

LGA Position Statement 2022





ANOTHER PLACE BY ANTONY GORMLEY

These spectacular sculptures by Antony Gormley are on Crosby beach. Another Place consists of 100 cast-iron, life-size figures spread out along three kilometres of the foreshore, stretching almost one kilometre out to sea.

The Another Place figures - each one weighing 650 kilos - are made from casts of the artist's own body standing on the beach, all of them looking out to sea, staring at the horizon in silent expectation.

Contents

Welcome Back to Sefton from the Leader of the Council	2	Economic Growth	33
Welcome Back from the Chief Executive.....	3	Peer Review Recommendation E - Accelerate work on a local economic growth strategy alongside efforts in the Liverpool City Region.....	33
Our People.....	4	Member Development.....	36
Our Place	6	Peer Review Recommendation F - Develop the role of all members in a changing context for local government and a changing model of delivery locally.....	36
Where is Sefton?.....	6	Looking Forward.....	38
Our Heritage	8	Finances.....	38
Our Council.....	10	Levelling Up	39
Introduction	12	Capacity to Deliver	39
Peer Team Recommendations	13	Climate Emergency.....	41
Update of Key Changes since 2018:.....	13	Digital.....	41
Leadership and Governance	14	Culture.....	42
Our Response to the COVID 19 Pandemic	16	Community Engagement and Partnerships.....	42
Leadership of Place	24	Key documents	42
Our Response to Peer Review Recommendations	26		
Local Priorities and Outcomes	26		
Peer Review Recommendation A - Prioritise the refresh of the core purpose	26		
Peer Review Recommendation B - Strengthen corporate performance management.....	27		
Corporate Transformation.....	29		
Peer Review Recommendation C - Refresh and make clear form, function, accountability and pace of delivery for the localities model.....	29		
Peer Review Recommendation D - Be clear on the Council's parameters around commercialisation.....	30		

Welcome Back to Sefton from the Leader of the Council

We are delighted to welcome you back to our **clean, green and beautiful** corner of the world.

There is no doubt the last three years have been difficult and challenging for Sefton, but I think you'll agree that we have made significant progress on your recommendations since your last visit.

Of course, the pandemic has brought with it so much change. Some colleagues saw their jobs change overnight as they were redeployed to support other teams across the Council, others had to adapt to working from home which included, for many, balancing the "day job" with home schooling and caring responsibilities. When the country went into national lockdown, our staff responded in the most amazing way. We faced a rollercoaster of tightening and relaxing of restrictions and ever-changing guidance, but I am proud to say that essential services continued throughout the pandemic.

I am also very proud of the local response to the pandemic, this is thanks to our wonderful workforce whose dedication is clear to see, our supportive and



collaborative partners, and of course, our fantastic communities who have pulled together to support one another. During the peer visit in 2018 I said, **"Sefton is beautiful but it is the people that make it sparkle."** They shone during the pandemic, so many wonderful people volunteered to help their friends, family and neighbours.

Our own staff made over 50,000 welfare calls to shielding residents and our staff, partners, local businesses and many volunteers delivered emergency food parcels and collected prescriptions across Sefton showing that **together, we're a stronger community**. Having our Localities Model in place meant that we could move fast to target help, advice and support to those who needed it the most. We processed over 23,000 business grants to over 5000 businesses. Our Growth Programme remains ambitious as we continue to work with partners to deliver the Sefton 2030 Vision.

We are aware of the pressures within Children's Services and at the time of this revisit we await the final report following our Inspection (ILACS). We are investing heavily in this area, and I am pleased to welcome our new Executive Director, Martin Birch, who will be driving forward our Improvement Plan.

Of course, we know that there are still challenges ahead, not least an extraordinary cost of living crisis, and over the coming weeks and months we expect to open our homes and our borough to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, but we are confident that we have robust plans in place to deal with these – Sefton is **ready for the future**. I look forward to speaking with you during the revisit and building on this opportunity to learn from peers.

Cllr. Ian Maher
Labour Leader, Sefton Council

Welcome Back from the Chief Executive



I am pleased to welcome peers back to Sefton as Chief Executive and have the opportunity to share our progress on our Action Plan and current Council priorities.

I echo the Leader's comments about our workforce, as their hard work and dedication throughout the pandemic has never ceased to amaze me. I have never been prouder to be a public servant and to lead such a brilliant team who

make a real difference every day. I would also like to thank our Trade Unions, partners and the thousands of volunteers; we could not do it without them.

We have continued driving change and reform to improve outcomes for local people and in particular those groups who are most vulnerable. Our role as Leader of Place has continued to be demonstrated consistently throughout the pandemic and in many other areas, for example, in our response to the Local Area SEND Improvement Notice. We have delivered our initial SEND Improvement Plan and this work has meant that there has been a significant improvement that has led to the Improvement Notice being lifted.

As the Leader mentioned we are working hard with our partners to improve the support available to children and young people and are currently awaiting the outcome of our latest OFSTED inspection. We are determined to deliver our Improvement Plan and enable the best possible outcomes for children and young

people. We also recognise that some of these challenges are a sub-regional problem.

Our Regeneration and Growth Programme is going from strength to strength and we are looking forward to sharing our progress with you during your visit. We have and will continue to undertake extensive consultation as we develop and deliver our plans for the future.

We are also making excellent progress with our Integrated Care Partnership with health and other partners, and we are told that we are at a very advanced, mature stage to make the transformation into the new system, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Local Government Association for their support in this process.

We welcome the opportunity the Local Government Association's Peer Revisit provides for us to learn from colleagues, helping us to go further with our ambitious agenda.

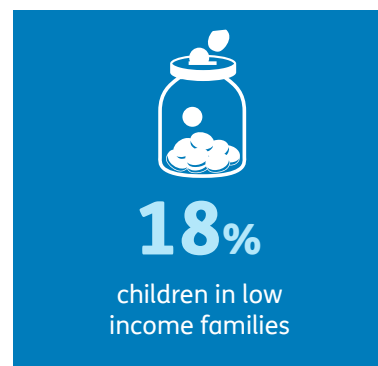
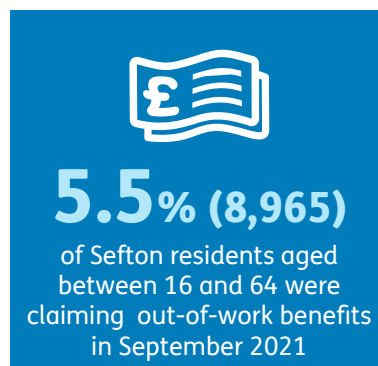
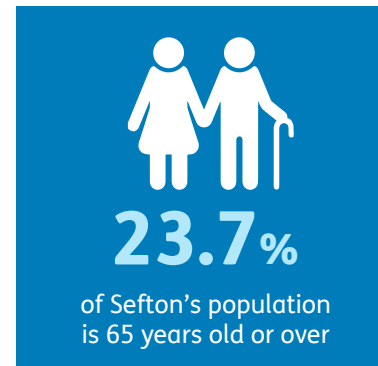
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dwayne Johnson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dwayne Johnson
Chief Executive, Sefton Council

Our Sefton

Our People

Sefton is a confident, connected borough because of its people. Sefton has a unique socio-economic geography. In its entirety it is in the most deprived fifth of English Local Authorities, with 27 of the 189 Sefton Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) being in the top 5% nationally (17 of these being in South Sefton). Yet other parts of the Borough, particularly in the middle and North, are some of the least deprived areas, with seven LSOAs (six of which are in North Sefton) were in the least deprived 5% of areas nationally.



