

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Marion Atkinson	Overview & Scrutiny Cabinet Member Regeneration & Skills	July 2017

REGENERATION

The Regeneration Team is playing an active role in the authority's Growth Programme, providing a programme management function and playing a key role in the successful purchase of The Strand Shopping Centre in Bootle and delivering a programme.

Town Centres

Work over the winter and spring period has enabled Town Centre Action Plans to have been prepared for Bootle, Crosby and Southport. This follows the publication of the associated Development or Investment Frameworks.

The Action Plans are representative of the work streams/themes and priorities that will be progressed over the coming months and years. They are not Council centric and relate to all potential stakeholders and deliverers.

The Authority's role will be to stimulate, facilitate and enable the regeneration of each of the Town Centre with developers and other agencies and stakeholders providing the direct investment.

Across each of the town centres discussions are ongoing with potential investors and developers to bring viable development sites to fruition. Project ideas are being scoped out and options reviewed.

Within Crosby Town Centre phase 3 of the Section 106 environmental improvement works, the installation of new street furniture is underway and due to complete in August 2017.

In Bootle the purchase of the Strand Shopping Centre was completed in April and now provides for the Council to agree and masterplan the Canal side area and wider town centre retail contribution the Strand will make.

Additionally the Town Hall Heritage Complex has been considered further on within this report.

Funding Opportunities

The team are exploring opportunities for funding to support regeneration initiatives through:

One Public Estate

OPE (Round 6): Following the General Election the government will open up requests for OPE funding. It is anticipated that a call will be made in late June with submissions by August.

Building on the work undertaken in the Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) programme and the unsuccessful, yet commended, Round 5 proposals we will explore opportunities for funding and develop robust proposals to enable the Council and multi-agency partners to move to Place Based working.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

A funding bid with a total value of £7.9m has been prepared through Viridis (a collective of housing providers and local authorities) with Sefton Council acting as Accountable Body and submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government. Although it does not fall within the Regeneration portfolio, the outcomes of the proposed project will see installation of energy efficiency measures. A decision on this funding bid is expected at the end of June.

The team supported the successful funding bid for **Coastal Communities Fund**: for the regeneration and refurbishment of Southport Pier.

Broadband – ‘gain share’

The Regeneration Team has supported the delivery of the Merseyside Connected project in Sefton. The project was delivered through a gap funding model where state aid was used to provide top up funding without which the broadband services would not have been financially viable. As a result of this take up of those broadband services has exceeded agreed thresholds. Consequently, BT has agreed to repay an element of the funding known as ‘gain share’.

Gain share funding will be used to continue the Merseyside Connected Programme for one year to provide additional broadband services throughout the LCR. This project will run from July 2017 to June 2018, the programme is currently being worked up but it is envisaged that a number of cabinets in Sefton serving hundreds of properties both residential and business will be upgraded to superfast status.

Southport Business Park

Site investigations are coming to a conclusion and a final report is being considered by the Council’s Contaminated Land Officer. Information contained within the report is now being used to help understand the condition of the ground in relation to its impact on the cost of developing the site for new business premises.

Concurrently officers have initiated detailed discussions with businesses and developers interested in bringing forward detailed proposals for the site. This will be a follow up from earlier initial discussions.

Work is underway to commission a development marketing strategy that will assist in bringing forward the remaining parcels of land on the Business Park.

Combined Authority SIF Round 1

Officers continue to liaise with the Combined Authority to refine the detail and assist in the development of the two principle Single Investment Fund Bids (SIF) that the Combined Authority opened before the Christmas break 2016.

Chancerygate, Mersey Reach has progressed through to a Final Business Case and is being further appraised given the application for some grant assistance to help remediate this large employment site along Dunning Bridge Road.

If the scheme moves forward through to implementation a total of circa 380 jobs will be created within the locality in addition to tackling a brown field site that has lain dormant for many years. The opportunity to regenerate the site remains subject to the award of SIF.

A further application has been made by Royal London for the Atlantic Park Employment site also along Dunning Bridge Road, Bootle. The scheme put forward by the investor developer will look to create 100,000 sq.ft of commercial and employment space in the next speculative phase and 531,00 sq ft beneath their overall masterplan. This site has the potential to create circa 1,200 jobs if all the parcels within the hybrid planning application were to progress.

