

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS)

MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE
ON TUESDAY 14TH MARCH, 2017

Overview
& Scrutiny

PRESENT: Councillor Sayers (in the Chair)

Councillors Bliss, Dan T. Lewis, Michael O'Brien,
Pullin, Roche, Weavers, Webster and Bill Welsh



39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carragher and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills, Councillor Atkinson.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received.

41. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) held on 24 January 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

42. MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES - OFWAT - INCREASE IN SURFACE WATER CHARGES

In relation to Minute No. 34, OFWAT – Increase in Surface Water Charges, the Senior Democratic Services Officer circulated two letters received from OFWAT and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reported that OFWAT understood that United Utilities were reviewing its charges to obtain a Schools solution and that they await instruction from United Utilities.

It was also reported that DEFRA had declined the invitation to attend a future Meeting of the Committee however representatives from DEFRA would welcome a small number of Officers/Members to attend its office in London to discuss the matter further.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reported that Sefton Council had provided support to Sefton Schools in drafting a template letter for teachers and parents to send to the Customer Challenge Group at United Utilities and DEFRA opposing the charging scheme to Schools for the drainage of surface water.

Members of the Committee agreed to wait and understand the outcome of the letters of objection to both United Utilities and DEFRA before accepting the invitation to attend the office of DEFRA, London.

43. UPDATE ON THE CARBON FOOTPRINT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF THE BOROUGH AND THE WAY IT ALIGNED TO THE 20/30 VISION

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Resources in relation to the alignment of Sefton's carbon footprint and energy efficiency measures with the 2030 Vision.

It was reported that Sefton's Carbon footprint was calculated by the amount of carbon dioxide CO₂ emitted as a result of activities within the borough. It was further reported that it was measured on the basis of the environmental impact that carbon producing activities have on the environment. There are various ways of measuring, the most commonly measure used by local authorities to measure their CO₂ emissions is the UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics produced by the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) – which provide a reliable and consistent measure of CO₂ emissions going back to 2005.

The report detailed the following key points in respect of Sefton's carbon foot print and highlighted how those key points would be considered in conjunction with Sefton's 2030 Vision:

- In 2014 Industry and Commercial gas use emissions rose significantly (Sefton had one of the largest rises nationally).
For businesses to be sustainable and resilient (to climate change and economic pressures) assisting businesses to work in new ways and investing in making their buildings and plant energy efficient as well as investing in energy generation would be advisable to align with the Vision.
- For the domestic sector, gas use is the most significant contributor to emissions (likely to be used for space and water heating).
Assisting households to insulate their homes, invest in energy efficient forms of space and water heating, which could include heat networks and renewable technologies, brings not only carbon footprint benefits, but also reduces fuel poverty and could improve health issues.
- All electricity users will benefit from the “decarbonisation” of the electricity grid, with a greater use of renewable energy and move away from coal powered generation nationally.
Support for renewable technology industries, considering the purchase of “green” energy or investment in self generation could also contribute to a reduced carbon footprint and deliver more local jobs as well as support the Vision.
- Transport CO₂ emissions have only reduced slightly since 2010.
The UK has targets to reduce CO₂ levels, although Sefton has not increased emissions per head, we should continue to ensure

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) - TUESDAY 14TH MARCH, 2017

carbon reduction and climate change remains a corporate priority, expressed in the vision as Sefton having “cutting edge green solutions”. Sefton Council should continue to raise awareness through education and initiatives to champion and provide community leadership as our role as long term stewards of Sefton to deliver the 2030 Vision and beyond.

- CO2 emissions per head had remained relatively stable since 2009.

The report detailed the following energy and environmental management measures being taken in relation to the following activities:

- Procurement of energy and water and contract management
- Energy efficiency projects
- Power generation (Renewables)
- Delivery of Home Energy Conservation Act requirements
- Sustainable Energy Action Plan
- Stewardship of the education and schools support

The report referred to the eight key themes within the Sefton 2030 Vision, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, and more specifically referred to the following three of the eight themes that aim to improve Sefton’s Carbon footprint/energy efficiency:

- Resilient People and Places “Sefton is a place where businesses, buildings, transport, the environment and housing are sustainable and resilient in 2030.”
- Image and Environment “It sets the bar in cutting edge green solutions, integrating renewable energy, housing and attractions in a way that protect local nature and wildlife.”
- Accessible and Linked “An eco-friendly borough, travel in Sefton is green, safe and affordable.”

Members of the Committee raised the following questions and observations:

- Members raised concerns regarding the rise of gas use emissions during 2014.
- Members highlighted that the consequence of the expansion of the Port, Liverpool 2 would result in an increase of carbon emissions.
- The approach to the management of the Council’s energy contracts that had yielded a cashable saving of £2.1M was referred to and Members agreed that Invest to save was the future focus to take.
Response: The team were investigating other ways of using resources within the Department along with identifying external funding for a number of invest to save projects.
- Reference to zero carbon houses was made and more specifically how that could assist individuals out of fuel poverty.
- Members requested more information regarding solar panel roof tops and if they were encouraged on new builds.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) - TUESDAY 14TH MARCH, 2017

Response: Solar Panels may not be suitable for all new builds. The Council would always encourage and promote solar panel roof tops where appropriate. If the build is not South facing then the solar panelling will not work.