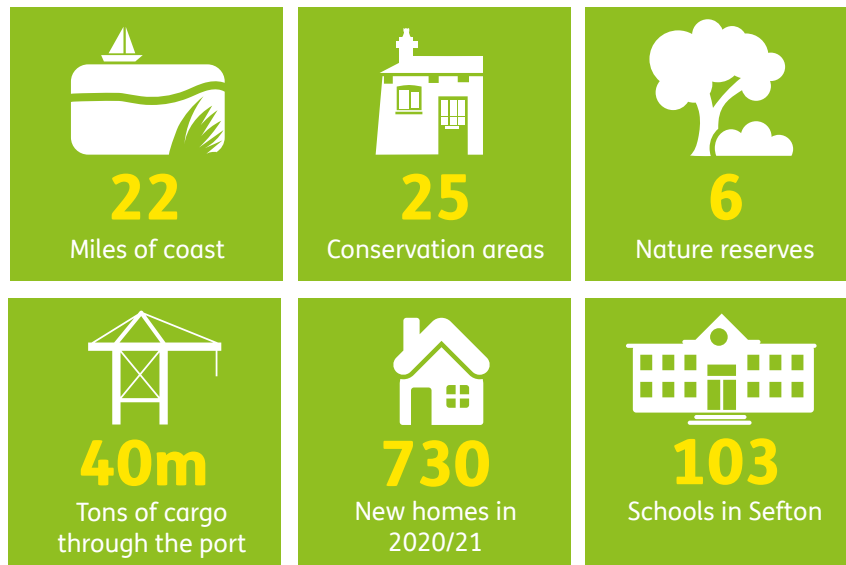


Our Sefton

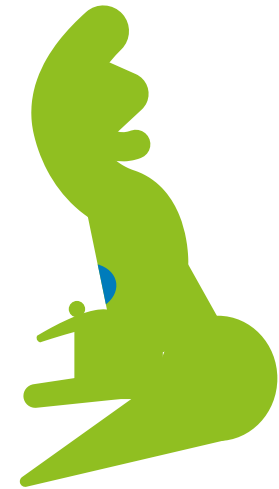
Our Place

Sefton is named after the village and parish of Sefton, near Maghull, which had formerly served as the seat of the Molyneux family; and the watermill located there was the inspiration for Sefton Council's distinctive crest.

Made up of five townships, Southport, Maghull, Formby, Crosby and Bootle, we have everything from beautiful coast and countryside to pretty villages, industrial areas and the docks. The distinctiveness of Sefton's towns and villages is integral to our uniqueness; however, it is the people that create the distinct and diverse communities that make it a vibrant place to live, work, visit and invest in.



Where is Sefton?



A community of communities

Southport – a seaside resort renowned for its Pier, sandy beaches and Lord Street - the Victorian canopied boulevard - which is a favourite shopping destination. Southport plays host to major events including the British Open Golf, Air Show, Fireworks Championships and Flower Show.

Formby – home to glorious beaches with dramatic sand dunes, surrounded by pinewoods and known for its wildlife, particularly the endangered red squirrel and natterjack toad. The area is conserved and designated a Site of Specific Scientific Interest.

Maghull - lies on the picturesque Leeds and Liverpool canal and boasts the bustling Central Square Shopping Centre. The nearby village of Aintree is home to the world famous Grand National horserace.

Crosby – is a popular coastal town boasting the Antony Gormley 'Another Place' art installation, where 100 iron men stand proudly looking out to sea. Crosby and Waterloo are vibrant areas and the village is home to the art nouveau-inspired Crown Buildings.

Bootle – has a growing economy and its geography is centred on the historic port, docks, and associated industries. The area boasts the busy community-focused Strand Shopping Centre and is home to green spaces including the stunning Victorian Derby Park.



BOOTLE CANALSIDE FOOD AND DRINK EVENT - AUGUST 2021



BOOTLE CANALSIDE

THE STORY SO FAR...

Sutton Council purchased the Strand in 2017 and since then it has been at the heart of transformation and regeneration plans for Bootle. We want to create a bustling town centre that works for the community.

The area adjacent to the Strand alongside the Leazes Liverpool Canal has been just aside to house a multi-functional space, while the longest term ambitions for the Strand are developed.

Demolition and clearance of the site started in December 2020 and the Canalside journey began, planning, designing, applying for permission... with the vision of creating a true community space for socialising and eating.

On August Bank Holiday 2021, Bootle Canalside hosts temporary five day pop-up event. Local food and drink vendors serve food and drink from around the world from repurposed shipping containers in a nod to Bootle's industrial history.

We have an opportunity to test the site with the community and gather feedback on what people in Bootle want to see from this exciting, new venue. The plans to the right show what Bootle's Canalside could look like... but what do you think?

HAVE YOUR SAY

We want to know what you want from Bootle Canalside. Fill in the feedback form found at the stalls and drop it in our drop boxes. Scan the QR code for more information.

BANK HOLIDAY Pop Up Market

SCHOOLCHILDREN ENJOY THE BOOTLE CANALSIDE CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA - DECEMBER 2021



Our Sefton

Our Heritage

Sefton's heritage and culture are woven in the fabric of its identity. We have a rich maritime history of which we are very proud. The impact of both World Wars is still visible today, especially in the south of the borough and our older people enjoy sharing their early memories, which we have captured through our Lost Voices project.

We have conservation areas, beautiful listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and scheduled monuments.


Southport Townscape Heritage is a regeneration and community project to bring new life to historic buildings on Southport's streets. Southport Townscape - Restoring a Victorian seaside resort's heritage for the future.



560
Listed buildings



5
Historic Parks and Gardens



100
Iron Men



SOUTHPORT MARKET

The £1.4 million refurbishment and repurpose of the old Southport Market building was completed in July 2021 and the new Southport Market welcomed, and continues to welcome, guests locally, regionally and nationally. Taking the market from a classical market format to something big, bold and wonderful for Southport – the Southport Market has been transformed to a food a drink market and has stimulated further investment in the surrounding areas of the town centre.



SOUTHPORT TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE

Is a regeneration and community project to bring new life to historic buildings on Southport's streets.



LOCAL AWARD-WINNING ARTIST PAUL CURTIS

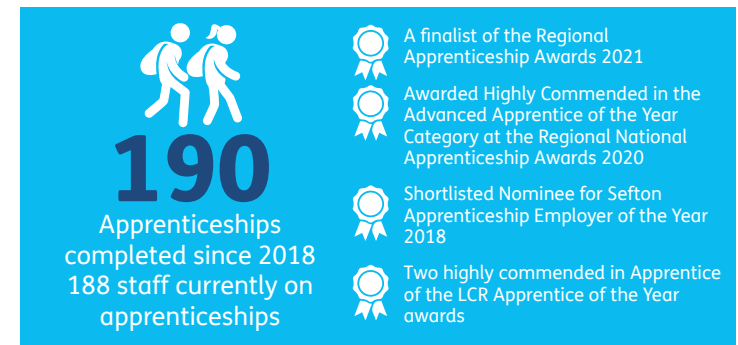
Red Rum mural (2020), Beatles mural and his largest ever commission to transform Toad Hall in Ainsdale with a huge mural!



Our Sefton

Our Council

Sefton Council was formed on 1 April 1974, it is a metropolitan borough and is one of six councils that make up the Liverpool City Region. The Council comprises 66 Councillors with one-third elected annually three years in every four.





TOGETHER A STRONGER COMMUNITY GREEN SEFTON



Introduction

In 2018 Sefton Council commissioned the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a peer review as an independent check on how the Council is performing in terms of planning for and delivering against our ambitious plans for the future. The peer review took place in September 2018 and the peer review considered the following five core themes:

- Understanding local context and priority setting
- Leadership of place
- Financial planning and viability
- Organisational leadership and governance and
- Capacity to deliver.

In addition to the five core themes, the peer review focused on the progress that the Council has made in implementing its 'vision for change' and the Council's approach to commercialisation.

The overarching message in the initial feedback from the LGA peer team immediately following the review was;

Sefton has listened to and served its communities well through a challenging period of austerity. To meet your Sefton 2030 ambitions, the Council will need to further recognise and move towards a model of co-production especially with your communities.

The peer review team summarised the Council's strengths as

- Knowledge of Sefton 'the place' is strong
- Strong political and managerial leadership
- Vision is in place, priorities have been set and transformation plan in place, which is significant
- Local Plan is in place which has required difficult decisions
- MTFP is linked to strategy and priorities
- The Council has a committed and passionate workforce
- Strong partner relationships exist across the Borough
- The Council exhibits self-awareness and willingness to reflect
- The Council has successfully managed a 51% reduction in grant funding and put in place a 3-year budget and
- The Localities model has proven to be effective, and the service is moving in the right direction

Peer Team Recommendations

The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

A. Prioritise the refresh of the core purpose. This will help ensure the Council's contribution to the delivery of Sefton 2030 by targeting capacity at a carefully sequenced set of key priorities.