Bootle Town Hall Heritage Complex

The Bootle Investment Framework sets out the aspiration for the Complex and a first opportunity is being looked at what role the Council could take to develop out this unique set of built assets which have played such an important role in Bootle's history over the past 150 years.

I will shortly bring forward more details of the priorities we wish to achieve to ensure the sustainable development of the Complex in due course.

TOURISM

Business Tourism

- In the fourth quarter of 2016/17, three more conferences were confirmed worth around £2.3m. This makes a total of 20 for the 2016/17 fiscal year, worth approx. £11.5m in economic impact and bringing a potential of around 25,000 bed nights to accommodation providers.

- Live enquiries added to the system during the 2016/17 period totalled 55 which if converted would be worth IRO £78.9m to the area.

Open Golf Championship 2017

- Ticket sales continue to be strong, on current trends over 200,000 people will visit the event.
- Multi Agency operational groups have produced and signed off their associated plans including: - Contingency Plan, Transport Management Plan, Medical Plan, Media Schedule and Protocol and Incident Response Plan.
- The Local Authority has established a number of management groups to ensure Sefton achieve commercial strategic aims and objectives. Detailed activities are in place around the key themes of Destination Presentation, Employment & Skills, Marketing & Communications and Hospitality & Investment. This will ensure that as a result of hosting The 146th Open, Sefton grows the economy, enhances the reputation and visibility of Sefton in national and international markets and builds on our existing reputation in hosting major national and international events.

Events

Southport Festival, 5th, 6th & 7th May

- This event is a partnership between Southport BID, Sefton Council, Southport Contemporary Arts and the private sector.
- This was the second year of this town wide event which included Arts, Jazz, Folk, Literature, Poetry, Comedy and Visual Arts. There were numerous venues that took part including – The Atkinson, Kings Gardens, Wesley Street, Town Hall Gardens, Bars & Restaurants.
- All outdoor events were well attended. Highlights included the Wesley Street Sea and Shore Festival, Pif Paf Action Painting, live music at Remedy and Dr. John Cooper Clarke at the Atkinson.

Southport Food and Drink Festival 2nd, 3rd & 4th June 2017

- The 2017 event was a great success with positive feedback from both visitors and traders, over 35,000 visitors attended the event.
- The event included over 50 Street Food traders, 50 Producers and 15 Bars.
- The children's festival marquee was extended and enhanced to include crafts, face painting, storytelling etc.

Southport Air Show 15th, 16th & 17th September 2017

- There will be a programme of night flying on the Friday including a fireworks finale
- Military Aircraft have now been confirmed (unfortunately no Red Arrows due to international commitments)
- The highlight of this year's show is Sally B – The Flying Fortress
- Civilian Aircraft are being confirmed
- Trade forms have been sent out with a positive response so far
- Tickets sales are steady

British Musical Firework Championships 29th & 30th September, 1st October

- This year is the Champion of Champions Event
- 7 previous winners from 1999 – 2016 will return to compete for this title. The competitor briefing took place in February 2017
- Tickets sales are going well with the seated area nearly sold out

Southport Market

- Southport Indoor Market currently sitting at 78%, this corresponds with the retail fall in Southport. Planned targeted marketing for the empty units commenced in March.
- Outdoor Markets are performing well, 35 gazebos on a Tuesday and Wednesday on chapel St Southport, and 35 gazebos in Formby on a Friday. The markets support local businesses and drive much needed footfall into the area. We intend to increase this over time to a maximum of 50 gazebos for each market.

Destination Development

- Radio – spring campaigns have been booked on Smooth and Gaydio. As well as air time the campaigns have included visibility on station websites and competitions.
- Two pieces of destination print have been designed printed and delivered (with partner support) – The Open Golf Toolkit and The Southport Retail Investment Prospectus
- STBN – meetings have been held by the main STBN Board as well as The Southport Restaurateurs Association. The Destination Management Group is due to meet 13 June 2017.
- STBN membership stands at 116 and whilst we have had a few restaurant and a guesthouse closures, several new members have been secured including Formby Hall Golf Resort & Spa.
- A review of conference advertising and events / exhibitions attended is underway to inform 2018 promotional activity.

- Southport won the 'UK Coach Friendly Destination' award at the recent Travel Trade Awards held at the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham. The town beat off stiff competition from five other finalists including Bournemouth and Poole.
- Southport Market – spring campaign is drawing toward its close and included Facebook (paid campaign), press advertising, bus panels, refreshed leaflet and website update.

