

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills – 21st January 2020)		
COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Patricia Hardy	Communities and Housing	21 st January 2020

NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Area Co-ordination

The Community skip programmes across the borough continue to grow and are welcomed by the community.

- Netherton and Orrell programme has collected **7.28** tonnes of waste.
- Ford ward programme has collected **8.98** tonnes of waste.
- Church ward programme has collected **6.72** tonnes of waste.
- A new programme started in Manor Ward in October and has so far collected **4.82** tonnes. The skips are sited every two weeks alternating between each end of Woodend Avenue.
- The final phase of the programme in Knowsley Road and Albany Road in Southport will take place in the first two weeks of January. Previous skips have been well used.
- A skip will be placed in Preesall Close in January. The close has recently suffered from fly tipping.

The Firework display in Netherton took place on Tuesday 5th November and was very successful. An estimated 17,000 spectators viewed the display across 2 viewing areas. This year's display was launched by Arthur Snellgrove an 84-year-old local school crossing attendant who this year celebrated 20 years crossing children and parents safely on St Oswalds swing bridge in Netherton.

The event was supported by Merseyside Police who provided 3 Officers and 5 PCSOs and Sefton Youth Service who had 5 Sefton Youth workers in attendance. There were no reports of ASB on the evening.

Christmas light switch on events were delivered as planned across the borough.

Netherton's event was well attended and delivered activities all day including a Christmas market, Santa's Grotto and School Choirs.

L21 Network hosted the Kirkstone Road Christmas Light Switch on event held in Kirkstone Park. Some of the lights on the shops will need replacing for next year. Ford ward members are looking at options to ensure that these are replaced for Christmas 2020.

Ford Ward members met with Merseyside Police, Green Sefton and Community safety to discuss issues residents have been reporting about Anti-Social Behaviour in the Hatton Hill area. A flyer will be distributed to residents in the area in January to inform them of actions taken so far and projects that will be delivered in the future including working with Everton in the Community delivering diversionary activities in the area in partnership with Litherland Youth and Community Centre and Sefton Youth Service.

Sefton Borough of Culture

A small grants funding opportunity was launched on the 16th December. The process will offer groups and organisations the opportunity to apply for funding up to £15,000. There will be two application forms. One for projects up to £5,000 and one for £5,000 -£15,000.

The Borough of Culture steering group will review and authorise applications up to £5,000. Applications for over £5,000 will be reported to Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing to review and authorise.

Welfare Reform

Food bank

1 April – 31 August 2019	South Sefton	Southport
Total Vouchers received	3788	1384
Adults Fed	4746	1183
Children Fed	3164	1265
Total Fed	7910	3148
Crisis Type	Low income - 1757 vouchers presented 34793 people fed	Low income – 680 vouchers presented 1481 people fed
Family Type	Single 2126 vouchers presented 56.12%	Single 659 vouchers presented 47.62%
Age group	No Data available	25 – 64 1628 people

Hate Crime

New dates have been set for hate crime awareness training to be delivered at the Ainsdale learning and development centre. Feedback from sessions continues to be excellent. Sessions are attended by Sefton staff and staff and volunteers from partner agencies.

Following a meeting of the Equal Voice network which discussed racism in Sefton schools, Merseyside Police will deliver sessions in schools that will talk to children about the issues and training sessions will be provided for school governors in February and May.

Equalities

Ability Plus group meeting with staff from Sefton CCG's to attend to discuss issues around healthcare in the area took place on the 2nd of December at Southport Town Hall. Issues raised included accessible information, particularly audio information for people with visual impairments, and issues around transport. The group is planning a meeting in February with a transport theme, looking at the difficulties that people with disabilities face when using the transport network.

Discussions are taking place with staff from Sefton Learning and Development team to set new dates for Equality Impact Assessment training for Sefton staff in 2020.

IYS

First Time Entrants

Sefton continues to be proactive through prevention strategies, particularly with out of court disposals and the use of Community Resolution. FTE's are locally tracked at the end of each quarter using data from the YOT Database. Local tracking shows a reduction in all quarters for financial year 2018/19 and continued reduction comparing Q1 2018/19 with 17 FTE's to Q1 2019/20 with 10 FTE's.

