

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration & Skills) - 28 July 2015

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Marion Atkinson	Overview & Scrutiny Cabinet Member Regeneration & Skills	July 2015

Invest Sefton

Business Start ups

- Invest Sefton works closely with Merseyside Special Investment Fund in referring new businesses to its Start-up Loans fund programme. **To date 48 start-ups have been supported with £361,800 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 18 Sefton applicants (under 30) and 31 (30+) have been supported.**
- Invest Sefton works closely with St Helen's Chamber who is one of two organisations who deliver the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) programme in Sefton. A business advisor from St Helen's Chamber spends a proportion of their time at Sefton@Work's Bootle office meeting potential NEA clients. Between October 2014 and March 2015 St Helen's Chamber has supported the start-up of 19 new businesses in Sefton, having met with 37 clients of which 34 were accepted onto the NEA programme

Business Growth

Invest Sefton remains at the heart of business growth support and together with Sefton@Work has delivered (up to March 2015) over **284 intensive assists** (12 hour minimum) to Sefton businesses as part of the ERDF Merseyside Business Support Programme. Up to the same period **125 new jobs have also been created.** The programme has been extended until October 2015 to allow some business support continuity moving towards the start of the new European Structural Investment Fund programme which recently launched its first calls.

Business Growth Grants

Invest Sefton works closely with the LCR Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver the RGF Business Growth Grants programme in Sefton. The programme is starting to gain momentum and Invest Sefton has received 75 expressions of interest from Sefton businesses. Progress to date includes:

- 29 projects at full application and/or appraisal stage
- Total project pipeline of **£1.69m** of potential investment generating **£8.82m** of private sector leverage
- Project could lead to the creation of over some 201 new jobs with local employment opportunities being maximised by Sefton@Work
- A further **275 jobs** will be safeguarded

Partnership working

A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed with Liverpool & Sefton Chambers 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.

Events & networks

- **10 workshops/forums took place between April and June 2015 attracting 280 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. Events have included Export; cashflow/business plans Digital marketing and sales
- Two network groups have also been established by InvestSefton-**Export Sefton** is being run in conjunction with 10 leading Sefton exporters who are looking to support businesses seeking both UK and overseas markets. A new website www.exportsefton.com was recently launched. A professional and financial services network-**Professional Sefton** has also been established and a March event in Southport attracted 23 businesses

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 and office uses has improved with several enquiries live. Projects include:

- Balfour Beatty Rail has agreed to lease 15,000 sq ft in Alaska House, relocating their facility from Knowsley.
- Local Office user negotiating to take 5,000 at Alaska House
- Ongoing negotiations for large new build office on Atlantic Park
- Enquiry for contact centre to take Caspian House (35,000 sq ft), creating 300-500 jobs.
- Additional enquiry for Caspian House and extension to 50,000 sq ft being handled.
- Ongoing negotiations and project development with manufacturing business to relocate to larger 200,000 sq ft new build premises on Atlantic Park.
- Several LCR generated enquiries for c. 50,000 sq ft of industrial space remain live, with little or no capacity to accommodate them in existing stock.

Funding Circle

Invest Sefton in conjunction with the Council's Treasury team have allocated resources to allow the council to invest in Sefton businesses via Funding Circle crowd lending platform. This is the first of its type in the Liverpool City Region. Cabinet has approved the use of £100,000 from council reserves to support applications for loans from Sefton businesses.

There have been about 9 Sefton applicants who all received funding from the platform without any requirement from the council's fund. The Council has now successfully placed funds with three businesses. These include a printing business, a building firm which is building 12 new homes in Melling, and a manufacturer of robots for use in industrial production. The loans vary from £1,000 to £1,500 per loan, with a maximum of £2,000 being recommended by Funding Circle to ensure that risk is spread.

Linacre Bridge Business Fund

Invest Sefton delivers the Linacre Bridge Business Grant fund which to date has supported 11 businesses with the potential of creating 16 jobs. 8 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.