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING UPDATE

Sefton@work Successes

Customer Service Excellence

During this period, it was confirmed that Sefton@work has successfully completed its Customer Service Excellence inspection for the sixth consecutive occasion and was awarded 18 “compliance plus” points.

STAR Awards

Sefton@work won a highly commended award in the Chief Executive's award category of Sefton's Special Thanks and Recognition ceremony in May.

Key Programme Performance

ESF Ways to Work

Ways to Work project reports in two strands, related to:

- Young people aged 16 – 29 years who are NEET. This is the part of the Programme that incorporates the Youth Employment Initiative, which needs to be fully expended by July 2018
- Workless Adults aged over 18. This part of the programme operates at a different grant intervention rate from the young people strand and activity on this element continues until end December 2018.
- On the young people strand, Sefton@work has engaged **598** participants.
- On the adult strand, **661** participants are now engaged on the programme. Across both strands of Ways to Work, there are currently **156** clients who have self-declared as having disabilities.

Youth Employment Gateway

YEG is now in its second phase and has largely been used as match finance to access the ESf grant to operate Ways to Work.

We have **404** clients on the programme for YEG phase 2, meeting our target forecast and no further enrolments can be admitted for this element.

Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)

Since the closedown of new starts onto YEG 2, we have been offering young people referred to us assistance using the YEI element of the ESf Ways to Work funding. This is currently supporting **102** clients aged up to aged 29 who may be claiming any benefit or are non-claimants.

Carers in employment contract – final outturn

This contract has now been completed and **87** clients, against a target of 50, were supported through the various strands, which captured young carers, carers claiming benefits and carers seeking help to maintain their employment.

Personalised Budgets

Personalised budgets have been an innovative feature of the Youth Employment Gateway and we have also made these available for YEI clients. The concept is about empowering young people to take control of their own personal development and journey towards employability by enabling them to draw down a budget to pay for a range of items they and their client adviser agree will help them move closer to work.

L30's Million

There are currently **111** clients within the relevant postcode area for this intervention who are receiving assistance. This has been extremely successful and all targets for engagement, jobs and placements have either been met or exceeded. Although the project has completed, the L30's Million steering group has requested a further proposal for funding for the 17/18 year and this has been prepared for their consideration.

All Programmes

Between 1st April and 5th June 2017, **91** Sefton@work clients have moved into work who were formerly workless.

In the same period, Sefton@work employment liaison team captured **112** job vacancies which were matched with Sefton@work clients through their advisers.

Transition to the Evolutive Customer Relationship Management system

Sefton@work has moved to a new CRM system, called Evolutive. The move was necessary as the previous system was becoming expensive and difficult to develop to reflect emerging needs of new programmes. The transition so far has been relatively smooth and has not caused undue delays to submission of project claims. Export of historic data from past projects is continuing. The expectation is that once all the report writing is complete, access to data will be quicker, more straightforward and enable a wider number of the team to get the data they need. We are working

with the supplier to ensure reports reflect all contracts, grants, referral pathways and collaborations with internal and external partners. Adoption of the Evolutive system puts Sefton@work in line with Invest Sefton who have been using Evolutive for some time.

LCR Combined Authority Household into Work Test

The final version of the business case for the Household Test has now been submitted to DWP for their consideration. The decision on confirmation of funding has now been postponed until after the general election. However, partners within LCR employment & skills teams have continued to work together to progress key implementation plans to ensure a swift and controlled start on the project can be made once an offer is made and approvals are signed off within each LA.

When the Household into Work Test commences, we are anticipating that some funding will be allocated to us to further develop our Evolutive system to enable additional data reports to be generated for specific purposes such as linking client records together into familial groups.,

DWP Work and Health Programme

The Procurement process for the DWP Work & Health Programme continues and the period of commercial dialogue with potential providers has been commenced. DWP has informed providers that the general election will not cause delays to the tender award timetable.

Maximising the Employment Benefit from the Open Golf Tournament for Sefton residents

Sefton@work has been actively contributing to the Employment & Skills Task force for the Open Golf. This involvement has led to an agreement between JCP, Sefton Adult Community Learning and Sefton@work. This has already generated joint publicity to promote the opportunity to work at the event.

