

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills – 7th November 2017)		
COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Patricia Hardy	Communities and Housing	October 2017

NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Neighbourhoods

A community intervention meeting took place in Nethererton on Tuesday 19th September. The main area for concern continues to be Marian Square. Partners reported there has been a significant drop in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) on the Grange Primary School site and at The Emmanuel Baptist church. It is suggested that the arrest of a local nominal and the installation of security fencing (supported by Sefton Safer Communities Partnership funding) around the Grange Primary School has led to this reduction.

ASB within Killen Green Park has significantly dropped with only 1 reported incident over the last 4 weeks given the peak in reports over the summer months.

There was a Dispersal Order in place on the Pendle estate on Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd August. This resulted in 12 dispersal orders being issued. 10 were issued to youths known to the Police. This has led to a reduction in reported ASB in the area. Sefton's Youth bus visited the estate on Thursday 21st September and a follow on programme of activity has been planned by Targeted Youth Support.

Consultation will begin in the near future regarding works that will be carried out to prune the trees and bushes that border resident's properties around Marian Gardens due to the numerous reports of youths congregating and causing anti-social behaviour.

An Arson Awareness day took place around the Sefton Estate on 25th August. Issues relating to fly-tipping and recent arson attacks on wheelie bins were addressed and advice was given to residents on how to protect their properties in partnership with Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue and Registered Providers.

The L30 Million project provided four weeks of Park Games in Killen Green Park during the summer holidays. Activities included Horse Riding, Inflatables and Go Karts. The activities were delivered in conjunction with Active Sefton's street games programme which began on Monday 7th August and ran till Friday 1st September. The Street Games programme was delivered in various locations across the borough based on hot-spot intelligence and Partners and Ward Member recommendations.

The NAC firework display will take place on Sunday 5th November starting at 7.30pm.

The Neighbourhoods Team have started to co-ordinate the variety of tasks that offenders could undertake across Sefton on a three-weekly cycle as part of the Community Payback programme. The Borough will be split up into three zones:

- North Sefton – Southport wards (7 wards)
- Mid Sefton – Crosby, Formby & Maghull wards (8 wards)
- South Sefton – Litherland, Nethererton & Bootle wards (7 wards)

The tasks the payback team will carry out will be those that would not ordinarily be undertaken by Sefton Council staff. From the start date of the 18th September the offenders have been carrying out work in Hesketh Park on the instruction of Sefton Parks Team.

Future planned work includes:

- Painting of the railings at Victoria Park
- Litter picking in Marian Gardens
- Works in Formby's Memorial Garden for Remembrance Sunday.

A multi-agency meeting took place on Friday 29th September after reports of ASB in and around the Old Roan Interchange. Partners who attended included Ward Councillors, Merseyside Police, Network Rail, Merseytravel, a Registered Provider and members of the Copy Lane residents association. A list of actions has been agreed and these will be monitored over the coming months.

Consultation for the Litherland Together Project has taken place with residents (mainly within the Ford Ward area). This consultation was held in conjunction with various partner organisations with the purpose of establishing what additional support, advice and information local residents believe they require. This consultation will assist in deciding what support will be provided over the “project week” which will take place at English Martyrs school w/c 20th November.

A school based exercise led by Venus took place with Year 5 and Year 6 pupils of English Martyrs. Pupils were asked a series of questions about life at home, life in the community and life at school. The young people questioned expressed concerns in the following areas:

- Bereavement
- Worry / Friendships
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Gangs particularly in and around parks and shopping areas
- Dealing with emotions – Anger Issues

The school have an excellent bereavement support programme in place to help the young people so no further action is planned in regard to this issue. However, the following support has been arranged for the school to help address some of the young people’s concerns:

- Get Away N Get Safe to be delivered February 2018
- Evolve – Tackling Legal Highs and Volatile Substances – to be delivered w/c 20th November
- Dogs Trust – Responsible Dog Ownership Assemblies – to be delivered 27th September
- Scrambler Bike Project with Merseyside Police – Ongoing
- Catch 22 have also been approached to deliver session around Child Exploitation.

Seven families have signed consent forms to take part in the multi-agency data sharing element of the project. They have allowed us to share their recorded information across agencies. Multi-agency meetings have begun to discuss the families in detail and to assign them a key worker. Agencies identified via action plans as being most important to the family will be based in the school throughout the project week w/c 20th November.