- What is the definition of fuel poverty?

Response: A household that spends more than 20% of its disposable income on heating the house.

- Members highlighted the simple efficiencies that could be made in Council and School buildings such as lighting sensors in rooms, heating controls, hand driers, toilet flush, it was accepted that there would be a short term cost but with a longer term benefit.

Response: The Council conduct ongoing building surveys and there is an engagements Officer who liaises with Schools on such matters.

- United Utilities charge Schools the amounts for the drainage of surface water, can or do schools harvest their surface water?

Response: An Officer of the Council, Mr Jonathan Williams does look at Schools to identify those suitable for the harvesting of surface water to reduce charges.

- A Member of the Committee referred to a business case he was compiling for an energy lagoon like that in Swansea which would reduce the cost of energy.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

44. NOT IN EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEETS) WORKING GROUP - IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Investment and Employment in relation to the implementation of recommendations of the Not in Employment or Training (NEETS) Working Group.

The Head of Investment and Employment reported on the following progress in relation to NEETs:

- Schools continued to be under a statutory duty to provide universal Careers Education and Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) service to all students. The service should be both impartial and independent i.e. not delivered by school staff, though a teacher may co-ordinate activities.
- Sefton Council commissioned a full service contract to track the NEET cohort and those at risk of NEET, through an annual Activity Survey and a continuous monitoring system that embraces all sources and destinations for 16-18 year olds (18-25 year old for those with Special Educational Needs)

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) - TUESDAY 14TH MARCH, 2017

- Sefton Council also commissioned an Information Advice and Guidance service for NEETs with a view to maximising their participation and reducing the NEET rate, which involved close working relationships with Youth Offender Team, Care Providers, Health services, Troubled Families and others who have clients in common.
- The Council is a founding partner of the Sefton Education Business Partnership, its purpose being to develop school/industry links and to prepare young people for the world of work by engaging employers and motivating students.

The Head of Inward Investment and Employment reported that the situation for young people post-16 had changed considerably in the four years since the then Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services) agreed the NEETs Working Group Final Report. The following changes were reported:-

- The Raising the Participation Age (RPA) legislation had been completely implemented, and since 2015, all 16-18 year olds must be in education training or in employment with training.
- The academization of schools had moved the fulcrum of relations between the schools and the Council from legal oversight and educational improvement to provision of back-office services and pathway planning.
- The Area Review of Further Education published in 2016 had authorised the merger by 2018 of Hugh Baird College, South Sefton Sixth Form College, Southport College and King George V College, in a new “Sefton College”. The new college would acquire and re-purpose its estates, and develop specialisations linked to the needs of the city region economy.
- The government had imposed a funding obligation on training providers that learners with a grade D in Maths and English must continue to study those subjects in their post-GCSE programme, in effect generating an extra volume of resits and drop out in Further Education.
- For independent training providers, the impact of the Maths/English requirement on achievement rates had come on top of difficult trading conditions, leading to poor Ofsted scores, cash flow issues, and in several cases, closure and loss of provision for 16-18 year olds in Sefton.

The Head on Inward Investment and Employment reported that the pattern of provision and progression were very different for the young people of today. The following impacts of the structural, organisational and curricular changes were captured in the headline performance measures reported to government as follows:

- The current situation was that the 2016 Participation Rate for Sefton of 92.8% was higher than the rate of 90.8% for the North West and

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) - TUESDAY 14TH MARCH, 2017

that for England which was 91.3% however the rate for Sefton had fallen from the rate achieved in 2015.

- For 16 and 17 year olds (the 18 year old rate no longer requiring to be reported nationally), Sefton's NEET rate was 3.9% in 2016. This is higher than the rate for the North West (3.2%) and for England (2.7%).
- The most up-to-date NEET data shows that the NEET rate for Sefton had increased since September 2016, and was at a higher rate than 12 months previously.

Other impacts relating to learners' experiences of the educational and skills system were reported as:

- Where providers had withdrawn (e.g. Oakmere, Shaw Trust), students in PRUs or Impact find alternative provision less attractive or accessible. Conversely, colleges regard this cohort as not ready to progress, and the drop-out rate has increased for those who do make the transition.
- The English/Maths requirement deters progression from schools to FE, generates high levels of re-sits, which do not improve grades, and lead to higher drop-out rates and learner frustration. In addition, lower achievement rates in English & Maths damage the formula funding on which Colleges rely and risk provider contraction.
- Some SEND learners with Education & Health Care Plans cannot find a local provider, and all schools have struggled to supply information on SEND students to training providers in a timely manner.