Employment and Skills

European Social Fund

An ongoing key objective is to identify sources of funding to ensure continuity of services to our clients and businesses, and to secure future resources to support those furthest away from the labour market. Sefton has been a key player in the development of a submission for ESF support in response to the DWP published tender for the Liverpool City Region ESIF. This first stage application has been compiled in partnership with all the Merseyside Local Authorities and the application for funding will be a Combined authority project to provide resource for employment support for young people eligible for the expanded youth employment initiative, a limited resource for younger people at risk of becoming NEET and for unemployed adults with a range of social and economic barriers affecting their employment. Sefton's particular plan for ESF in our area will see the maximisation of the Council's planned public health resource to deliver additional services to support unemployed people with health conditions re-engage with the world of work. This is a two stage application process and over the summer period, DWP will be consulting with local stakeholders to assess the strategic fit of the bids received and if endorsed, the LCR Combined Authority bid will progress to the full application stage expected in September 2015.

Youth Employment Gateway

Youth Employment Gateway has now been fully implemented in Sefton and referrals are flowing from local Job centre plus offices. The Gateway at this stage is funded directly by the Cabinet Office and is a city region programme co-ordinated through Knowsley MBC as the managing agent. We have to date started more than 150 young people aged between 18 and 24 who are looking for work and claiming out of work benefits.

A key feature of the pilot is the Personalised Budget, where each young person is able to draw down financial support from Sefton@Work to help them improve their employability through the provision of goods and services that meet their individual needs.

To-date, the personalised budget offer has indicated that there is a strong demand among Sefton young people for financial support with travel costs, vocational training/ accreditation not supported elsewhere by the Skills Funding Agency, driving lessons, official documents for identification purposes required by employers (such as birth certificates/ passports etc.) and Disclosure and Barring Service clearances. There is a continuous demand for assistance with Personal Protective Equipment and other suitable work attire. It is likely that requests for assistance with housing bonds from young people currently homeless or in difficult housing situations will arise.

The current Youth Employment Gateway will form a part of the wider combined authority ESF programme if our application is successful. This will see the expansion of the current eligibility constraints to allow the Gateway to include young people in a broader range of financial circumstances, including those who are workless but not claiming benefit and those who are working restricted hours or unstable working patterns. These groups are a critical concern for Sefton as we have a range of challenges related to shifting employment trends in our labour market that current DWP and other government data releases cannot readily shed light upon. The further rollout of Universal Credit complicates our vision of our labour market at LA level further so the inclusion of young people in marginal employment into our support programmes is seen as a very positive development.

The Youth Employment Gateway, as a pilot programme will be externally evaluated and a specification is currently being devised in order to procure a suitably qualified Evaluation partner.

Supporting Carers in Employment Project

Funded by the Department of Health, Government Equalities Office and the DWP, this project is being delivered on behalf of the Council by Sefton@Work in partnership with the Sefton Carers Centre. Sefton Council won this bid through a competitive process earlier last year along with nine other LAs from around the country. The aim of the project is to identify best practice in assisting carers to enter and retain paid employment whilst maintaining their caring responsibilities.

Our project focuses on a number of strands:

1. Establishing a Working Carers Network

This will be carried out in partnership with Sefton Carers Centre who will receive additional resource to provide out of hours support for carers who are currently in the workforce. Sefton@Work will identify a cohort of people known to be carers who we have helped enter paid employment in recent years and encourage their participation in this network

2. Supporting Young carers into employment

This strand of work will be closely aligned with the youth Employment Gateway and will concentrate on identifying the critical issues which young carers need to address to facilitate their entry to employment including skills gaps, confidence, and a range of practical barriers. Young carers will have access to an enhanced problem solving budget within this project.

3. Employers Best Practice exemplar

We will work with a small number of local employers we have identified who have made adaptations and other concessions for carers in order to avoid losing their essential skills and experience in the workforce.

Sefton Turnaround Programme

Sefton@Work continues to focus on working with clients furthest away from the labour market and facing multiple levels of disadvantage. Through the renamed Sefton Turnaround Programme, we are providing dedicated resource to meet the core objectives of the Council in placing employment at the forefront of the journey families to help overcome complex barriers. This provides a closer alignment with social care, educational welfare and anti-social behaviour and crime prevention.