B. Strengthen corporate performance management. The Cabinet should receive a comprehensive, corporate performance management report on a quarterly basis. This report should be accessible and allow the Cabinet to understand the progress being made by the Council against the key priorities. A suitable report should also be made available to scrutiny.

C. Refresh and make clear form, function, accountability and pace of delivery for the localities model. The team acknowledged the ambition being shown by moving to this new delivery model and endorsed this as the right direction of travel for Sefton. At this stage it is important the council is clear internally, and with its partners, on what this will mean locally.

D. Be clear on the Council's parameters around commercialisation. This requires both officers and members to have a consistent understanding of what commercialisation means for the Council as well as the options that can be considered and those which will not. This will allow the Council to focus its efforts on the right commercial opportunities for Sefton.

E. Accelerate work on a local economic growth strategy alongside efforts in the Liverpool City Region. This will help Sefton benefit more from the opportunities presented by the Liverpool City Region and ensure that more schemes are in place ready for future funding opportunities.

F. Develop the role of all members in a changing context for local government and a changing model of delivery locally. This should reflect the

role of all members in their communities and the capacity they can attract to support the efforts of the Council. This would mean the council more consistently co-producing solutions with communities and partners.

Cabinet considered the feedback report in December 2018, the recommendations were accepted, and Cabinet requested officers to develop an action plan for their consideration. The Action Plan was approved in January 2019.

The purpose of this position statement is to provide an update on the progress made, and share the further changes that we plan to make over the next few years.

Update of Key Changes since 2018:

The Corporate Peer Challenge was carried out in 2018 and while it is important to review progress to address challenges from that time, it is as important to be clear on our priorities for the next few years and the challenges that we have and continue to face.

Some of our key areas of focus include:

- Responding to the pandemic
- Climate Emergency
- Continuing our work to improve services across the Local area for children and young people with SEND
- Improving Children's Social Care services
- Financial Planning and
- Integrated Care Partnership

Leadership and Governance

The Council is composed of 66 Councillors with one-third elected annually (three years in every four) for a term of four years. The political composition now is Labour 46, The Liberal Democrat and Progressive Alliance Group 8, Conservative 8, Independents Group 2, Independent Members 2.

The Cabinet comprises of the Leader of the Council and nine Cabinet Members of the Council. Each has responsibility for a defined service area (portfolio). Within the budgetary and policy frameworks set by the full Council, the Cabinet is responsible for carrying out almost all of the Council's functions in delivering services to the community. In May 2021 two new Cabinet Member roles were introduced - Cabinet Member, Education, and a Cabinet Member, Children's Social Care.

In April 2019 Dwayne Johnson was appointed as Chief Executive. Dwayne has continued to drive a culture of positivity, equality and diversity, openness, provision of providing excellence and a One Council way of working to ensure the best possible outcomes for local people. His leadership is visible across the organisation with frequent visits to many locations and the introduction of Dwayne's Teams Hour which attracts approaching 1000 staff as they have an opportunity to ask questions and listen to updates.

The Executive and Strategic Leadership teams have a great mix of skills, and the makeup of the team is well balanced in terms of corporate memory and new ideas.

The quality of member-officer relationships remains good with a clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. There are strong relationships with all ward members and the area co-ordinators and many frontline teams. Our One Council ethos reinforces the need for consistent and proactive relationships with all Councillors.

The Children & Young People's Partnership Board ensures that appropriate arrangements are in place to enable vulnerable children and young people to be heard, happy and healthy so that they can achieve the best possible outcomes. This Board also provides assurance to the Health and Wellbeing Board that system wide services, and processes are contributing effectively to keeping children safe and supported across the continuum of need.



The SEND Continuous Improvement Board (SENDICIB) was introduced in 2019 in response to an Improvement Notice. This is a partnership board, led by the Council, committed to delivering the actions that will improve the lives and life chances of Sefton's children and young people with SEND. We have ensured robust governance throughout the delivery of our action plan, driven real change and the Local Area is now able to demonstrate how the whole system is held to account and increased partnership working. The Improvement Notice was lifted in July 2021 and the Local Area is committed to continuing with SENDICIB and associated subgroups.

In April 2021 an independent person was identified as chair for the partnership Children's Improvement Board. The Department for Education (DfE) issued an Improvement Notice for Children's Social Care Services in May 2021 and this has meant a galvanisation of a need to change and to focus on outcomes for children. The Council has further external advice from a DfE advisor who is a member of the Board. This has opened a range of advice and support to Sefton at all levels in the organisation. The risk is around the pace of change and the capacity of the organisation to meet the need for change. The pace of the required change is a challenge given capacity and so the Council has invested an additional £11.6m in Children's Services, secured the required interim transformational resources, put in place a robust Improvement Plan, developed a new approach to recruiting the Children's Social Care workforce and appointed a new Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education.

We have moved away from a regional leadership arrangement in respect of the Safeguarding Adults Board and have established a Sefton Board which aligns with Community Safety Partnership. This ensures that all Sefton system partners have a strong focus on safeguarding vulnerable adults in Sefton.

The Sefton Integrated Care Partnership will bring together key partners from across Sefton, recognising both the vital role of wider cross-sector partners and the central role that Primary Care Networks will play in adopting a population

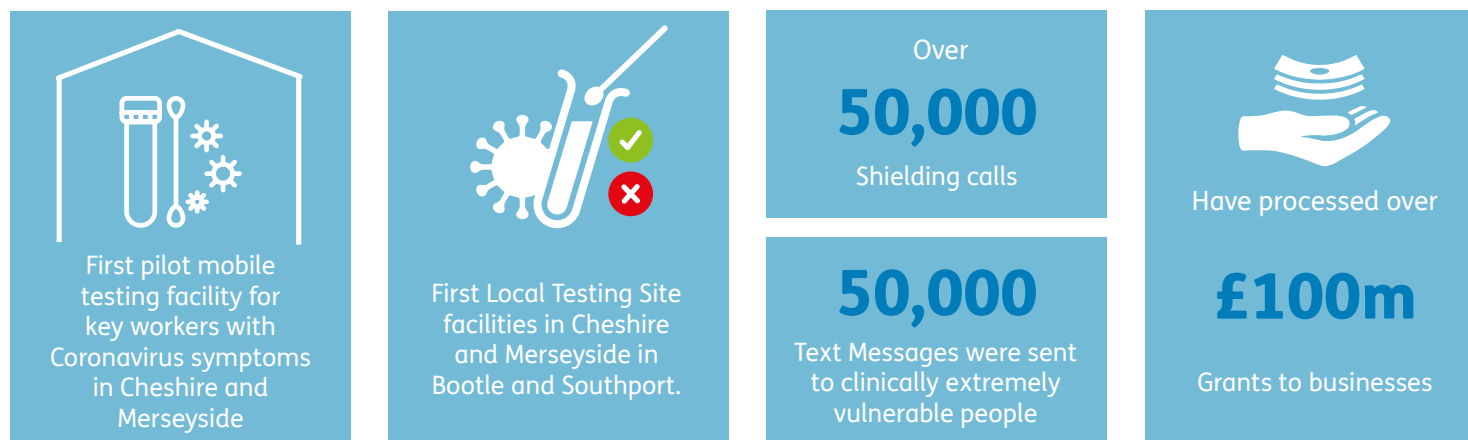
health management approach in Sefton. The Integrated Care Partnership will work together to deliver improved health and care outcomes for Sefton's population. The Health and Wellbeing Board and system partners have already agreed several key priority areas embodied within the **Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2025**. Cabinet will consider governance arrangements in June 2022.

We have continued to working closely with the leaders from the other five local authorities and Metro Mayor. We worked together closely throughout the pandemic, are continuing to develop recovery approaches together and are collaboratively driving forward strategic plans to grow our economy and attract more people and businesses to live, work, visit or invest in the wider Liverpool City Region (LCR), which ultimately benefits Sefton.

