both Major and Minor adaptations to the residents of Sefton. The aim of these services is to ensure that people are able to live safely and independently in their own homes for as long as reasonably possible.
- The Service delivered 230 Major home adaptations to disabled households in the current financial year (April – December 2014).
- The Service also delivered 2042 Minor home adaptations to disabled households over the same period.

Land Disposal for Housing

- **Kew Housing Site Southport**

The appraisal of the remediation and other costs associated with the development of the Kew site were submitted by David Wilson Homes to the Council in October. Because of the nature of the review it was only possible to agree the detail of the scheme just prior to Christmas. A registration of the site by Hesketh Estates for Manorial Rights (the right to extract minerals) has added an additional complication to the disposal. Consequently it has been necessary to seek insurance cover to address this matter. Completion of the land transfer should take place when the appropriate cover is available. The remediation contractor for David Wilson Homes is in a position to commence activity once the transfer is complete.

Commercial Development and Economic Investment Strategies

- **Dunnings Bridge Road Economic Investment Strategy**

A more detailed analysis, an outline assessment of the potential development capacity and outline development costs of the sites along Dunnings Bridge Road has been carried out by consultants BE Group. A briefing paper summarising the details will now be prepared for CM to be shared at the earliest opportunity.

Land Disposal for Commercial Development

- **Senate Business Park, Bridle Road**

Advertisements to secure a developer partner for the Senate Business Park site were posted in the appropriate trade magazines in November 2014 and returned submissions are expected by the 20th February 2015. Further detail for CM will follow receipt of submissions.

- **Southport Business Park**

Some land related matters need to be addressed before it will be possible to prepare a more detailed briefing note for SCIG and CM Regen and Corporate Services. This note will detail a procurement/land disposal route for the site. With the appropriate CM agreement it will then be possible to place advertisements for a developer partner for the Southport Business Park.