£20,000 funding was secured from a Registered Provider to provide diversionary youth activities throughout the summer period in South Sefton. Youth organisations including, Litherland Youth and Community Centre, The Brunswick, Christ Church Youth and Community Centre and the Carragher Foundation provided diversionary activities and trips for local young people and their families. A number of residential breaks also took place.

Activities took place in local parks and resulted in some youths crossing internal gang borders including:

- Football tournament – inter ward final
- Segway’s
- Multi Sports events
- Navigation experiences
- Basketball
- Animal sanctuary visits to the parks
- Cinema trips
- 3 residential events

Merseyside Police have indicated a 54% reduction of anti-social behaviour in South Sefton compared to the same period in 2016. Further activities are planned for the October half term and the

Halloween/Banger period. A Proceeds of Crime Act application for £65,000 will be submitted in November which, if successful, will secure the future of this project for 2018.

Community Transition Fund

To date £539,576 has been approved with £485,617 remaining. The guidance and application form has been amended following the last Cabinet Member briefing to include more information about project's contributing to the Council's Core Purpose. Options for running a loan system as part of the fund are being examined with our Legal and Finance departments.

Domestic Abuse

Action Plans developed for the IDVA Team, MARAC and the SSCP following the recommendations from the LSCB's multi-agency audit on domestic abuse were discussed at the last LSCB Performance and Quality Assurance Group. Following the review of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), a number of process and procedures have been updated. These will be shared with partners on a MARAC refresher day being held on 10 November 2017.

The Level 2 multi-agency domestic abuse training has now been drafted and is expected to start being delivered from October 2017 by SWACA and the IDVA team. The Senior IDVA and MARAC Co-ordinator delivered Domestic Abuse and MARAC briefing to Sefton Magistrates on 23 September 2017 which was well received and a further session has already been requested.

Work is underway to develop a joint Merseyside wide commissioning specification for sexual violence support services. This is being led by NHS England North and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, working with Local Authority CSP Leads and CCGs. The aim of this is to provide a consistent offer for victims of sexual assault and rape (of any age or gender) across the Merseyside area. Currently Sefton provides funding from the PCC Community Safety Fund to RASA for an ISVA post. Sefton's Public Health team are also considering whether they could contribute to funding. Due to the level of potential funding in this contract a pre-procurement report requires approval by Cabinet Member. This will be available for consideration at the next Cabinet Member briefing.

Sefton has started attending Liverpool City Council's Sexual Violence in the Night Time Economy steering group which is chaired by their CSP lead. There is an opportunity to work together on a joint campaign (which could potentially be expanded across Merseyside) and to use their plan to help develop some key actions on sexual violence to be added to Sefton's Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.

There is potential for Sefton to contribute to a Merseyside wide public campaign on Domestic Abuse as part of International Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls Day on 25 November and the following 16 days of action until 16 December. This is being led by Liverpool City Council and Merseyside Police. Further information on what this would involve is being sought.

Equality and Diversity

The Equality and Diversity policy has been presented at Strategic Leadership Board for Heads of Service to review and understand any impact on their service. Cabinet Member has reviewed the draft and the policy will shortly be sent out for consultation.

Welfare Reform

The Children's access to food programme ran during the 6 weeks holidays and supported some of the most vulnerable families within our communities. 3,981 meals were provided from 9 centres across the Borough.

Following the Universal Credit event in August awareness sessions have taken place with a mixture of Voluntary, Community and Faith, and Council staff in attendance. The workshops highlight the changes individuals will expect to see during the roll out of Universal Credit and are aimed at giving frontline staff the information necessary to support residents through the changes.

INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES

Targeted Youth Prevention (TYP)

Digital Advantage

The Digital Advantage project took place in August with 12 candidates selected from Targeted Youth Prevention and Youth Offending Team (YOT) cohorts. Some of the young people were challenging as they had emotional and behavioural issues and some had not been in full time education for a considerable time.

Two out of the 12 young people received an Outstanding Achievement Award for their exceptional contributions. One young man who was selected from the Youth Offending group, was really proud of himself having worked through the project, this significantly improved his self-confidence and ambition to be in work. He engaged with Sefton at Work and on Friday 1st September he was successfully interviewed for a full time role within Sefton Councils cleansing department.

Peel Road /Balfour Street project

As part of a multi-agency initiative the youth bus has been located in the Peel Road and Balfour Street area of Bootle for two evenings a week to provide diversionary activities to children and young people to address anti-social behaviour in the area. Area workers have seen a visible decline in groups suspected of drug dealing and engaging in anti-social behaviour and increased engagement with young people and families who have enjoyed street activities.