Sefton@work has been the single point of contact for the first wave of advertisements and the response has already been significant. A referral pathway is in place to direct any clients who may want to brush up their basic skills or application techniques to access SACL short courses. This package of learning includes customer care, basic English and maths, food preparation and hygiene and is expected to generate further interest started through the SACL Open days held in April.

Sefton@work is supplying clients with jobs skills, application techniques and individual guidance where needed. For those who register with Ways to Work we have identified a budget to pay for free travel to get to work during the event, making use of the allocation from Mersey Travel. JCP has agreed to confirm destinations of any clients coming through the single point of contact to assist Sefton@work track the impact of this work. Sefton@work staff will be available to work alongside JCP

staff during the event at unsociable hours to respond to immediate staffing needs of the employers.

Collaboration between Sefton@work and Sefton Adult Community Learning

Previous reports have outlined the collaborations between Sefton@work and SACL in order to provide learners with the information, advice and guidance they need to make progress towards employment, linking them to work placements and job opportunities when they are ready to proceed.

In order to monitor the outcomes of this joint working, a data trawl has been done to cross-check SCL learners who have taken up the offer provided by Sefton@work. This has shown that since 1st April 2015, **70** SALC learners have accessed support from Sefton@work and of these, **12** have moved into employment and a further **6** have taken up further learning, work experience placements or voluntary work to improve their employability.

Recruitment Trends – Care Vacancies

During this period, Sefton@work employment liaison team has seen a marked increase in the number of residential care homes in Sefton seeking support to fill a range of caring vacancies. This increase has not been the result of any marketing exercise and has largely been reactive, following employer's direct contact. This is noteworthy as these kinds of vacancies tend to be particularly difficult to fill and reflect problems of poor staff retention. Sefton@work will of course market these vacancies to clients but there are relatively few people who have identified care as a sector they are considering moving into.

Case Studies

CASE STUDY : Young person with an youth offending order

R, aged 17, was referred to S@W from Sefton Council's Community Adolescent Service (CAS) and Sefton's Youth Offending Team (YOT). The CAS team were involved with R's family for some time as they had been experiencing problems arising from J's challenging behaviour and his involvement with a troubling peer group. At the time he was referred to Sefton@work, R had been issued with a YOT order and was under supervision for a range of issues. He was spending time at the Sefton Council respite facility at Melrose House which provides opportunity for breathing space and support for both young people and their families.

R's CAS worker made contact with Sefton@work because they felt he could benefit from intensive, personalised support to help him become more hopeful about his future and give him practical assistance to develop a personal plan to get him on the right track to help him progress towards an apprenticeship or a job. Initially, R attended his sessions with the Sefton@work adviser with his CAS worker. His adviser aimed to introduce R to a number of different pathways to encourage him to get a better understanding of possible points of entry to the world of work and build within him a sense of momentum about his own future.

R's initial assessments related to his skills and preferences highlighted that he preferred working with his hands and outdoors work so this was taken into account by his adviser. R had no formal qualifications gained from school and he was very clear that he had not enjoyed his time in formal education which had influenced his poor attendance. So, in many ways, R's choice of direction appeared limited.

After a couple of sessions focusing on communication skills and confidence, R's adviser took him to meet with a railway training company and a construction training company who are key partners of Sefton@work and who agreed to talk to R about the pathways he would need to take to lead into work in their sectors. The exposure to employers at this relatively early stage was critical as a means of inspiring R about different jobs he had not really known about before. The involvement of local employers who share our values about the importance of developing local young people is extremely valuable to Sefton@work. R, along with all the other clients we work with in this way was given a full briefing into the value of these employer relationships.

After a further period, R felt it was time to apply for a place at FE College and he was accepted at Hugh Baird College onto an introductory construction course. R's decision to go to college was critical for his personal development as it marked a real moment of maturity. He had some tough choices to make about the area of specialism he would opt for and he was not looking forward to doing English and Maths again after his school experience but enrolled despite these worries.

R was now attending appointments alone at Sefton@work but after some time his attendance became very erratic and for a period his Sefton@work adviser was unable to contact him. With assistance from the CAS team, R was eventually located and the reasons for his going "off the radar" became apparent. R's home life had begun to deteriorate badly and he was having second thoughts about attending his course at Hugh Baird College. His principal worry related to social issues and in particular being around other young lads with whom he had been in past friendship groups where there had been bad feelings.