Some of our members and most senior officers hold key roles within the LCR, including the Leader as the Portfolio Lead for Digital Connectivity & Inclusion. The Council also has influential voices on several committees. Having these leadership roles firmly rooted within the LCR enables us to speak with a powerful voice and deliver improved outcomes for our communities.



Our Response to the COVID 19 Pandemic



Leadership of Place has been critical throughout the pandemic. The Council delivered response and change at great pace, worked closely with national, regional and local colleagues, partners, providers and volunteers to protect the most vulnerable and support our communities and businesses. Together we unlocked the borough's collective resources for the benefit of all and to ensure that people were well informed.

The Council coordinated a group of partners to ensure that a robust community response and support plan was in place and being delivered to respond to the changing levels of need within our communities. Working with our partners we offered support to over 24,000 people identified as clinically extremely vulnerable people in our communities. Over 50,000 contacts were made with those that needed continued welfare support during the lock down periods. In addition to this Contact Centre operated 7 days per week taking more than 9,000 calls regarding access to testing facilities, supermarket referrals, Test & Trace Self-Isolation payments and over 70,000 text messages were sent

to clinically extremely vulnerable people who were shielding to direct them to support. The Council also delivered over 1700 emergency food parcels to clinically extremely vulnerable people who needed support whilst shielding, this was in addition to planned contributions to Food banks, donations from ward budgets and Sefton's Emergency Limited Assistance Scheme (ELAS).

During the pandemic local businesses and voluntary organisations provided packed lunches, food hampers and meals to local families. We also responded quickly to the need to deliver a Free School Meals scheme in October, issuing over 5000 vouchers to eligible families. The promotion of the scheme also led to an increase in the number of families applying for Free School Meals. We worked hard with our partners across Merseyside to make people aware that we are still here and available to support those who need our support. We joined partner organisations across the Liverpool City Region to launch a new domestic abuse campaign telling anyone experiencing abuse during the Coronavirus pandemic: [#YouAreNotAlone](#). This multi-agency initiative aimed



to raise awareness, remind those experiencing abuse that support was still available, and encourage victims to report incidents to the police.

Through good partnership working we promoted school attendance, resulting in above national average attendance for vulnerable children. As part of our work to facilitate confident and resilient communities we worked closely with schools to ensure that children and young people could continue to access education and training opportunities during the pandemic, sourcing over 1100 laptops, and that families had access to the most up to date information and advice.

Our Public Health team focused on the emergency response to the pandemic, whilst continuing to deliver wider public health interventions. The team, along with Council colleagues and partners nationally, regionally and locally, worked together to identify cases, manage outbreaks and prevent onward transmission of the virus. The impact of Covid-19 has not been felt equally. It has exposed and exacerbated many long-standing health inequalities. Going forward we will work with partners to ensure activities are aligned with efforts to promote community recovery post Covid and promote good health and wellbeing for all.

Throughout the pandemic the Council, acting as broker, worked hard with partners to ensure that access to Covid-19 testing met the needs of communities and was localised. In April 2020 we brokered the first pilot mobile testing facility for key workers with Coronavirus symptoms in Cheshire and Merseyside. Following this very successful pilot mobile testing sites were implemented in Bootle, Litherland, Maghull, Aintree, Crosby and Ainsdale. July and August 2020 saw the opening of the first ever Local Testing Site facilities in Cheshire and Merseyside in Bootle and Southport. October saw two new, walk-through Local Testing Sites. In December 2020 Covid-19 testing was further strengthened with SMART coronavirus testing for people with no symptoms becoming available at walk-through sites across the borough.

In February 2021 we coordinated the surge testing operation to understand the spread of a South African variant of Covid-19 in three wards in Southport, training over 200 staff, visiting over 17,000 homes and helping to register over 8,000 tests in three weeks with the support of partners and many volunteers.

We worked hard during the pandemic to protect the most vulnerable and remain accessible to all. We have done this by working with care homes, other social care providers, schools, the voluntary, community and faith sector and our partners.

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to find innovative ways of delivering early help to support families in need. Three Family Wellbeing Centres remained open throughout, and we also delivered online support sessions to families during lockdown. When restrictions allowed, families received the support they required in their gardens or outdoors. We created support packs and delivered these to the families that needed them in a socially distanced, safe way. We changed the early intervention and prevention huddle from a physical meeting to a virtual meeting ensuring that we continued to identify individuals and families that need help and support at the earliest opportunity to ensure we put the right intervention in at the right time. Partnership working flourished, as we worked together to meet the needs of families in our communities.

We continued to support vulnerable young people who need additional support, utilising a variety of digital options such as FaceTime and Zoom which enabled regular contact through challenging times. Young people responded well to this approach and continued to engage with our services well. Some of our staff delivered outreach to families to provide bespoke support through lockdown which received excellent feedback, going forward we will continue outreach support to the families who need it most.

Our Cabinet continued to work with our young people in the regular forum

known as SYMBOL (Sefton Youth Making Better Opportunities with Leaders), with the young people prioritising the agenda and leading the discussion on what really matters to them. During the pandemic sessions included a discussion on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing. The Council has extended its mental health support offer recognising that the pandemic has been an emotional and stressful time for many.

The Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) Reduction and Early Intervention Service (NR&EIS) was commissioned in December 2018. We believe that our preventative approach has reduced the impact of Covid 19 on this group of young people. This is borne out in comparisons with other areas and statistical neighbours. We recognise there remain some very real challenges ahead to improve outcomes for this group of young people and we will continue to use our strong working relationships with education institutions and training providers in Sefton and the wider City region and beyond to track and record destinations and activities of our young people.

As part of the government's response to homelessness during the pandemic, "Everyone In", we commissioned a range of emergency accommodation to ensure that no-one slept rough and became more vulnerable to the pandemic. Our focus around homelessness remains proactive rather than reactive. We are working with key partners to identify potential homeless cases at the earliest opportunity and using a variety of approaches to prevent homelessness. We ensured our vulnerable children and families have been supported throughout the pandemic. Social Workers have maintained contact with children and families, ensuring children were being seen and having access to advice and support when required. This has been supported by members of our partnership and close working relationship with education settings.

Adult Social Care continued to provide support to, and protect, the most vulnerable throughout the pandemic, and where needed undertook face-



to face visits to ensure individual welfare checks were completed and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults maintained. When day care opportunities closed, impacting on over 650 individuals across the Borough, the Adult Social Care team ensured alternative provision was put in place where needed to ensure assessed need was met. Throughout the pandemic, the team worked with providers to ensure care could be delivered to the most vulnerable safely, establishing regular meetings with providers and administering over £10 million in additional grant funding to the care sector.

Our everyday services became even more important to our residents throughout the pandemic, especially during the times we all had to stay at home more. The support for our refuse collectors was incredible as they were shown how much they are valued by our communities. Our parks and coastline saw an incredible increase in footfall as we all appreciated the beauty on our doorstep.

The coast saw many visitors in periods of lockdown and when restrictions eased. At its peak, we saw more than 24,000 people on the beaches at any one time. In its role of Place-leadership and influencer the Council worked closely with partners. We developed and delivered the Coastal Visitor Action Plan, to keep Sefton's coastline safe for residents, visitors and our own employees. Sadly, not everyone demonstrated the care and commitment to our natural environment leaving tons of litter behind and causing several incidents of serious anti-social behaviour. We responded quickly and ensured increased facilities for rubbish disposal, parking at Ainsdale and toilets were available for everyone visiting the coast. Despite this, our volunteering groups worked overtime to keep our patch beautiful. Following the implementation of the Action Plan the Council is investing a further £300,000 in continuing with the activities within the plan in future years, as well as increasing staffing resources within the Green Sefton team to enhance the service provided along Sefton's coast.