Re-Offending

Local tracking also shows a reduction in Court Disposals during the first two quarters of 2019 compared with 2018. In Q1, 2018 there were 36 Court Disposals compared with 22 in Q1 2019 and in Q2, 2018 there were 34 Court Disposals compared with 24 in Q2 2019. There have been no Custodial Sentences in 2019 compared with two in Q2 of 2018.

Custody

Sefton's custody rate continues to be the lowest in the last four years. However, a young person has very recently been sentenced to 12 months in custody, YOT will review this young person and present findings to the Cabinet Member as to whether this was a foreseeable risk.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

The RJ Lead for YOT is currently delivering the 'International Institute for Restorative Practice' training to a group of staff from YOT and IMPACT (pupil referral unit) volunteers preparing to become YOT Community Panel Members. The training is delivered over four days and includes a written test which can lead to accreditation for those who complete successfully. This training is recognised by the Restorative Justice Council and the Youth Justice Board as equipping staff and volunteers with a well proven methodology for delivering restorative intervention.

YOT Management Board Development Session

As part of the improvement journey, YOT Management Board members attended a development session including some new members to the Board including senior representatives from Venus, Adaction and CAMHS.

Sue Walker from the Youth Justice Board attended to discuss the Revised National Standards and the requirement to complete a thorough self-assessment of the implementation of the new standards which is due for submission in April 2020.

The board was very interested to hear the story first hand of a young man's progress whilst being supervised by YOT. The 17-year-old boy attended the session to talk about how his relationship with the YOT has helped him move on from serious crime to desistance from offending and into employment.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Programme

In November, the ACEs recovery toolkit adopted in a pilot programme which will be delivered in partnership with Early Help Thornton Family Wellbeing Centre and Holy Family High School. The target group will include targeting 13 young people who are displaying adversities in an educational setting. These will include young people aged 12-17, young people with low level mental health needs, young people who are not reaching their educational attainment goals, those displaying some additional needs (ASD) and Young Carers. The programme will be delivered over a 10-week period and will be fully evaluated.

Youth Service

Youth Bus

Staff on the Youth Bus have continued to support groups in and around the area of Bootle North Park, Peel Road, Queens Road, Seaforth, Litherland, Maghull and Netherton.

Staff continue to make contact with over 100 young people and families each week with a Christmas party being planned for 10th December.

Duke of Edinburgh Awards

Youth Workers continue to work in partnership with the VIBE at Linacre Community Hub on Tuesday evenings delivering Duke of Edinburgh award activity. The young people involved come from different schools and backgrounds and are participating in expedition training. Some young people are referred into the project from Family and Wellbeing centres, however it is hoped that more young people from the centre itself will be encouraged to form a new group.

Melling

The group mainly run by volunteers with the assistance of Sefton Youth Service continues to be well attended. Some of the young people have been helping in the community by assisting the Melling in Bloom project. Young people continue to maintain their health and wellbeing by joining in various group activities including football and skipping. There have been darts and table tennis tournaments with the young people showing their competitive natures when faced with a challenge. A Christmas party has been arranged for the week before shut down as well as a trip to the ice rink. Young people now have the materials ready to make Christmas cards and decorations over the coming weeks.

New Beginnings

The New Beginnings members are taking part in two sessions with The Open Eye Gallery this month. The young people now have copies of the 'Zine' magazine designed as part of the last project with The Open

Eye and the Atkinson. Copies of this were given to senior management at the last SYMBOL meeting to evidence the powerful work undertaken.

On average, we have around 25 young people involved with New Beginnings. There are multiple outcomes with young people as they discuss various topics including Mental Health, Relationships and issues around school/college.

They are now working towards the Ticket To Pride project with a launch event being planned for March. The event will take place at Southport Railway station. The marketing information is already in progress to include both the Sefton and New Beginnings logos.

Linacre Mission

Young people continue to take part in a programme relating to Knife Crime particularly looking at impact on the community Staff also continue to offer a variety of games and activities as well as drum and guitar lessons. Workers also continue to deliver outreach work when needed and have supported other youth sessions by covering staff annual leave.