New Beginnings Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) – Southport

The New Beginnings LGBT group for the north of the borough began in Southport Family Centre on Wednesday the 20th of September. This complements the LGBT project being delivered in the central area at Crosby Youth Centre. Sue Logie (lead worker) and young people from the project are also supporting Venus to enable them to deliver a LGBT project in the south of the borough this means that young people will be able to access LGBT provision borough wide.

Culture Shifts – Positive Changes, Young People’s Photography Project

The Culture Shifts Positive Changes young people’s photography exhibition evening took place on Tuesday 12th of September at the Atkinson. Numerous young people attended plus parents, carer’s, friends and workers from other agencies including the Assistant Chief Constable from Merseyside Police. The young people who participated in the project gave the audience an insight into their work and gave a musical performance which included their own original songs. The evening was a successful family and community event. The exhibition is on until the 4th November at the Atkinson then selected images will be exhibited at the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool.

The exhibition will then travel to Bootle Town Hall and be shown for a period of 4 weeks in the Assembly Room, then will go on a tour of Sefton’s libraries for the wider community to enjoy.

Youth Offending Team (YOT)

Safeguarding Concerns at Youth Offending Institutes and Secure Training Centres

On 24th July 2017, Sefton YOT received a letter from HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) regarding inspections at Youth Offender Institutes (YOI’s) and Secure Training centres (STC’s) within the Secure Estate. The letter notes the results of inspections completed in 2016 as being of concern, including at Wetherby YOI which was rated as “not sufficiently good”. The 2017 inspection at Wetherby has yet to be published.

Action plans are in place at every YOI and STC in response to the recommendations made by HM Prison and Probation Service with particular regard to young people safety.

Sefton YOT will continue to monitor the safety and welfare of Sefton children in custody and meet National Standards in completing statutory visits at the minimum frequency of two months or sooner if this is required. Sefton’s YOT Manager is satisfied that there is an open line of communication with YJB colleagues to immediately raise concerns should they arise.

Merseyside Court Merger

At present, Liverpool, Knowsley and St Helens young people attending court are listed at Liverpool Queen Elizabeth 11 buildings in the Youth Court. The intention is that all five borough courts will centralise with one Youth Court within Liverpool. Sefton Youth Court is scheduled to close on 15th January 2018 therefore from that date, Sefton young people will be listed at Liverpool Youth Court.

Liverpool City Council already manages the youth court with a team of staff and to manage the additional listings to deliver a Merseyside wide court service, the boroughs will support the team with officer's support.

LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES

Refurbishments at Bootle and Meadows Libraries

The final phase of refurbishments at Bootle and Meadows library took place in July when both libraries had new flooring installed. The installations took place over a weekend to minimise public disruption. Bootle Library had new carpet laid and the subsidence in the floor repaired while Meadows Library had a new vinyl floor laid on the ground floor.

Beyond the War Memorials Project

The Library service has secured £10,000 of HLF funding to deliver a community project called Beyond the War Memorials. Designed to tie in with the 100 years commemorations of the end of World War I in 2018, the project will engage with schools, community groups and volunteers across Sefton. They will research the lives of the people listed on the 11 Civic War Memorials. This information will be plotted on a digital map of Sefton and the current owners of the property will receive a letter informing them of the previous occupier. A website will be created bringing all the information on Sefton's casualties to be used by schools, researchers and family members in the future.

Summer Reading Challenge – new record

This year's annual Summer Reading Challenge took place over the summer holidays. The library service had a tall order to compete with last year's figures which saw Sefton have the highest completion rate in the North West.

This year the number of children signed up to the challenge was on a par with last year but the completion rate improved from 68% to 74%. This sets a new record of achievement for the children of Sefton and something to aspire to next year.

Community Digi- day

Bootle Library hosted an interactive ICT day delivered by Barclay's Digital Eagles. The Digital Eagles brought with them virtual reality headsets, mini-bots, programmable lego and a 3D printer. Members of the public and children had a play with the interactive devices designed to teach people basic computer coding. The highlight of the day was the 3D printer and the community were fascinated with how it printed a 3D object throughout the day.

THE ATKINSON

For Armistice Day 2017, The Atkinson commemorates the impact of war past and present, with a programme of talks, events and activities, organised in partnership with Veterans in Sefton and Sefton Libraries. This is part of an ongoing, borough-wide programme of events leading up to the centenary of Armistice Day in 2018. There are currently a number of different projects and initiatives that show how the First World War impacted on the borough – in a unique way.