The pandemic had a significant effect on our libraries, leisure and arts sector with our facilities closed to the public for large parts of the year. Many of our staff were temporarily redeployed during the closures to other critical services. We continued to offer some leisure activities virtually to support people with their fitness and mental wellbeing during lockdowns. Our libraries offered an online lending service, access to ancestry software as well as a select and collect service when restrictions allowed. The Atkinson continued to offer a range of innovative online exhibitions throughout the lockdown periods, and this was recognised in February 2021 as the Atkinson scooped two awards at the Liverpool City Region Culture Awards for 2020. The People's Choice Award for Outstanding Contribution to Culture as well as the Impact Award – Covid-19 Creative Response, were suitable recognition for the work the team did during the pandemic. More recently our partnership Human Libraries project was awarded the Liverpool City Region Culture - Impact Award for Creative Covid response.

During the pandemic we recognised the challenge of sustaining the current and future economy, a series of measures were introduced by the Planning Service which sought to facilitate investment, stimulate developer interest, simplify process, flexibly extend the life of permissions and generally operate in a manner which encouraged regeneration and development. This has led to an unprecedented uplift in the number of planning applications received.

The pandemic has impacted the whole retail sector, including the Strand in Bootle, but the centre remains a vital asset for local communities, and has remained safely open throughout the year. Moreover, strategic planning and development work has continued including the acquisition and demolition of the sites between the Strand and the canal, upon which new public spaces and a food, beverage and leisure offer are being delivered.

The pandemic also impacted significantly on the number of visitors and local people being able to enjoy our local attractions, events and cultural offer, many



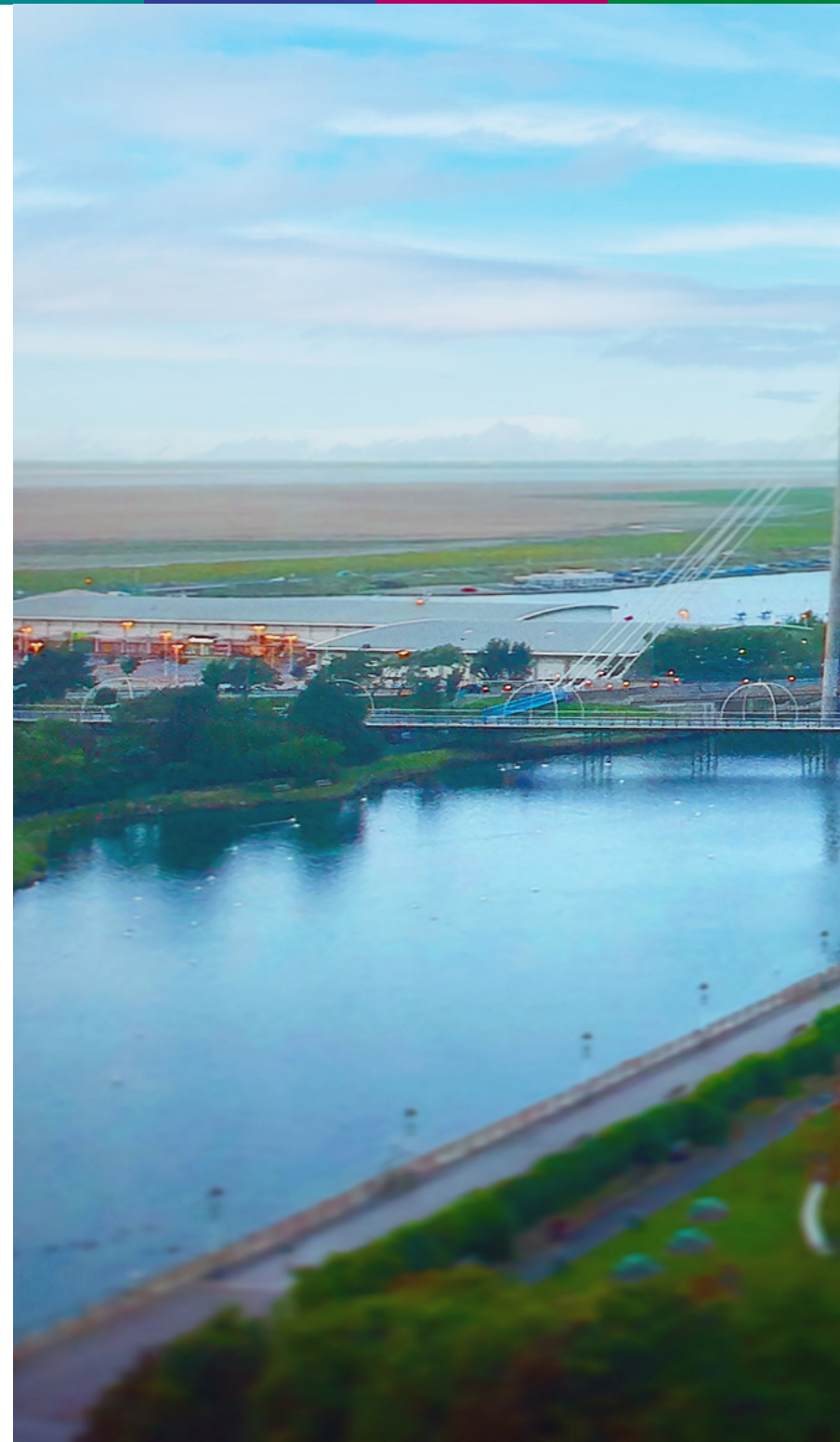
businesses and attractions were forced to close and events cancelled. But the events programme for the coming year is developed and promises to be better than ever, working with local businesses and the wider community the roadmap to recovery provides a real stimulus for Sefton to reinvigorate its visitor economy.

The Council supported local businesses in many ways during the pandemic. Since the start of the pandemic, a programme of successive nationally and locally funded grants were administered by the Council, ploughing millions of pounds into the local Sefton economy, across the most acutely impacted sectors, supporting thousands of businesses and helping to keep tens of thousands of our population in work.

The Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards teams supported businesses to operate safely and legally. Providing advice on existing and new legislation and guidance, through thousands of telephone conversations and visits, working closely with other agencies such as the Health and Safety Executive and Police. We also took the necessary enforcement action where non-compliant businesses failed to comply with the law and placed staff and customers at risk. We quickly changed or implemented new systems to keep people trading where the law allowed them to, including adapting and maintaining licensing arrangements to keep taxis running.

All Social Care providers were supported through the pandemic with new ways of working and supporting vulnerable residents of Sefton have emerged such as an increase in personalised care and support on a 1:1 basis and creative ways of keeping in touch with people who need social care in our communities.

Our ICT transformation programme focused on improving agile working and this work enabled many Council staff to work from home during the pandemic and for many democratic meetings to take place remotely. These changes included the procurement and deployment of a cloud-based contact centre software, within ten days, the new 'cloud contact centre' was up and running and 40 staff were able to work-from-home.





Leadership of Place

The Council continues to work hard to ensure what we and others do is in the best interests of Sefton and our residents through true collaboration, mutual trust and rigorous prioritisation. As you can see from our response to the pandemic we have truly risen to this challenge in the last couple of years. We continue to work with our partners to raise aspiration, work towards common goals and build a sense of pride and belonging in the borough.

Our Councillors are passionate, committed and engaged in the work of the Council in a variety of diverse ways. They are visible in their local communities and neighbourhood leadership continues to be good from both a member and officer perspective. We are further investing in our neighbourhood team as well as allocating a total of £300,000 each year to individual wards for projects that will enhance the environment within those wards.

SYMBOL meetings continue to be hosted and co-ordinated by Young Advisors, managed by Sefton Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), they help organisations to understand the interests of young people, and how to get their message across to them in a more youth-friendly way. This group of young people continue to support many of our consultation and collaboration activity, and we are proud to say that one of their team was honoured as national Young Advisor of the Year, and they also collected the Community Project of the Year award for their consultation work as part of our Sefton Your Streets initiative.

The Office of the Mayor continues to be extremely valued by local people, always a true ambassador for the Council, instilling civic pride and leading as a community connector. This is highlighted in initiatives such as the continued success of the Mayor's Toy Appeal, which demonstrates the kindness and generosity of spirit of local people and the business community.

Our Executive Director, People, chairs Sefton Leadership Collaborative (SLC) where strategic partners come together on a regular basis. This group works together on a range of topics, for example, the Climate Emergency.