SYMBOL

As reported to cabinet last month the latest SYMBOL meeting saw young people and Youth Work staff join with Cllr Hardy, Cllr Maher, Cllr Fairclough, Head of Communities Tanya Wilcock and Locality Manager Chris White to discuss youth funding. Tanya Wilcock spoke about funding reduction and the impact on the service. Cllr Hardy gave a presentation reiterating her commitment to Youth Services and made reference to the consultation that is taking place nationally. Table top activities for young people included an opportunity for them to share their views about the level of availability of youth services and the impact an increase/decrease of sessions may have. The next meeting will discuss Young People and Employment.

Youth Voice / Member of Youth Parliament (MYP)

The Youth Voice group / MYPs attended the last Youth Foria of the year on Sunday 1st of December at FireFit in Toxteth. The Sefton group will soon be meeting up with other Youth Voice/cabinet and MYP's from across the North West. The theme for the meeting will be Environment and Being Green. This will also end the year and be a celebration event.

LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES

£74,000 boost in funding for the Human Library Project

Arts Council England have announced that they are extending the funding of the Human Library project for a further 18 months. The £74,000 will be used to extend the geographical scope of the project to the Netherton and Crosby areas. The project will deliver creative activities to engage with socially isolated residents and encourage their community participation. The successful delivery model will draw on the experiences of the original project to effectively target those residents in need.

Tech Lab Sessions

For National Libraries Week, libraries ran some unique ICT awareness sessions for adults using Ozobots, microbits and Raspberry pie devices. 2 members of staff ran several sessions aimed at showing adults the basics of computer coding and how to program the devices to carry out simple tasks such as remote messaging or turning a raspberry pie into a pedometer. The staff who volunteered to lead the sessions were mentored by senior staff and the sessions were as much a personal development programme for them, as it was for members of the public. They have now gained experience in delivering projects and delivering activities. Further sessions are planned, including the use of 3D printing.

Chronic Pain Support Group

Libraries ran a new initiative in November to support residents living with Chronic Pain. An estimated 78,000 Sefton residents live with chronic pain, but there are very few support opportunities available,

particularly in the Crosby/ Waterloo area. Led by a library apprentice, who lives with chronic pain herself, Crosby Library ran the first of 6 pilot sessions targeting residents. The idea is to create a self-sustaining support group that will meet at the library with a view to combating isolation and mental health issues of people living with chronic pain. Guest speakers have been invited each month. This sessions' speakers were from the Brain Charity who spoke to a full house about the services and strategies available to alleviate the effects of chronic pain. The group will meet once a month at Crosby Library and if the pilot is successful, libraries will look to extend the project to a wider area.

Home Visit Service 30 years old

The home visits round at Meadows library has been in operation for 30 years this month. This service is co-ordinated by the Library Service but deliveries are carried out entirely by volunteers. They deliver books to residents who are unable to leave their homes. Remarkably, two of the original volunteers from day one, Rita Addison and Lynn Fairlie, still make deliveries. Over the years they will have taken books out to thousands of housebound readers, helping them continue to enjoy their reading and providing a valuable connection with the outside world.

THE ATKINSON

Exhibition programme

The Art Society worked with and funded The Atkinson to hold a series of workshops for local schools and colleges linked to the Westwood exhibition. The sessions were run by Lesley Raven, the Programme Leader BA (Hons) Fashion Art Direction from Manchester Metropolitan University and ten of her students. Classes were aimed at students studying fashion, textiles, photography and fine art. It was originally planned to hold one class but the demand was so great that the workshops ran for three days and involved 137 students from 7 schools.

The first Palette Club Invitation exhibition was very successful with sales of 18 paintings totalling £3205 and commission and hire fees of more than £1200.

Programming

The Atkinson Development Trust has funded subsidised places for over 550 schoolchildren from 11 Sefton schools to see Christmas shows at The Atkinson's theatre. The funding was targeted at schools with a high Pupil Premium, 8 of the 11 schools are from the south of the borough, including schools from Litherland, Bootle, Seaforth and Netherton.