Early in 2017 R and his Advisor discussed one of S@W's new ILM training opportunities with Sefton Council Coastal Services. An ILM is a paid work experience placement with a sympathetic local employer for a set period of time where the young person is given on the job support and helped to use their experience to develop their prospects going forward whilst receiving job search assistance to obtain their next position in the wider labour market. R was very keen about the prospect of a Coastal ILM and so he put all his efforts into ensuring his application for one of these competitive positions could be the best he could make it.

He started attending interview skills sessions with his Sefton@work adviser in preparation for the application and learned all he could about the ILM position, the type of work he would be doing and the setting he would be working in. As a result, his adviser noticed a marked change in R's behaviour with his attendance at appointments improving 100%.

R attended the ILM interview and conducted himself so impressively that he was offered a position. He started on his placement in April 2017. In order to assist him get to his place of work reliably, S@W has provided his first month's travel ticket before he receives his monthly wages and we will also provide ongoing in-work support in the form of calls and visits to ensure R can successfully sustain the job for the whole placement and can use the essential experience he gains as a positive asset to his next move.

INVESTSEFTON

Sefton Growth Hub

InvestSefton is one of the Liverpool City Region growth hubs working alongside the Local Enterprise Partnership, other local authorities, Chambers of Commerce and The Women's Organisation. This is part of current UK Government funded activities delivered locally by Local Enterprise partnerships. In Sefton this activity has been merged with the ERDF Business Growth Programme to help provide a more cohesive service to businesses.

As at 5 June, InvestSefton has engaged with 918 businesses, carried out 282 diagnostics and brokered 406 businesses into other areas of support. The team has now surpassed its contract target of 800 business engagements.

The ERDF element of delivery provides eligible SMEs, who would not typically engage with providers of business support, with the capacity and support they need to grow and prosper.

InvestSefton serves as a bridge between start-up and more bespoke, intensive or specialist support typically supplied by the private sector and provides participating SMEs with a dedicated Business Growth Adviser. The Advisers provide diagnostic, business planning and brokerage into other specialist/commercial support. This follows triage activity performed by two Business Growth Officers who provide initial support and capture the necessary information to help develop into growth projects

InvestSefton recently attended a briefing by the host Department for the national programme -Business, Energy, Innovation & Skills (BEIS). They are currently undertaking a national review of all LEP areas and Liverpool City Region feedback has been excellent. The review will be concluded after the June election but BEIS have indicated a preference to extend the programme which is currently due to end on 31 March 2018.

Start Up Support

InvestSefton has established a close relationship with a complementary ERDF start up programme delivered by the Enterprise Hub, a consortium of providers led by The Women's Organisation (TWO) and Liverpool Community College. This three-year part funded ERDF programme offers pre start up and business start-up support to aspiring entrepreneurs across the Liverpool City Region. The programme is tasked

with engaging and providing initial enterprise awareness support to 6,360 people and a minimum of 12 hours intensive support to 2,320 individuals over three years. The programme anticipates supporting the start-up of 1,272 new businesses as a result of these interventions, and 17% of all targets will be achieved in Sefton with Sefton residents. Key headlines to end March 2017 include:

- 346 Sefton residents have had at least 3 hours support – 238 women and 108 men
- 169 individuals have had over 12 hours support in Sefton
- 60 individuals have started a business in Sefton – 45 women and 15 men of whom 25 were unemployed and 9 economically inactive on joining the programme

Over 30 delegates attended an Enterprise event in the Atkinson, Southport, following a successful Bootle forum in November 2016. In attendance were Invest Sefton, Start-Up Direct and Enterprise Hub partners, The Prince's Trust and Alt Valley Community Trust.

Alt Valley Community Trust brought along their client, James Dale, to share his inspiring entrepreneurial journey and how he set up his personal training business. Nick Bell from StartUp Direct talked about the types of start-up loans that are available to those thinking about setting up a business and going self-employed. Katie Dullaghan, client of The Women's Organisation, shared her experience of working alongside The Women's Organisation when setting up her dentistry business.

Business Case Studies

Cabinet Member has now made visits to over 13 growth businesses and this has helped generate some publicity through subsequent press releases.

Two recent visits included:

Sefton Carers Centre is an active company incorporated on 10 November 1995 with the registered office located in Merseyside. Sefton Carers Centre has been running for 21 Years in Crosby and through their Learning Well Agency initiative has been given a unique opportunity to sell recycled paint via Recipro, Wirral (an organisation set up with community benefits in mind that supports the environment by recycling unused building materials). Dulux, the paint manufacturer, selected Recipro to be one of the first Community Repaint remanufacturing centres in the UK and invested over £3million in the new recycling equipment

The remanufacturing process takes unused/discarded paint and filters and processes it to create a new paint product. The paint is sold from the Crosby centre and a Sefton@Work ILM has been recruited to support the project.