On Saturday 11 November, 11-4pm The Atkinson is presenting an important series of talks and films that showcase **Maghull and the Great War Remembered: Shell Shock –the impact and aftermath** an ongoing project exploring the ground-breaking treatment of shell shock at Moss Side hospital during the First World War. There will be opportunities to explore Sefton's First World War heritage through an exhibition of banners and visitors can do their own research as well as talk to our Volunteer researchers. There will be a performance by the Maghull Parish Handbell ringers.

Veterans in Sefton will share their stories and discuss the importance of the work they do in providing local support and help for Sefton soldiers today who suffer from PTSD.

Bill Esterson MP, Sefton Central, has been championing the heritage of Moss Side for a number of years, and he will be attending the event at 1pm. We are also delighted that the Mayor of Sefton and the Mayor of Maghull will also attending, and extend the invitation to all Councillors.

Event Objectives:

Mental Health Awareness

1. Raise awareness of Veterans in Sefton and the instant support it can offer to ex-service men and women and their families
2. Inform and signpost people and their families of the pathway for recovery
3. Help break stigma around subject of PTSD
4. Highlight importance of Early Intervention with PTSD

Target audience – veterans and their families and wider community

Local Heritage and Pride of Place

1. Promote The Atkinson's **Maghull and the Great War Remembered: Shell Shock –the impact and aftermath** project and the importance of local community history
2. Raise awareness of The Atkinson and the stories it tells
3. Promote volunteering at The Atkinson

Target audience – people interested in family and local history

Funding and Fundraising

British Legion Poppy Day collection

Donations box and collections throughout the day to raise money for Veterans in Sefton and The Atkinson Development Trust

The event is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund **First World War: then and now**.

HOUSING

Liverpool City Region

I represent the Council on the Sub-Regional Housing & Spatial Planning Board (feeds into the LCR Combined Authority Strategic Agenda) and plans had been progressing with identifying sub-regional Housing Needs and Strategy.

However, as this was becoming a complex piece of work that could take a long time to deliver, the Board agreed to focus on production of a 'Housing Delivery Plan', aimed at increasing the pace of delivery of new homes across the sub-region. The delivery plan will focus on investment needs, primarily to help deliver all types of housing within both Sefton and across the City Region for which there is significant demand, with estimates running as high as 40,000 homes needed by 2030.

Recently the Homes and Communities Agency announced the availability of a Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to help unlock large housing development schemes. Part of the fund is only available for Combined Authorities to bid for. The LCR CA have a completed a bid and application for the city region, which was submitted at the end of September 2017.

I have overseen this process and engagement on behalf of Sefton.

Registered Provider Sector

We are looking to re-establish new relationships with the Registered Provider (RP) sector in the context of their operating models and principles. It is apparent to many that some are increasingly behaving as private companies; we need to redefine our partnerships in this context, particularly given other regulatory changes.

There are also opportunities to work positively with housing associations on issues such as welfare reform, improving health outcomes, sharing data and support to deliver council priorities, which I would like to explore in 2017/18.

Work by a collaboration of 5 housing associations has led to a successful Estates Renewal bid focussing on parts of Bootle. The value of the bid was £150k, and was seeking a share of the £30 million of 'enabling funding'. Enabling funding is provided to help landlords at the early stage of estate regeneration proposals, and to help them develop such proposals.

The RP consortia have confirmed they will use this funding to pay for consultancy work to look at designing a collaborative investment plan for all RPs property in the area. The funding provides an opportunity to allow us to collectively look at the issues in the area, and come up with some plans to address these issues over the next 12 months or so.

Homes and Community Agency

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) have announced a number of programmes and funding, which are designed to help deliver new house building. Some specifics:

- £1.7bn accelerated construction fund – aimed at bringing forward surplus public sector land. HCA will require developers to build at a faster pace on selected sites. Sefton submitted an expression of interest in February, and we have been invited to submit proposals, with Bellway Homes, for the former Peoples & TT Cables site in Bootle. We will be liaising with HCA and develop proposals over the coming months;
- Housing Infrastructure Fund, which was launched on the 4th of July and is a capital grant programme of up to £2.3billion nationally: Any funding will be awarded to Local Authorities on a "highly competitive basis" providing grant funding for new infrastructure to unlock new homes in areas of greatest housing demand. Two programmes exist to support infrastructure. This includes the 'Marginal Viability Fund' available to all Councils, and the 'Forward Funding Programme' available to upper tier authorities including Combined Authorities (see above LCR comments). The funding is available over four years from 2017/18 to 2020/21, and needs to be committed by March 2021. I have approved a Sefton bid for infrastructure funding to help deliver new housing on the 503-509 Hawthorne Road site, which recently secured outline planning approval.

