

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Ian Maher	Cabinet Member O&S Report Regeneration & Tourism	March 2015

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.
- Demolition contractors for the Phase 2/3 area have commenced on site on the 2nd of February, including demolition of the properties owned by Adactus HA.
- The Council are in negotiation to acquire the ownership interests of Adactus Housing Association, to enable ownership of the Phase 2/3 site to be assembled, in turn that it may be sold to Bellway for development

Former owners of the Tannery site and Wirral Tool Hire store 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. The St Winifred's site is completed and Bedford Queens site is expected to be finished by the end of July.

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 has begun to be implemented from 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 May 2015.
- Proposals to introduce a 'Gateway scheme' have been introduced with homelessness agencies from December 2014. This is an action contained in the Council's Homelessness Strategy, and sees 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.

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. By the end of December 2014 a further 739 service requests had been received for 2014-15. 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. We are

consulting with property agents with a view to extending the scheme to accredited agents who manage properties on behalf of landlords.

- 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 have been recommended to Cabinet Member to approve action. This includes some long term empty leasehold properties where the Council owns the freehold, and we are seeking forfeiture of the leases on the basis they have not been adequately maintained
- 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 Service, Major & Minor Adaptations (incorporating DFGs)

- The Service manages delivery of the councils DFG programme & Budget and provide for major adaptation in peoples in order for them to maintain the independence and to remain at home for as long as is reasonably possible. In the previous financial year 314 residents were assisted. In the current year (2014 / 2015) 301 residents will be assisted through this programme with a total expenditure of approximately £2 million.
- Along with major adaptations the service also provides services to install minor adaptations in people's homes to ensure they can move about safely and in support of the prevention of accidents and to also ensure where applicable, that people can be discharged home from hospital. In the previous financial year, 2,415 minor adaptations were delivered. In the current financial year (2014 / 2015) 2,708 people received minor adaptations showing an increase in demand for these services

Housing Strategy

- 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 its priorities. Four schemes bids on named sites were submitted by housing associations, all of which have been approved for funding. From October 2014 there is 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, which are likely to be approved for funding.
- 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 successful launch event was organised early in February for all stakeholders who participated in the work, to share the results.
- Cabinet Member Regeneration has been consulted about the process to deliver a new Housing Strategy for Sefton. Work to begin to develop this Strategy has begun. A Steering group of internal and external partners will be formed to oversee this work. We hope a new Strategy may be in place by the end of the year.

Land Disposal for Housing

- **Kew Housing Site Southport**

The disposal of land at Town Lane has now been completed following some insurance matters being resolved. David Wilson Homes (DWH) have now appointed their contractor Hydrock to carry out the site remediation and stabilisation works and are now on site with this work. The detailed programme and timetable of works has yet to be received from

DWH and this will be distributed in due course. The most current expectation of development for the first new housing being available for sale is March 2016.

Commercial Development and Economic Investment Strategies

- **Dunnings Bridge Road Economic Investment Strategy**

The consultants BE Group are working towards their final draft report which has provided high level estimates of the potential development capacities, job expectations and the financial requirement of the business sites on Dunnings Bridge Road. There are proposals to report the details contained within this report and the other Investment Strategies collectively which will clarify the Councils ask for resources from the LEP

Land Disposal for Commercial Development

- **Senate Business Park, Bridle Road**

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Tenders have recently been received from potential developers of the Senate Site. The matter has now been included on the Forward Plan and further details of the respective offers will be reported in due course.

- **Southport Business Park**

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The land disposal matters still remain unresolved and this is delaying the process of advertising of this site for a developer partner.

Invest Sefton

ERDF Merseyside Business Support Programme (MBSP)

InvestSefton and Sefton@Work have delivered the MBSP programme to Sefton businesses. The programme is awaiting confirmation of an extension until October 2015. To date some 223 Sefton businesses have received a minimum of 12 hour intensive assists. The work involves business diagnostic support to SMEs including sales/marketing, access to finance and HR/Recruitment. A city region MBSP roundtable event with businesses is to be held on 11 March.

MBSP Case study

A Bootle manufacturer and exporter of quality marine survival equipment is expanding its operation by taking on additional premises to cater for the growing demand for their products from the marine, aviation and military sectors. A training school will also be built within the new premises to train apprentice sewing machinists using experienced in house staff trainers and a specialist accredited college for City and Guilds qualifications for the apprentices throughout their apprenticeship. The increased space will allow for the acceptance of additional contracts and volume orders which they were previously unable to fulfil due to capacity constraints.

ERDF New Markets programme

InvestSefton is working closely with the LEP to deliver the ERDF New Markets programme in Sefton. New Markets is a new way for local businesses to access high value, commercial business advice, tailored to the specific needs of SMEs. Eligible businesses can receive a 35% financial contribution to services procured including financial planning, corporate finance, legal advice and product development and diversification. To date 31 Sefton businesses have registered for support.

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.

InvestSefton has received over 70 expressions of interest from Sefton businesses. Progress to date includes:

- 22 projects at full application and/or appraisal stage
- Total project pipeline of £1.49m of potential investment generating £7.46m of private sector leverage
- Project could lead to the creation of over some 175 new jobs with local employment opportunities being maximised by Sefton@work
- A further 270 jobs will be safeguarded

Government recently announced a further £15.6m has been announced for a Business Growth Grant programme in 2016. This is in addition to smaller RGF programmes to be delivered by Chambers of Commerce (£7m) and MSIF (£6M).

Business Events

- Professional Sefton was launched on 23 February in Southport and attracted over 30 businesses including accountants, Solicitors and other professional services. The event was delivered in partnership with Bibby Financial Services and Merseyside Special Investment Fund. This new initiative sits alongside Export Sefton and Build Sefton to help develop a family of sector led business networks for business engagement, support, networking and consultation. The official launch of Sefton Exporters Network is scheduled for 4 March.