Public Engagement

Access Change upgrade works scheduled to start in February. £10K funding from National Lottery Awards for All together with £3k funding from The Atkinson Development Trust. Access change will be developed in to a Changing Places facility, installed by Astor Bannerman contractors, who held the quote for three years whilst we sourced funding. We worked closely with Southport Access For Everyone (SAFE) and some of our disabled patrons to best describe how this facility will transform their experience here. Any visitors to Southport will find a much-improved facility with up to date fixtures and fittings to allow greater independence.

Library and Information Service

Early Years New Music Project beginning at the start of 2020. Sky Music Hub's successful BID from National Lottery Awards for All funding to work across Sefton and Knowsley.

Brighter Sound, in partnership with Note Weavers will recruit a mentor to support the process, and to organise delivery for CPD opportunities for volunteers who currently work with the library's story and rhyme time audiences. £1000 instrument budget available to spend across three library centres. Project will allow practitioners and the community to lead on the selection of instruments. Possible link with Borough of Culture, with an emphasis on 'Our Story'.

HOUSING

Liverpool City Region

I represent the Council on the Sub-Regional Housing & Spatial Planning Advisory Group, which feeds into the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority Strategic Agenda. I have been re-appointed as the Vice Chair of this Advisory Group, for 2019-20. There are number of new LA Member representatives on this Group.

I hope to use this position to have greater influence across the LCR.

The role of the CA is having a growing significance, in particular when the Govt allocate resources to the CA for the whole of the LCR. The CA are looking to work with Homes England to secure resources to help bring forward development of brownfield sites across the sub-region. We are supporting this exercise.

The CA have also been consulting on a LCR Spatial Development Plan. Together with Cabinet Member Planning and Building Control (Cllr Daren Veidman), we will be submitting a response on behalf of Sefton.

Rough Sleepers & Homeless services

In November 2018, we undertook an annual 'formal Rough Sleeper count' and found 11 rough sleepers, 10 of whom were in Southport. Recognising the numbers of individuals who are unable to or cannot use our hostel sit up facilities we have responded with a number of initiatives, including:

- a Winter Cold Weather Shelter (December to February).
- commissioned MerseyCare to provide a health outreach service
- secured funding from MHCLG's Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding 2019/20, to continue to deliver the health based service alongside our homelessness rough sleeper outreach services for a further 12 months
- introduced 8 additional Complex Needs beds within existing hostels, together with enhanced support services
- funding to support clients with 'no recourse to public funding'.

We have submitted a further funding bid under the Government (MHCLG) Homeless Cold Weather initiative for 2019-20 winter period, which has been agreed and will provide an enhanced sit up service over the winter months.

I approved a bid for funding under the Governments 'Rapid Rehousing Pathway initiative', our bid was successful and we will receive funding of £142,000 in 2019/20, which will fund initiatives to increase access to housing for those people within temporary and emergency hostel accommodation or accessing Sit-Up services in order to relieve some of the bed blocking within our homeless hostels. The funding also allows two Navigators to assist clients with high & medium level needs, facilitating access into services and using flexible personalised budgets in order to access whatever a person needs to make progress.

Each year each Local Authority is obliged to advise the MHCLG as to the extent of Rough Sleeping in the borough on an annual basis. The **2019 Rough Sleeper count** is based on a single, typical night between 1 October and 30 November and as we have done in previous years the Councils within the Liverpool City region co-ordinated our Counts on the same night. The 'typical night' chosen for the estimate was the evening of the 12nd November to the morning of the 13th November 2019.

A spotlight-count was carried out in both Bootle and Southport town centre this year simultaneously. This was followed by an estimation meeting where the data from the Spotlight Count was shared with various partner agencies to verify the data. The count has now also been validated by Homeless Link. The total number of rough sleepers in Sefton on this year's chosen night was **two (2)**.

The reduction in rough sleepers in 2019 compared to 2018 can be largely attributed to the good partnership working by our commissioned services. The external MHCLG funding has also had an impact due to introduction of the different additional services mentioned above.

The LCR CA are leading on the development of a **Housing First homeless initiative**. This is a Housing and Support service model for homeless people with multiple and complex needs, that existing services are unable to effectively support. Unlike a traditional homeless service approach, clients will be assisted to

move directly into their own home and receive adequate support for as long as they require. This service is being rolled out on a 'test and learn' basis from July, with a full roll out of the service later this financial year.