Housing Development Company

I am the Cabinet Member sponsoring the investigation to set up a council wholly owned housing company that could build and sell (and/or rent properties). For just over a year a project team has investigated the viability of establishing a company to develop new housing across the borough primarily for Sefton residents to purchase.

Cabinet received a report with Final Business Case at its October 2017 meeting, and after considering the report in detail approved the creation of a Sefton Council wholly owned housing development company.

Over the next few months, the company will be formally established and will then begin to bring forward detailed designs and proposals for priority sites across the borough. There are a lot of detailed activities to be addressed during the transition to delivery period, leading to the legal establishment of the company.

The activities fall under broad headings, covering:

- (i) Corporate & Governance arrangements, such as the development of the formal governance arrangements, setting out in more detail decisions the Council will take as shareholder and decisions the company will take;
- (ii) People and support services arrangements for the company will include recruiting suitable lead staff, and providing Service Level Agreements to pay for council support services;
- (iii) Development preparation including determining the right constructor procurement arrangements;
- (iv) Financial arrangements for funding and financial management of the company

Private Rented Sector Licencing

We are progressing well with the private landlord licensing scheme. We urgently need licensing schemes in Bootle, Seaforth/Waterloo and Southport. A formal report and business case was approved by Cabinet on 1st December 2016, setting out our proposals.

Legal provisions will enable us to have three different schemes - focusing on the licensing of all private landlords in Bootle, but developing stronger 'Additional HMO' licensing schemes to cover more types of HMO properties for Southport and Waterloo.

A formal 12 week consultation, required by Law, was undertaken over 12 weeks between 1st of April and the 24th June 2017. This consultation was widely promoted, and we received almost 2,000 responses. Overall the responses were supportive of the Council's proposals.

Cabinet formally approved the establishment of these schemes on the 7th of September. The draft programme should see the three schemes implemented in Sefton by March 2018. I will update colleagues regularly as we make progress with these proposals.

High Rise Fire Safety

Since the awful events suffered in the fire at Grenfell Towers in London, all high-rise residential properties have been subject to fire safety concerns. The Government required all (stock owning) Local Authorities and housing associations to submit samples of cladding materials for fire safety testing. One Vision Housing (OVH) own two high-rise blocks, which were found to have external cladding made of aluminium composite materials (ACMs), which had failed Government fire safety tests. OVH responded immediately to remove this cladding.

Since then the Council (together with Merseyside Fire & Safety Service) have worked with OVH to ensure the safety of residents who live in the buildings. OVH came forward with their preferred solution for the treatment of the blocks and replacement of the cladding in September 2017, and submitted a planning application which was approved early in October. OVH will be implementing works as soon as possible.

Council officers together with Merseyside Fire & Safety Service have undertaken fire safety audits of all (21) high rise buildings in Sefton over July and August, to ensure they are safe. Officers from Housing Standards and Building Control have spent approximately 270 hours of work on inspecting the properties, and completing reports for the owners in conjunction with MF&RA.

Follow up visits will be undertaken to ensure building owners have addressed any remedial works identified and I have agreed further communications that will be managed with Sefton MP's at the request from the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Housing and Planning Act - Private rented sector enforcement

The Act was introduced in the summer of 2016 and includes six measures designed to tackle rogue landlords and property agents:

- Banning orders for most prolific offenders;
- Database of rogue landlords/property agents;
- Civil penalties of up to £30,000;
- Extension of Rent Repayment Orders;
- Tougher Fit and Proper Person test for landlords;
- Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme data sharing.

However, all of these new measures will require new regulations to be introduced by Government before they can be implemented. For example the Government has recently issued a consultation on what offences could result in a banning order. Following this consultation the Government has indicated that it will seek to introduce regulations to come into force in October 2017. I intend to review the Council's own housing enforcement policies when there is greater clarity over these new measures.

In the meantime officers in the Housing Standards team take enforcement actions and occasional prosecutions.

Housing Development

Developer Bellway Homes have made progress with remediation and site preparation works on the Klondyke Phase 2&3 site, which is the final phase of new development from the former HMRI programme. Bellway Homes began construction of new housing in August 2017. Communications have been ongoing with local residents and will continue.