The Welfare Reform Member Reference Group continues to work hard to address the impact of Welfare Reform on our communities and is now considering the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis which is hitting our communities hard. Working with our partners we are letting local people know where they can find help, support and advice.

As part of work to combat the effects of child poverty, which have been worsened by the pandemic, Cabinet has approved the development of a Child Poverty Strategy. The Council will work in partnership across the statutory, community, voluntary and faith sectors to ensure services are put in place to support families. Its aims will include working to prevent families falling into poverty, and support to help those already in difficulty. Increasing family income and improving opportunities for employment and building resilience in local communities against the causes of poverty are key aims of the Strategy. Improving mental wellbeing, addressing stigma and exclusion and improving digital inclusion are also among its objectives. The March 2022 Every Child Matters (ECM) Forum considered feedback from the recent Child Poverty Conference. providing partners with an opportunity to contribute to development of the Sefton Child Poverty Strategy.

Feeling safe, supported and free from discrimination and harm is important to our communities. The Sefton Together Community Safety Partnership, facilitated by us, looks at community issues from a crime and disorder perspective. Together we continue to take a whole system approach to tackling serious organised crime. This group takes a thematic approach and considers

topics such as how we can work better together to tackle issues such as violence against women and girls.

Our Invest Sefton team has had far reaching and meaningful engagement with the business community. Regularly bringing together new and existing business so that we can work with local companies and potential investors to make Sefton an attractive and easy place for businesses to start, operate, grow and thrive. The Council is committed to working with businesses to help create new jobs for local people.

Returning Peers will recall that the Council signed a ‘New Realities’ agreement with the CVS which demonstrates a commitment to working closely with the sector. In order to become increasingly ‘enabling’ as a Council. A new agreement has been drafted, co-produced with the sector and will be considered by Cabinet in April 2022.

We are continuing our work to improve services across the Local Area for children and young people with SEND. Led by the Council we have delivered whole system change.



Our Response to Peer Review Recommendations

Local Priorities and Outcomes

Peer Review Recommendation A - Prioritise the refresh of the core purpose

Our Progress & Impact

The Core Purpose was created as part of the Imagine Sefton 2030 consultation process and summarises how the Council intends to achieve the aims and objectives of the Sefton 2030 Vision which is based on the feedback from everyone that took part in the consultation. Following the LGA Peer Assessment a thorough review of the Core Purpose was undertaken, this identified that the existing Core Purpose still held true and continues to reflect the Council's role in delivering the partnership Vision 2030.

Committee reports include a section where authors identify the subject matters "Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose" and more recently Climate Emergency implications are also articulated in reports.

The Core Purpose is underpinned by the Council's Framework for Change Programme which targets capacity at a carefully sequenced set of key priorities. Over the last three years this programme has not only helped the Council support the delivery of the Borough's 2030 vision and its own objectives as set out in its Core Purpose, but it has also successfully enabled the Council to set and deliver balanced budgets.

As would be expected with a programme of this size and complexity that spans a number of financial years, it will continue to be the subject of change. The previous Framework for Change programme was built on four workstreams / pillars and these form the cornerstone of the 2020 Programme, namely Public Sector Reform, Growth and Strategic Investment. This has evolved into:

Public Sector Reform

Within the new Public Sector Reform pillar, two projects are progressing

- **Council of 2023** - this project takes account of the successful work to date in delivering the partnership 2030 Vision and the Council's Core Purpose and will further enable the Council to define what it will do and how (within the budget available), what outcomes are expected, how these will be measured, what resources will be allocated and where it will focus its influence. This will ensure a clear correlation between the policy objectives of the Council and its budget / resource allocation process. The Council had identified savings of £890,000 which could be achieved through new ways of working. This included reviewing ICT contracts in areas such as telephony, bulk printing and mail, as well as reviewing office accommodation to take further advantage of remote / agile working that will support the delivery of the core service, the health and wellbeing of staff and climate emergency agenda.
- **Demand Management** - this project considers demand led budgets across the Council for example Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Home to School Transport. Due to the size, complexity and demand for these services, a continual review must be undertaken to ensure that the cost base for these services reduces, an early intervention and prevention programme is embedded, and residents are supported in 'moving down the system' so as to reduce the demand for Council services and particularly those at the acute end. Where a service is provided the Council needs to ensure this is achieving value for money and promoting future resilience.

Economic Growth and Strategic Investment

This programme directly supports economic growth and development within the Borough, creating new jobs and businesses and enhanced productivity. It will also directly benefit the Council by reducing / removing subsidies, creating new net revenue streams and Council Tax and Business Rates receipts.

The Programme will be delivered within a set of themes and includes “Invest to Save” schemes whereby capital investment directly reduces or removes a service cost to the Council. The Programme is wholly-focused on social and environmental outcomes, in tandem with economic and financial outcomes.

Next, We Will

The Council developed Vision 2030 and the Core Purpose following major community consultation in 2016. The timeline below outlines our approach to building upon and assessing the impact of Vision 2030.



We develop a strong narrative around our plans and the Council’s role in developing 2035 so that local people and businesses are engaged in change.

The Framework for Change Programme will continue and the projects, alongside our Children’s Improvement Plan will deliver real change.

Peer Review Recommendation B - Strengthen corporate performance management

Our Progress & Impact

We recognise the importance of performance management and service areas have continued to report regularly to Cabinet Members and Overview and Scrutiny on service-related performance and key corporate activity. Following the LGA Peer Review a detailed, comprehensive Corporate Performance is **reported annually** to Cabinet. The pandemic identified key risks to the Council and it was decided to introduce a standardised performance management report to all Cabinet members to ensure line of sight and visibility as we emergence from the pandemic and consider operational performance and the progress being made against key priorities.

Financial performance was identified as a key risk on the Corporate Risk Register as we emerged from years of austerity and the pandemic, and a detailed report is tabled at every Cabinet meeting to ensure line of sight. This has meant that the Council is in a strong financial position and for the first time funding is available to invest in key services.

In 2021 My Sefton, My Space, the Council’s refreshed Performance Development Review (PDR) process was introduced. It is a key part of the opportunities the workforce has to develop, grow and thrive in their role.

The Council has embarked on the implementation of a new data warehouse environment using MS Azure and intends to use MS Power BI as the preferred business intelligence reporting service for this new environment, allowing for the transformation of real-time data into comprehensive visuals which can be accessed and shared securely across the Council’s network, providing for insight-driven decision-making.

Whilst the development slowed as resources were redirected to support the Council's response to the pandemic, good progress is now being made on implementing the solution. The MS Azure Data Warehouse is live and the MS Power BI software has been deployed to the team of Data Analysts, who are currently being trained on the MS Azure Data Factory, SQL and MS Power BI components.

The Council has commissioned its IT provider to deliver the first tranche of database connections to the data warehouse, focusing on those key applications used across Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Education. This will allow Data Analysts in the Council's Performance & BI Team to extract, transform and load data from these key systems into the new data warehouse, where it can be modelled, linked with key reference points, including the local land and property gazetteer, analysed and visualised. Having this new technology will increase the automation of performance reporting, allowing the resources to be focused on predictive analytics. Despite the significant further development work needed, the Council is confident that the opportunity that this new solution presents will be maximised to inform strategic choice and operational delivery.

In parallel to this innovative development the Council's Performance & BI Team continues to meet the performance needs of the Council's various departments, Senior Leadership Board and Elected Members, providing service specific performance reports, providing and key insights, including:

- **Sefton 'People and Place profile'**
- **Sefton population forecast**
- **22 Sefton Ward profiles**
- **22 Sefton Ward MOSAIC profiles**

- **12 Sefton Family Wellbeing Centre profiles**
- **JSNA Children's Chapter**
- **JSNA Children's Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing Chapter**
- **JSNA Education Chapter**
- **The Index of Multiple Deprivation**

Our Performance & BI Team has been working closely with CCG colleagues to explore population health in Sefton, in preparation for the Integrated Care Partnership, developing a Population Health profile for St Oswald Ward, which is considered a 'left behind' neighbourhood (Informed by the Overcoming health inequalities in 'left behind' neighbourhoods report, commissioned by an All-Party Parliamentary informal Group and delivered by OCSI and NHTA; January 2022).