The CA have recruited staff teams to deliver the test and learn phase of the service.

During the Test and Learn Phase, Sefton have utilised our Complex Needs Panel (chaired by Sefton Housing Options) to consider suitable cases and make referrals to the Housing First Service.

We submitted 19 potential cases, and to date attempts to engage with 13 are in the process; 3 are engaging with their existing support providers in order to present them with a Housing First offer; 2 are on the watch & wait list. To date 1 client has been rehoused in Sefton.

The CA originally indicated that in the Test & Learn phase they would have capacity to take 60 clients from across the Liverpool City Region. However, they have decided to recruit two additional support teams during the test and learn phase, which will increase service capacity to 80, when we will be asked to provide additional referrals.

The CA have established a Charter with housing associations which will act as a protocol for sourcing properties for the Housing First clients.

The CA are also commissioning a rough sleeper outreach service, to engage with people who would be suitable for the Housing First initiative.

We have commissioned a 'pilot' temporary accommodation and support service with Riverside housing association, for homeless families who face difficulties accessing their own independent housing. This service went live from 2nd December 2019.

Housing Development Company - Sandway Homes

The Company has been operational since January 2019, with the Council's Head of Commercial Development acting as Managing Director.

Schemes have now been designed for three Council owned sites in the borough with all of the designs being fully compliant with Sefton Council's planning policy.

Planning applications have been submitted and approved for two of the three sites: -

1. Land bordering Barton's Close, Southport: 30 houses for sale (10 Affordable Houses and 20 for open market sale)
2. Land bordering Meadow Lane, Ainsdale: 48 houses for sale (16 Affordable Houses and 32 for open market sale)

Construction is due to start early in 2020.

A planning application for the third site, bordering Buckley Hill Lane in Netherton, is being compiled and is due for submission early in 2020.

Private Rented Sector Licencing

Our 3 private landlord licensing schemes went live on the 1st of March 2018- 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.

We have been actively promoting these schemes to ensure as many landlords as possible apply for Licenses. We have been writing to landlords who have not applied for licenses to inform them to do so, as we uncover unlicensed properties. Final warning letters have been sent out in relation to unlicensed premises. The majority of these have or are now in the process of making an application. Further investigative work is being undertaken on those that have not submitted applications and these will then be considered for enforcement action (Prosecution or Civil Penalty).

As at the end of November, the numbers of full applications is 2370 (previous report 2249) received and partially completed applications of 373 takes the total application figures up to 2743 (previous 2728), which is 91% of the number of premises that we anticipated would require a licence.

We have had some staff turnover over recent months, reducing the capacity within the Housing Standards Team. We have recently carried out Licensing Compliance officer recruitment to 3 vacant posts. Staff began to start in post during October.

Officers have carried out and planned 550 compliance visits (previous report was 502). 45% of properties inspected have been fully compliant on 1st inspection. This figure continues to drop from an initial 49%, as the properties that we are now inspecting are not just those requesting/achieving accreditation, so there are more issues/deficiencies being identified. Where we uncover non-compliance, informal action is taken to give the landlord opportunity to remedy the issues identified. There is a requirement to revisit these properties to ensure compliance, resulting in a higher number of property visits staff have to undertake. Of the 55% non-compliant on first inspection, over 90% were fully compliant on 2nd visit.

638 hazards under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System have been removed from properties as a result of the proactive compliance visits (476 in previous report). Of the 29 hazards that can be identified, Fire safety, Falls between levels, Falls on stairs, Damp & Mould and Electrical hazards were the hazards most commonly identified. Since the schemes began, 113 properties have had serious Category 1 hazards removed (previous report 86 properties).

We have worked with the Anti-social behaviour team and police who have identified some problematic properties in relation to ASB. These properties will be a priority for enforcement for either not having a licence or not complying with the ASB licensing condition.

We had received a number of allegations about landlords or their tenants tipping rubbish outside their properties, particularly in alleyways. We have issued a letter to all landlords reminding them of their duties to help prevent such nuisance and behaviour.