Referrals from children's' centres, youth offending team, Career Connect and Jobcentre Plus are now flowing into the Project and reflect the liaison work undertaken across the Council and with other stakeholder agencies.

Commercial Sub- Contracts

Both the DWP funded "Families Programme" and the Skills Funding Agency contract 'Work Routes' will be winding down over the summer of 2015. Work Routes has been developed in conjunction with Sefton Adult and Community learning team to provide a structured, accredited training provision linked specifically to specific employment sectors such as retail and care. This offers a routeway to employment incorporating work placements and incentives for employers to take on previously unemployment clients.

Both these contracts are delivered by Sefton@Work through a subcontracting arrangement with Reed in Partnership Ltd.

Work Programme

Our contract to deliver Work Programme continues but the Prime contractor has changes hands. Our new contractor is called People Plus Ltd and is the largest single Welfare to Work DWP contractor in the country. As a result of the overall reductions in claimant count and therefore in the cohort of people eligible for Work Programme, the number of new clients entering the scheme remain consistently low.

Across all our programmes, we are tackling issues such as digital exclusion, by ensuring that clients can meet benefit requirements, avoid potential sanctions and concentrate on job focussed activity.

Sefton Apprenticeships

The first phase of the Sefton Apprenticeship Scheme is coming to completion and an evaluation will inform phase two of the initiative. This involves providing a grant to employers but is only offered if the minimum wage for the age is paid to our apprentices rather than the apprenticeship wage. This challenge aims to encourage employers to pay the higher rate, and the success rates of our clients being kept on after completion of the apprenticeship is extremely encouraging.

We have also recently launched the School Sports Apprenticeships in conjunction with a number of primary schools in Sefton and the Jamie Carragher Sports and Learning Academy which sees 9 Sefton Young People employed to develop the PE curriculum in line with key stage requirements.

Linacre Bridge

Within the Linacre Bridge area we are focussing specific resources on engaging with long term unemployed clients to access personalised support to help them gain paid employment – funding is used flexibly to meet client needs, including waged support and paid work placements.

The approach we have taken in matching individual residents with suitable placement opportunities hosted by sympathetic local companies has yielded impressive results, particularly for clients who face complex and persistent issues. This has seen 28 local residents from the target area enter jobs, and 17 of this number have were previously unemployed for more than three years.

L30 's Million

Sefton@Work have been given the opportunity to deliver an outreach project in the L30 Million area. The focus of this work is on promoting employability, addressing issues faced by the community related to isolation from employment sites and digital inclusion. We have undertaken to provide a range of group sessions in different venues across the area in conjunction with the L30 steering group and individual advice and guidance interviews from our qualified and experienced outreach staff. We have a number of clients from the area who have already received job offers and are awaiting clearances to commence employment and a local personalised budget for local residents is available to assist with travel costs, licensing and accreditation and remove a range of barriers to work.

REECH

Project entering its last (albeit very active) phase, with a completion date of 31st October 2015.

Number of live retrofit schemes, some are near to completion others to be completed in September:

- One Vision – Hornby Flats
- Liverpool Mutual Homes – Waldrgrave
- Regenda – Lord Nelson Street
- Riverside – Liverpool 6 and 7
- Helena Partnerships – Windlehurst – on site early July
- Magenta Living – Danger Lane – on site early August

To date we have committed grants to registered providers totalling £12,916,989. The remaining £147,241, of which £55,192 can only be spent in Halton, is ring-fenced for REECH into Business.

REECH into Business

Assessment phase now completed – 42 Businesses assessed. 13 businesses have indicated that they would like to apply for a grant. To date 8 applications have been received of which 4 have been forwarded to the Grants Panel with a recommendation for funding. Grants requested range from £24,250 to £4,500.

Dissemination event held feedback positive. Further dissemination activity to be planned.

New Project: Retrofit for the Future

VIRIDIS proposal with Sefton Council as accountable body (due to the experience of delivering REECH).

The proposed project will run from October 2015 to December 2018. The value of this proposal is £8,353,058 of which £4,176,529 will be funded via ERDF. Proposed activity includes:

District Heating - piloting a district heating network linking a combined heat and power plant (CHP) to local energy efficient homes.