Next, We Will

Over the next year we will:

- Continue to respond to the increasing demand for statistical and geospatial data, and detailed data analysis from across the Council, to support statutory inspection, statutory returns, operational decision-making and strategic choice.
- Refresh the Vulnerable Adults, Health, Lifestyles and Wider Determinant chapters of the JSNA.
- Develop our data warehouse and reporting environment, to improve the efficiency and quality of performance reporting so we are more focused on targeting what will make the most difference particularly in addressing inequality.
- Consider the capacity, skills and knowledge in the Performance & BI and

Policy Teams to maximise investment in the new technology, new ways of working and changes in national policy.

- Look to use the new technology collaboratively with colleagues in the CCG to allow us to apply the 'Bridges to Health' population health segmentation tool to inform commissioning and service delivery at macro and micro levels across the borough.
- We will use our new payroll and HR system to monitor the completion rates for My Sefton, My Space for completion rates of PDRs and will consider feedback from staff and managers to review the new process.

Corporate Transformation

Peer Review Recommendation C - Refresh and make clear form, function, accountability and pace of delivery for the localities model

Our Progress & Impact

The Head of Communities continues to drive forward the implementation of the Localities model and the understanding of the model continues to embed across the Council and partners, in particular how the model will align with the Integrated Care Partnership. The Executive Director (People) has continued to champion the model with partners and the community providing whole system leadership. This was recognised by the Department of Works and Pensions winning the Aspiring Instructors programme.

The move to locality-based working with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention aimed to reduce demand by identifying need much earlier and working with partners to build resilience and to require public services less. This work is starting to be embedded within communities and Sefton Council for

Voluntary Service aligned its structure to the Locality model.

The national Supporting Families Programme (formerly the Troubled Families Programme) aligns with the Sefton Localities model. Sefton's claim target for the 6-year programme was to achieve 'Significant and Sustained Progress' for 2487 families. To ensure timely draw down of payment by results (PbR) and attachment fees, Local authorities set annual PbR targets.

In Sefton, phase 2 of the national programme is being delivered via the Locality model by implementing the principles of "Whole Family working" In 2018, three years into the programme, Sefton were at 30% against the 6-year target. Since implementing the "whole family working" model 70% of the target has been achieved.

Early Help workers based in the Family Wellbeing Centres across the three localities provide extensive support to families with multiple and complex needs through the delivery of whole family working. Sefton Early Help have worked closely with commissioned services from the voluntary and community sector to provide a portfolio of family support.

To ensure delivery of 'whole family working', practitioners are encouraged to have more conversations with families around attendance, worklessness and debt alongside the safeguarding issues affecting the family. We have raised awareness across Early Help through the locality model with the seconded employment advisors from the DWP who are able to provide advice, guidance and support to vulnerable families looking to move in to work.

Being in Phase 2 presented a more challenging programme to evidence significant and sustained progress for the families. This is particularly the case for the more complex cases where families qualify against several criteria. Progress needs to be achieved and sustained against all criteria that the family are affected by. We are confident that we will evidence progress for 100% of the target in the 7th year of the programme.

Ward members are kept up to date on what's happening from a Locality perspective through a monthly newsletter.

In 2019 Sefton Libraries were awarded almost £240,000 in National Lottery funding to support the award winning Human Library project in light of our way of working in this area. That is our libraries are creative, innovative and support the local community and individuals to flourish, creating a sense of wellbeing and supporting people in their own community. This project sees a year-round creative programme in Bootle, Crosby and Netherton libraries, volunteering opportunities, and new initiatives including creating a garden space for Bootle library, and programmes of work with young families and refugees.

When the pandemic hit the connectivity of teams within the Locality model meant that staff were quickly able to adapt to new roles and ensure that the right support was swiftly put in place to support vulnerable residents and ensure that essential services continued.

The Locality model and way of working remains strong and more recently there has been some change to the reporting structure of some areas of the model in order to support the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan, but the connectivity between teams remains strong.

Next, We Will

Early intervention and prevention remains a priority and we will continue to embed approaches that will enable local people to better face future challenges and experiences.

The Head of Communities will continue to work with the ICS Partnership Board to ensure that we maximise the opportunity of adopting a population health management approach in Sefton.

Sefton has successfully had a bid confirmed by the DfE, to enter the DfE

evaluated programme of Leeds Family Valued, which is a strengthening families approach. This programme, which begins in Spring 2022, lasts for two years and has funding attached. We are determined to build on existing good practice and use this opportunity to help improve outcomes for local children and young people.

Peer Review Recommendation D - Be clear on the Council's parameters around commercialisation.

Our Progress & Impact

The Council's commitment to developing a commercial nature has continued, looking at what it can do either by itself or with partners to generate sustainable income and profit that can be reinvested into delivering social purpose. We have selectively focused limited capacity in this area on a small number of priorities such as our three companies **Sandway Homes**, Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited (SHOL), Sefton New Directions and the Strand Shopping Centre in Bootle.

We launched our wholly owned housing development company, Sandway Homes Limited, in January 2019 to help accelerate the delivery of the Local Plan target for 11,000 new homes to be created in the borough by the end of the decade, delivering high quality, policy exemplar, tenure-blind developments in the areas that they are needed and generating financial returns to invest more in core services across the borough. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the company has made good progress and has started construction on two sites with a third due to commence summer 2021 delivering nearly 150 new homes over the next 24 months.

The Strand was purchased for regeneration purposes. The pandemic has impacted the whole retail sector, including the Strand, but the centre remains

a vital asset for local communities, and has remained safely open throughout the pandemic. The current business case forecasts that this income loss will reduce by £1.2m in 2022/23 but will increase again by £300,000 in 2023/24. As would be expected these figures will be the subject of change over the period and an update is included in the budget report for 2022/23. Strategic planning and development work has continued on the exciting future of the centre, including the acquisition and demolition of the sites between the Strand and the canal, upon which new public spaces and a food, beverage and leisure offer are being delivered.

In February 2022 Cabinet approved the proposed strategy and **Business Plan** for Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited (SHOL). SHOL is a private company set up to create and operate hospitality outlets offering exciting, diverse, and accessible options for their customers. From hotels through to bars and restaurants, as well as outside catering, food delivery and events SHOL aims to provide unique experiences for both its guests and employees. In January 2022 SHOL launched a recruitment drive offering permanent employment and career opportunities, with all roles paying a real living wage or above and offering training and development routes in an interesting and diverse sector. SHOL is keen to cultivate a diverse and inclusive workforce.

In addition to this our coastline and greenspaces present other opportunities and we have recently opened **a new driving range at Bootle Golf Course** and combining such opportunities with health and wellbeing for example we are offering under-16s free junior golf memberships and Twilight green fees.

We also continue to enhance the offer at the spectacular gateways to Sefton's coast. During 2021 our coast saw the arrival of the sand lizard mural at **Toad Hall**, the largest installation by a single artist in the country, and exciting and much-welcomed street food and drink concessions being delivered in Waterloo and Ainsdale.



Next, We Will

The current Business Case for Sandway Homes forecasts that there will be a surplus of £1.35m once Phase One of its development programme has been completed. Therefore, a dividend of £1.35m will be paid to the Council on completion of Phase One, expected to be received in 2024/25.

The Council has **reaffirmed** its commitment to the Strand shopping centre, a cornerstone of the local community, which remains at the heart of plans to regenerate the hard hit town.

In collaboration with partners and communities, we will continue to progress the exciting vision for the future of the Strand Shopping Centre.

The Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment Project is to provide a sustainable future for, and to optimise the benefits from, the Centre. Once operational, the Council will no longer be required to provide a subsidy.

Through dynamic and modern approaches SHOL aims to become the hospitality business of choice for customers and employees, first in Sefton, then the wider Liverpool City Region.

Working closely with community groups and local businesses we will continue to build upon the opportunities that our coast and green spaces present.