Over 300 final warning letters have been sent out in relation to unlicensed premises. The majority of these have or are now in the process of making an application. We are finding that it is often the case that if we identify one unlicensed property we uncover that the landlord has many more. We have recently had one landlord submit 20 applications after receiving one final warning letter. Several properties are at the "Intention to serve" status for Civil Penalty action and Compliance officers are working through the policy to determine level of fines for each. It is anticipated that the numbers of enforcement action in the form of Civil Penalties or prosecution will steadily increase.

Any properties that are identified as having poor housing conditions, from the receipt of a complaint and do not have a licence application will be prioritised for enforcement action.

The 23 Civil Penalty Notices served on one landlord. A date for mediation with the landlord has been set by the First Tier Housing Tribunal for 9th December 2019 but the appellant did not attend, so a full hearing date will be set, likely in January.

A further Civil Penalty Notice has been served for failure to licence a HMO that requires an Additional HMO licence.

2 x Rent Repayment Orders are being pursued on the 2 properties on which we have had successful prosecutions. The total monies we are seeking to recover is £28,000 in Housing Benefit paid to the landlords whilst the properties were unlicensed. Recovered funds will come to the Service to be spent on housing enforcement activities.

One landlord has been added to the National Rogue Landlord Database. This landlord also appealed to the Crown Court on the level of fine imposed on conviction at the Magistrates Court. The level of fine was significantly reduced to a total of £25,000.

I have recently approved updates to the Housing Strategy Delivery Framework. We have made progress with a number of Actions and housing priorities that were contained in the original Housing Strategy and its Delivery Framework, since its adoption in 2016. Since then there have been wide-ranging new housing policy, legislation and council priorities that have emerged since.

Included in this Delivery Plan is a commitment to look at the feasibility of providing new Council Housing for social rent. In the meantime, Cabinet has given approval to request Sandway Homes to provide up to 5 new Council homes as part of their development proposals.

Extra Care Housing

At its meeting in March, Cabinet considered a report about the future provision of extra care housing for older residents. Together with Councillor Cummins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, I will seek to oversee the work required on the Council's approach to Extra Care Housing. Extra Care Housing has been identified as a model which helps people to live independently at home for longer, thereby either delaying or preventing the need for long-term residential care and helps people to remain well, therefore avoiding Hospital admissions.

We have agreed to fund an additional staff post to lead on this piece of work. Recruitment has been undertaken and we will have someone in post in January 2020.

Empty Homes

I recently reviewed the current position regarding vacant homes within Sefton, and the implementation of the Empty Homes Plan 2019-2024. As at October 2019 the current total proportion of vacant homes in Sefton stands at 4.15%. This equates to 5,304 properties in the Borough. This is a small reduction on the 4.22% in October 2018, and below the past 6 year average annual figure of 4.35%.

The total proportion of vacant homes in the borough has remained relatively static over the past few years, however the long-term average has reduced significantly from a high of 6.2% in 2008.

The current total proportion of properties empty for 6 months or longer stands at 2.2% equating to 2,811 properties. This is a small reduction on the 2.35% in 2018. Again, the proportion of LTVs has remained stable over the past few years.

In terms of progress in delivering our Empty Homes Plan (2019-24),

Our Strategic Aim is to; *'focus our intervention activity to reduce the number of long term privately owned empty properties across the borough, therefore helping to increase housing supply, but more importantly to improve neighbourhood conditions by tackling problematic empty properties.'*

To help achieve this aim, the Empty Homes Plans 2019 – 2024 focuses on three key objectives. In terms of our progress (over the first year of the plan) and the work we have undertaken to deliver the Plan Objectives:

- **Objective 1: Raising awareness of long term empty properties as a wasted resource**

On 20th March 2019, Sefton Council partnered alongside local authorities across Merseyside and Cheshire to host a free 'Empty Homes Event' at Liverpool Town Hall. The aim of the event was to offer advice and support to owners of empty properties across the region.

More than 80 property owners and landlords attended the event, and the feedback given was very positive, as a result, the Sub Regional Empty Homes Group are planning for the event to be held annually.

This event was promoted in the local press, and invitations were sent to owners of long term empty homes, whose properties are in the designated selective licensing area.