It was further reported that the tracking systems in place facilitate the monitoring and where possible anticipate trends in progression. All the key organisations (primary and secondary school heads, education/families/care authorities, colleges, training providers, labour market intermediaries and employment) were reported as being represented on the Sefton Education Partnership Board.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions and observations:

Members referred to the Apprenticeship Levy and asked if the Council's Levy income could be ring fenced for young people who are NEET?

Response: Apprentices have to be 16+ and in employment to access an Apprenticeship, with highest rates of training subsidy for 16-18 year olds. Therefore it is desirable that the Council recruit young people to fill vacancies and provide appropriate training. The Council's provider framework is currently being renewed, to support an Apprenticeship Programme recruiting about 100 people per year. The Council takes about 25 p.a. into permanent employment, so offers opportunities both for employment and for work experience.

Members requested clarification on the way in which the tracking system worked and the organisational accountabilities.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) - TUESDAY 14TH MARCH, 2017

Response: The tracking of young people at 16 is outsourced entirely to our IAG contractor, currently Career Connect. They undertake an Activity Survey of all 16-18 year olds in school in September each year providing a baseline against which to measure progress. Students are tracked by a variety of means (mainly telephone and email) for the two years to their 18th birthday. Additional support is provided to those students deemed to be at risk of NEET (RONI). The contract with Career Connect runs until March 2018, so the relevant Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Skills, Councillor Atkinson has authorised a review of current performance and how the service needs to be reshaped to meet modern needs.

Members were curious to understand how the tracking system worked with seasonal/part time employees who also are in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance.

Response: The question will be forwarded to Career Connect and a response will be forwarded to Members when received.

Do the Council encourage Vocational Colleges to come to Sefton? I believe there is a Vocational College in Southport that has been successful.

Response: The Vocational College is a commercial training provider rather than a type of provision. The Council is not obliged to manage the commercial training market, but we track trends in provision and progression and in particular the departure of established providers which inhibit progress for young people, as referred to in the O&S report. Where a gap has been identified, we make representations to the Educational Funding Agency for additional support.

Members of the Committee referred to the matter of students who had not achieved GCSE Grade C or above in Math or English and the government stipulating that those students must continue to study those subjects in their post-GCSE programme, in effect generating an extra volume of resists and drop-outs in Further Education. Members agreed that the stipulation government were imposing on training providers had created a stumbling block.

Members requested how Care Leavers were supported in the process?

Response: The question will be forwarded to Career Connect and a response will be forwarded to Members when received.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

45. ACTION PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Inward Investment and Employment in relation to the implementation of recommendations contained in the Final Report of the Employment Development Working Group.

It was reported that the former Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environmental Services had developed an Action Plan for each of the recommendations detailing action and progress made against each of

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND SKILLS) - TUESDAY 14TH MARCH, 2017

them, the newly appointed Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills had adopted the same process, as set out in the report.

The Head of Inward Investment and Employment reported that the employment landscape was constantly evolving and that there could be some difficulties in restricting reporting to the format of the recommendations and so the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills had summarised activity across her portfolio whilst also identifying initiatives undertaken with other portfolio holders regarding employment.

Members of the Committee congratulated Sefton@work on achieving the Cabinet Office Customer Service Excellence Award.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the Committee extend its congratulations to Sefton@work on achieving the Cabinet Office Customer Service Excellence Award.

46. PEER REVIEW WORKING GROUP - FINAL REPORT

RESOLVED:

That the Peer Review Working Group – Final Report, be deferred until the next Meeting the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills).

47. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance that included the most recent report from the following Cabinet Members:-

- Cabinet Member – Communities and Housing;
- Cabinet Member – Health and Wellbeing (parks element only);
- Cabinet Member – Locality Services;
- Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Skills; and
- Cabinet Member – Planning and Building Control

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member update reports be accepted.

48. KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN - 1 APRIL - 31 JULY 2017

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance in relation to the Committee's programme of work. A number of Key Decisions within the latest Key Decision Forward Plan fell under the remit of this Committee and Members were reminded of their right to pre-scrutinise such items.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer, Mrs Ruth Harrison, referred Members to Appendix B to the report, which detailed the programme of work for the Committee for the Municipal Year 2016/17. It was reported that whilst the majority of work within the work programme had been completed there were some outstanding reports that would be carried forward to the new Municipal Year 2017/18.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Committee notes items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan for period 1 April to 31 July 2017;
- (2) the Committee notes the progress of the Peer Review Working Group;
- (3) the Committee notes the progress of the Parks and Greenspaces Working Group; and
- (4) the programme of work for 2016/17, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be noted and agreed as completed subject to the following reports being carried forward to the work programme of the Committee for the new Municipal Year 2017/18:-
 - Refuse Collection;
 - New Houses being sold as Leasehold; and
 - Peer Review Working Group – Final Report.

49. VOTE OF THANKS

As this was the last Meeting of the Committee in the Municipal Year, the Chair thanked Members and Officers for the assistance they had given him throughout the year.