Eco Archetype - piloting the comprehensive retrofitting of conservation properties. Finding the right technologies to meet planning and heritage requirements. Lessons learnt will provide a module for learning across the LCR.

Neighbourhoods - Registered providers and local authorities and others working together to deliver designed solutions in a holistic community-wide way. Innovative approaches will be used including alternative funding mechanisms e.g. revolving loan funds & grants.

SMEs - A grant pot enabling SME's to retrofit their premises with behavioural change advice & signposting.

These proposed activities will be supported by a variety of LCR wide initiatives including local supply chain and skills initiatives, awareness raising, behavioural change advice and guidance

The Stage 1 application was submitted on 22nd May. No formal timelines have been released but we understand that DCLG will provide outline applications to the ESIF committee members on 10th July, for the local strategic fit assessment to take place at the 21st July ESIF meeting. We will know more after this date.

If invited to Stage 2 it is likely that a full application would need to be submitted in September. This is the stage at which projects are fleshed out, greater linkages made and more activity added.

Likely that DCLG will request a lower grant figure, amend activity and possibly include additional applicants.

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

PORT ACCESS STEERING GROUP

- The growth of the Port of Liverpool will bring major economic benefits for the Liverpool City Region and the wider national economy by increasing opportunities for trade with the rest of the world, including key markets in India, the Far East and the Americas.
- For the Port to be successful, it needs to have good transport access, enabling the efficient and timely movement of large quantities of freight by rail, road and water.
- The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority is working with the private sector and Government agencies to develop and deliver transport measures that will improve access by rail, road and water to the Port to facilitate the planned Port expansion. Transport improvements will also support continued regeneration and investment in North Liverpool/South Sefton.
- A work programme has been developed to identify the improvements needed to both local and strategic road and rail networks to improve transport access to the Port. This work programme is being delivered and includes :
 - A technical study to identify the requirements for freight and distribution centres across the City Region, funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership, was completed in 2013;
 - A rail strategy for the Port of Liverpool commissioned and paid for by Peel Ports, was completed in 2013;
 - A wider rail strategy for the City Region, commissioned and paid for by Merseytravel, was completed and published in May 2014;
 - An assessment of the demand for rail freight capacity from the northern ports and on the trans-Pennine rail routes, commissioned and paid for by the Department for Transport, through the Strategic Freight Network Steering Group, started in 2014. The work is being carried out by Network Rail and has identified a series of recommended upgrades to the local and strategic rail network;
 - A review of the potential for providing a direct rail connection to the new deep water berth (Liverpool 2) at the Port of Liverpool is being undertaken by Peel Ports and proposals to compensate for the impacts on Seaforth Nature Reserve are being developed;
 - Peel Ports continue to promote use of the Ship Canal and they are implementing a Memorandum of Understanding with Warrington BC relating to the operation of the Ship Canal and the opening of the swing bridges in the Warrington area;
- A major junction improvement at the A5036 Princess Way/Bridge Road roundabout, funded by the Department for Transport through the national pinch point programme, was completed in spring 2015;
- Proposals have been developed to upgrade the traffic signals along the A5036 and provide advanced warning signs to improve traffic management along the route, but there is no funding available for this at present;

- A review of existing and future demand for HGV parking has been commissioned by Sefton Council on behalf of the Combined Authority in 2015 and this will determine whether new parking provision is needed;
- In the long term (post 2020), a major new road improvement will be needed to meet the forecast demand for road access to the Port. Highways England has commissioned consultants to undertake a detailed assessment of the options, taking account of traffic impacts and the economic and environmental impacts, so that the best option for the future can be identified. This assessment is expected to take until the end of 2016. Following this, there will be an extensive public consultation on the results of the options assessment, currently expected early in 2017.
- As well as the significant economic benefits and job opportunities provided through port expansion, there are potential environmental impacts on local communities. To address this, the Combined Authority is working with Peel Ports and the local communities to ensure that these impacts are reduced, mitigated and managed as far as possible. Sefton Council has completed the first phase of a programme of local accessibility and environmental improvements in the Seaforth area and a second phase is planned for the start of 2016.