The Housing Standards team also regularly write to empty property owners to try to encourage them to bring their property back into use.

- **Objective 2: Encouraging empty property owners, particularly those who own homes in the selective and additional licensing areas, to bring properties back into use through advice and assistance, including early intervention and preventative measures.**

On 22nd July 2019, the Council sent 140 letters and leaflets to property owners who own homes in the selective licensing area, where those properties had been empty for two or more years (and on the 100% premium council tax charge).

18% of the empty property owners responded to this letter, & we were able to gather useful intelligence as to why they had left their properties empty, with the main reasons stated as being; financial, legal and other issues.

After sending the letters, some owners contacted the Council and advised of their intentions for their properties:

- 8 said their properties were undergoing renovations, and it was their intention to bring them back into use;
- 2 said they would be selling their property privately at auction;
- And 1 said that they were now actively seeking tenant(s)

Furthermore, a recent Council Tax search on those targeted properties showed that:

- 11 of the 140 properties are now occupied;
- A further 2 have new owners.

The department's 'proactive' intervention has seen 6% of those long term empty properties come back into use, with an additional 10% likely to be occupied in the next few months.

- **Objective 3: Utilise the full range of enforcement powers to target and bring problematic properties back into use, through cross departmental working, focussing primarily on those empty 2 years or more in the selective and additional licensing areas.**

Sefton Council can take enforcement action if the empty property is causing a statutory nuisance or a public health issue, and if the Owner is being uncooperative or untraceable.

Enforced sale is a particular tool that the Council has been successful in using, especially with regards to long-term empty properties. This procedure is primarily designed as a debt recovery process. However, it provides an effective method for bringing long term, problematic properties back into use, and has been adopted by Councils across the country.

Over the past 8 years, enforcing the sale of empty properties has recovered debts owing to the Council totalling **£352,315.17**. This work brings together the twin aims of maximising the recovery of debts, whilst bringing difficult, empty properties into use.

Social Housing Allocations (Property Pool Plus)

I have recently reviewed information about social housing allocations and lettings. The total number of applicants on the Housing Register is currently 5963, and by Priority Band the largest numbers of applicants are in Band B (30%) and Band E (31%). Looking at bedroom requirements, the largest numbers require 1 bedroom accommodation (57%) and 2 bedrooms (29%).

For comparison purposes, the Total numbers of applicants from the Housing Register at June 2015 was 3929; hence we have seen a significant increase (52%) in the total numbers of applicants since then. However, the distribution of bedroom size needs has broadly remained the same.

In terms of Number of properties becoming available, the number of properties becoming available to let and advertised via the Property Pool Plus (PPP) Allocations service, over Quarter 1 (April to June) 2019, shows the average number of applicants making bids for properties which become available is; 45 bidding for 1 bedroom properties, 59 for 2 bedroom, 109 for 3 bedroom, and 78 for 4 bedroom properties.

In terms of **Nominations** provided to housing associations from the Council's Housing Register, generally housing associations have been expected to provide the Council with 50% nominations. This is seen as an 'industry norm', and help RPs fulfil their duties to assist Council's discharge their housing duties (such as homeless duties). However, in the case of OVH, the stock transfer contract requires them to provide the Council with 75% nominations.

Lettings made via PPP are considered to be nominations, together with some direct lets (made outside of PPP), for example under the Children's services protocol for Care Leavers.

The latest publicly available information published for the Sefton area in 2017/18, shows there was a total of 1761 lettings (new and relets across all RPs) of which 1421 were classed as Choice-based (PPP) lettings (80.7%).

We will continue to monitor the proportions of PPP nominations achieved to ensure that Registered Providers are meeting their required quotas. The Social housing lettings in England, 2018/19: Continuous Recording (CORE) data is due to be released in early 2020 allowing a further examination of the PPP nominations information for the latest period available.

Sefton participates in the Property Pool Plus scheme along with Liverpool, Wirral, Knowsley and Halton Councils, as well as the participating housing associations. The Local Authorities have collectively agreed to review the current Policy and associated service arrangements. An external consultant has been appointed to undertake this exercise, which began in August and will take place over the following 9 months.