Invest Sefton have supported Sefton Carers with introductions to commercial painting and decorating companies, bringing companies to visit the Recipro site, inviting companies to the launch of the new paint project, attending a meeting with

70 Landlords promoting use of paint and meeting with the Public Health lead to discuss opportunities regarding a proposed community shop in Bootle and shelf space for community paint.

Hybrid Technical Services Ltd was established in 2005 as a Training Provider. They specialise in electricity, gas and plumbing training and accreditation. In April 2006 they moved to Heysham Road, Aintree, grew the business and acquired an additional unit in July 2014 to expand their qualification portfolio.

The growth of the business was restricted by the size of the premises and the next phase of development was the purchase of business premises (completed 5 April 2017) with the creation of larger classrooms/training areas to train and accredit more students and grow turnover.

Invest Sefton have assisted in acquiring finance and grant support to purchase and renovate the new unit, which has tripled the size of their operation. This secures Hybrid's future and provides a permanent home within Sefton. Job creation is expected to be approximately 10 new roles adding to the existing staff of 8.

Further good news was received when Southport based broadband specialist Adaptive Communications was shortlisted for Business of the Year (up to 50 employees category) in the Liverpool Echo Regional Business Awards 2017. The award ceremony takes place on 22 June.

Seaforth based Crosby Coffee Ltd owner Jack Forster has also been shortlisted in the for Young Business Person of the Year category. Both businesses have received extensive support from InvestSefton Advisers including help with securing a Regional Growth Fund grant for Adaptive Communications.

Inward Investment Update

InvestSefton continues to work to attract and retain investment in the borough. Working with colleagues in Regeneration, InvestSefton continues to drive forward some key developments, including the 200,000 sqft+ Mersey Reach scheme on Dunnings Bridge Road and Atlantic Park. This will see £19m invested in a new industrial park in a strategic location in the borough.

InvestSefton has supported the development of the project and sought financial support to ensure viability of the scheme. A planning application has been submitted, and though this has required a number of changes in response to resident concerns, it is intended that this will be considered at July Planning Committee.

Following the investment by Kura in Atlantic Park, plans are in place to arrange a meeting between Kura senior management and key stakeholders. Over 90% of offices are now let on Atlantic Park and officers met with the site owner (RLAM) and development manager (Industrial Securities) in April. Work is ongoing with InvestSefton to bring forward a further phase of development, a planned 100,000 sqft industrial/distribution unit, including the submission of a full business case for

Single Investment Funding. It is anticipated that this will be appraised and submitted for final consideration at the July meeting of the Combined Authority.

Similarly, InvestSefton is supporting the Head of Regeneration and Housing with Bootle Town Centre, Crosby Town Centre, Southport Business Park and other regeneration opportunities.

InvestSefton is also supporting the Executive Director with the delivery of investment activity associated with The Open Golf. Activity is being coordinated to maximise the benefits to Sefton through an integrated LCR approach with partners. Activity is focused on inward investment, development/regeneration opportunities associated with the whole of Sefton borough.

Tourism colleagues are also working to attract conferences, visitor attractions and infrastructure and boost profile. Over 50 places have been 'sold' to partner organisations with natural synergies, including Chancerygate (investor in Mersey Reach), Bruntwood (significant investor and landlord), International Business Festival, Marketing Liverpool and Bliss Investments (acquired Ramada complex and significant investment potential in surrounding complex).

InvestSefton supported Southport BID and the Council's tourism team to produce an Open Golf business toolkit for circulation to local businesses to help maximise trade opportunities during the July open. The toolkit is the subject of a separate report.

The Place Marketing for Investment Bid was approved in January 2017 and is now contracted. Activity is now under way with targeted activity in key sectors (Financial, Professional and Business Services, Advanced Manufacturing, Energy and Environment, Maritime, Creative and Digital and Life Sciences). InvestSefton is heavily involved in this activity.

InvestSefton is also handling a number of confidential enquiries relating to local business expansion and relocation.