I was recently asked to provide a response to a question raised at full Council concerning the number of new homes built in the borough. The figures below show the gains and losses of dwelling units in the 2016/17 year. These include changes from developments including conversions, changes of use, new build and demolitions:

Ward	Change from conversions	Gains from New Build	Losses from Demolitions	Overall net change
Ainsdale	0	34	-2	32
Birkdale	0	15	0	15
Blundellsands	12	7	-1	18
Cambridge	30	1	0	31
Church	22	0	0	22
Derby	11	0	0	11
Dukes	16	5	0	21
Ford	0	34	-2	32
Harington	-2	8	-1	5
Kew	3	19	0	22
Linacre	196	38	0	234
Litherland	0	2	0	2
Manor	2	4	0	6
Meols	-1	16	0	15
Molyneux	0	0	0	0
Netherton & Orrell	1	66	0	67
Norwood	2	1	0	3
Park	2	1	0	3
Ravenmeols	1	26	-2	25
St Oswald	0	0	0	0
Sudell	1	2	0	3
Victoria	5	47	-13	39
TOTAL	301	326	-21	606

As can be seen within these figures, there is a large gain in Linacre ward in the conversions column, this is exceptionally high due to the Daniel House conversion - from an office building to 180 apartments.

The table below shows all the New Build sites where more than 15 units have been completed within the year:

Ward	Site Ref	Developer – Site details	Units in year
Ainsdale	S0221	McCarthy & Stone – Fmr Ainsdale Car Sales Mill Road Ainsdale	32
Ford	B0153	Adactus – Sefton Road Netherton	19
Kew	S11	David Wilson Homes – Town Lane Kew	19
Linacre	B0144	Gleeson Homes – For St Joan of Arc Church Peel Rd Bootle	19
Netherton & Orrell	B0135	Bellway - Crown Speciality Packaging Netherton	54
Ravenmeols	F0140	Bellway - Powerhouse Site Formby	20
Victoria	C0144	McCarthy & Stone – Moor Lane Crosby	46

Homeless Services and Housing Options Service

The Council has a legal duty to adopt a Homelessness Strategy. We adopted the current strategy back in September 2013, together with a Delivery Plan. Together with our service delivery partners, we have reviewed the delivery plan, and I have approved an updated version with a number of new actions. During

the course of 2018, we will have to undertake a formal review of homelessness in Sefton, with a view to adopting a new strategy by September 2018.

The Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) received royal ascent in April. The Act is due to come into force from April 2018. The principle behind the Act is to confer a legal duty on local authorities to provide homeless prevention services to all people who are potentially homeless. This mirrors the current legislation already enacted in Wales.

The current legislation (Housing Act 1996 as amended) broadly states that we must provide “housing advice to all” and “homeless assessment and resolution to those in priority need”. There was previously no legislation covering what is referred to as “prevention activity,” rather it is promoted as value for money good practice. Most local authorities only offer specific homeless prevention services to those who are deemed to be in priority need.

The Act will enforce a statutory duty to provide homeless prevention services to all people who are threatened with homelessness irrespective of whether they are in priority or not. The Act will offer more protection for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, at an earlier stage, to a greater number of people than we are currently obliged to assist.

We will need to monitor and assess the impact of the new measures on the demand for Council services, particularly as we move toward the introduction of Locality teams in 2018 as part of the Councils Public Sector Reform Programme.

Leasehold house sales

At its September meeting, this O&S Committee considered a report on leasehold house sales, as requested at a Meeting of the Council held on 26 January 2017. The report showed the extent of leasehold house sales nationally and in Sefton over recent years. Committee will have noted the high proportion of leasehold house sales in Sefton in recent years (eg 92.7% in 2016-17).

However the purchasers of these homes, including a large number of first-time buyers (including those within Sefton) are increasingly complaining that; at the point of sale they are not being made fully aware of the associated and ongoing costs of buying a leasehold property. Members of the Committee share concerns about the alleged abuses of leaseholders by housing developers or the companies who take on the freehold titles.

The Government have responded to these concerns and undertook a consultation exercise in advance of potential new legislation. I can confirm that I submitted a response to this consultation on behalf of Sefton Council, to share the evidence on leasehold house sales in Sefton, to express the concerns about the alarmingly rapid rise in new build houses sold as leasehold and support reform which results in new house sales which can no longer be sold as leasehold.

I will also be working with officers to investigate whether information can be placed on the Council’s website offering guidance on leasehold sales, including a “jargon buster”, to help raise the awareness of the issues of leasehold house sales.