Business Events

Brexit Group 21st April

InvestSefton arranged the first of an intended number of Brexit briefings for businesses. The event took place on 21st April and attendance also included over 20 business leaders. Christian Spence (Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce), a regional expert and policy adviser, updated on the latest position and implications for businesses, Other items covered included:

- Exports and Trade (markets, currency, tariffs, customs and regulations, supply chain etc.)
- Employment and Skills
- Inward Investment
- Local Impact and Mitigation

The group is to meet on a quarterly basis.

Sefton Economic Forum 19th May

More than 100 business delegates from across the borough attended the 26th Sefton Economic Forum hosted by Hugh Baird L20 Centre and sponsored by Arvato. The theme was '*The Future for Business is Digital*'. *Businesses learnt* about exciting new developments for SMEs in the field of digital technologies.

Subjects discussed at the event included digital technologies as an enabler for small firms, future trends and the many free applications available online to help businesses improve productivity, save time and reduce costs.

Speakers included Jo Wright (Executive Director of FACT), digital technologist Adrian McEwen, Andy Kent (CEO of Angel Solutions) and Yana Williams (Principal of Hugh Baird College).

Event evaluation revealed:

- 29% of businesses who attended had never attended a forum before, the increased engagement activities seem to be paying off
- 89% stated that the event made them think about how they could use digital technology to develop & grow their business
- Sales, marketing and social media are the most popular areas identified as needing further support

InvestSefton is using this data to develop future activities such as follow up advisor meetings with those businesses attending for the first time and brokering others into specialist areas for digital and sales support. The latter could include a bespoke sales and marketing event hosted for free by a commercial provider.

Business Friendly Sefton

I fully endorse and support proposals for "Business friendly Sefton". This followed a survey of business facing teams and services within the council in 2015/16 and the broad agreement for business friendliness to be a theme within Council agendas for both Reform and Growth.

The survey revealed:

- 21 sections across 7 different services of the Council engage with businesses. **This number has risen by 15 since 2012, an indication that cross authority liaison has improved in terms of greater awareness of each other's services.**
- **44% of respondents engage with businesses** as part of their core service

provision including **37% dealing with compliance with statutory regulations.**

- **Business, investment and employer support activity remains high at 40%** through Investment & Employment front of house services InvestSefton and Sefton@Work. Tourism is also well represented through its Southport BID and Southport Tourism Business Network activities
- **22% of respondents are involved in generating income for the council** including business rates, bidding for and securing EU and UK government monies for regeneration programmes, planning/building fees and developing private sector income and sponsorship in support of services, e.g., Southport Tourism Business Network.
- Links between business/investor facing services and regulatory/compliance services have been strengthened by the co-location of Investment & Employment in Magdalen House which has helped improve communications between teams.
- The number of weekly engagements with businesses has **increased by 18%** since 2012.
- The most often used method of communication is through email (97%). Site visits and/or 1 to 1 meetings remain high at 71.4%. Postal communication has decreased by 27.2% since 2012. The use of media has also increased from **40% to 45% ranging from notices, press releases, adverts, service newsletters and council social media.**
- There is an opportunity to review the use of systems across the authority with the potential aim of developing more cohesive or even a Single User Business Account system. Both InvestSefton and Sefton@Work either use or are about to acquire Evolutive.

To further develop this work a task and finish group was established with the following twin aims:

- To develop a business friendly reputation to help drive the Council's Growth and Investment agenda
- To promote Corporate Social Responsibility for Sefton's well-being and support the Council's Welfare Reform agenda

The group has since met on three occasions and made progress on a number of fronts including:

- Improved co-ordination of regulatory responses to development and inward investment enquiries. This has included close collaboration between Planning, Regeneration and Investment and Employment Officers on recent investments at Kura (Atlantic Park), Domino (Senate Business Park) and Chancerygate which will lead to some 1,000 new jobs.

- Production of an internal contact directory for business facing staff. This is near completion and the group is to develop an electronic interactive format for intranet use with Corporate Communications. This can be further refined for outward marketing and promotion purposes.
- Promoting Active Sefton to Sefton businesses to help increase awareness of services and potential benefits to employees, e.g., tackling absenteeism, increasing health and well-being in local workforces.
- Access to Business Rates appeals and intelligence reports which includes new business rate payers.
- Production of a Most Frequently Asked questions sheet for Business Rates staff to help them with referrals (Business Rates deal with 2,000 plus enquiries in April each year from businesses).