ARTIST IMPRESSIONS OF CROSBY LAKESIDE PROJECT

Economic Growth

Peer Review Recommendation E - Accelerate work on a local economic growth strategy alongside efforts in the Liverpool City Region

Our Progress & Impact

Since the last Peer Review in 2018, Sefton Council has made significant progress in developing both formal and informal relationships with the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority (CA). Examples of this include the Weekly Growth Directors meeting, which ensures a collaborative and strategic approach to economic recovery and growth. There is a CA Representative on the **Town Deal** Board, and CA officer engagement as part of the team on every strategic project in Sefton. The Council and CA have also together established a Bootle Task Group, focused specifically on the challenges and opportunities ahead for Bootle, comprising a range of public and private sector partners and stakeholders.

This strong relationship and our clear priorities have helped to secure funding from the CA for the development of **Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre**, **Cambridge Road Adult Learning Centre**, funding to support the transformation of **Southport Market**, and match funding of £20m to accompany the £37.5m Southport Town Deal which includes the redevelopment of the Marine Lake Events Centre in Southport.

The CA is also funding two pieces of work relating to the regeneration of Bootle: 'Our Future, Our Bootle', developing an Area Action Plan which will set out a clear vision for the town for the next twenty years and beyond. The Area Action Plan aims to act as a catalyst for further investment in the town, creating more opportunities for local people and businesses. The CA is also part of the project team delivering transformation of the Bootle Canalside space. Two CA-funded trial events formed part of the first phase of the long-term plan for transformation of the town centre.



Sefton has developed economic strategies for the borough with the regional impact in mind. Despite the obvious economic impact of the pandemic, we have still been able to make progress on our Economic Strategy; this strategy has been refreshed to reflect the impact of the pandemic and planning for recovery, and Sefton and the CA are collaborating on regional (as well as local) recovery and growth planning on an ongoing basis.

Growth is key to many of the ambitions in the Vision 2030 and the foundations for long-term, self-sustaining, economic prosperity.

Recent successes of the Growth Programme

Our communities have had, and continue to have, the opportunity to influence major projects within the Growth Programme through extensive, meaningful consultation and engagement. Of note is the quality and quantity of engagement carried out for the Southport Town Deal which heavily influenced what was included in the Town Investment Plan submitted to Government. In particular, over 1,000 young people were engaged with as part of this exercise. The strength of this consultation process underpinned our £37.5m Town Deal award – only one single town of 101 places received a larger Town Deal than ours.

Since the £1.4 million refurbishment and repurposing of the old Southport Market was completed in July 2021 the new **Southport Market** has welcomed, and continues to welcome, guests locally, regionally, and nationally, and the space has gone from strength to strength. The Market has created more than 30 new jobs, is supporting local businesses and entrepreneurship, and providing a catalyst for significant additional investment from the private sector in this area of Southport Town Centre.

The event space at the rear of the market has seen a number of events, such as the venue's inaugural Oktoberfest, the first ever Christmas Extravaganza,



ARTIST IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW MARINE LAKE EVENTS CENTRE, SOUTHPORT



transforming the space into a Winter Wonderland, with visits from the Big Man himself! In December 2021 InvestSefton and The Good Business Festival hosted the 'Family Fortunes' event to explore how the business dynamic of working alongside those related to you may help, or occasionally hinder, growth and progression.

The Southport Townscape Heritage Project is a heritage-led initiative to regenerate Southport's historic town centre over five years, enhancing the quality and strength of the linkages between the town centre and the seafront so that the two become more integrated. The Council and **Southport BID**, with support from partners such as **Southport Civic Society** and **The Atkinson**, led the successful funding bid and were awarded £1.6m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), and are now overseeing a programme of property grants for historic buildings, skills training and community activities.

The project focuses on the four key streets linking Southport town centre and the Marine Lake attractions – Coronation Walk, Scarisbrick Avenue, Nevill Street and Bold Street – which sit within the **Lord Street and Promenade Conservation** Areas. The regeneration work will complement the NLHF-funded restoration of Kings Gardens and Coastal Communities-funded refurbishment of the Pier and the further improvements proposed as part of the **Southport Town Deal**.

The Townscape Heritage Project team coordinated over a dozen special events in September 2021, showing off the town's wonderfully varied buildings and historical quirks as part of the national Heritage Open Days festival.

Situated on a 13.5-acre site off Dunnings Bridge Road, the **Mersey Reach** project was developed with support from Sefton Council's business growth team, InvestSefton, and is expected to create up to 350 jobs when complete. Mersey Reach was named as Development of the Year 2021 at Insider's

Liverpool City Region Property Dinner. Phase one consisted of four units and work has already started on phase two which will consist of 12 units with completion due in 2022.

The Mersey Reach development is enabling fast-growing Sefton-based companies to continue to operate from our borough, not only improving productivity in the advanced manufacturing industry but bringing new jobs for local communities. Having the infrastructure to accommodate the needs of expanding businesses is what makes Sefton the ideal place for businesses to flourish and offers a real sense of confidence about the future of business here as we focus on recovery post-pandemic.

The Sefton@Work Team continue to provide information, advice, guidance and practical support to any Sefton residents who are looking for employment and training opportunities. March 2020 saw the 1,000 Stars of Sefton event, a celebration that marked 1,000 Sefton residents being supported into work through the ESF Ways to Work programme delivered by Sefton@Work. Sefton@Work has now secured employment for over 1,300 out of work Sefton residents since the project began in 2016.

All of the major projects within the Growth Programme will have an environmentally sustainable design, using innovation and technology to minimise the carbon footprint.

We will continue to work hard to maximise Levelling Up opportunities across the borough.

Member Development

Peer Review Recommendation F - Develop the role of all members in a changing context for local government and a changing model of delivery locally

Our Progress & Impact

Following the LGA Peer Review we commenced work to develop an elected member development plan under 3 key activities: -

- The Induction Programme for Newly Elected Members
- Ongoing Member Development (some of which is mandatory) provided by the Council; and
- Dedicated external training for all members on specific subjects for example the Local Government Association provided training on the changing role of councillors.

In October 2019 the LGA delivered two sessions for members to look at the role of the ‘modern councillor’ and how this role is changing given the demands on councils and councillors. The sessions were put in place to look at what this means in Sefton and the role that members play in helping residents and community groups to find and develop their own solutions. More specifically, the sessions looked at how in their roles elected members can support effective prevention and early intervention with a view to reducing the need for Council services. The feedback from members was, in the main, positive.

The Democratic Services Manager also regularly circulates the wider LGA training offer to members.

In November 2019 Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered proposals for the induction of newly elected Members and continuous Member development. This included proposals to develop an induction programme,

conduct a review of the Councillor Induction and Member Development Programme and outlined the LGA Member development sessions, together with the next steps planned. The launch of the Member Development Programme was planned to take place in May 2020 but the pandemic and cancellation of the 2020 Elections meant that this was put on hold.

Following the announcement by the Government that the Elections would take place in May 2021, work continued, and the Member Induction and Development Programme was launched in May 2021. In December 2021 Members were asked to complete a survey to provide feedback on the 2021-2022 Member Development programme and the 2022-2023 Programme will consider the results of that survey.

Two key documents have been produced to support Councillors in their role as Sefton Councillors and their on-going development. These are ‘Guidance for Newly Elected Members Handbook 2021/2022’ and ‘Member Development Programme of Courses 2021/2022’.

‘Guidance for Newly Elected Members Handbook’ was produced to provide a guide to Members and help them in their first weeks and continuance as a Sefton Councillor. The document provides information about Sefton, the Core Vision, Core Purpose and Framework for Change, responsibilities as elected Members, Code of Conduct, the decision-making process/Committees, the political management structure, local government finance and so on. The document also provides information and contact details for the respective service areas.

Newly elected members have found the induction process and handbook valuable, and the ongoing training offers to all members.

The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel continued to meet remotely during the pandemic and the **Annual Report** demonstrates our commitment to co-producing solutions with communities and partners. Ward members

continued to be available to their communities throughout the pandemic, many making use of digital opportunities and taking part in volunteering activities. Surgeries commenced in line with the easing of restrictions.

Next, We Will

Both of the member handbooks are 'living' documents and continually evolving and being amended in response to changes to Council personnel, addition of new courses, etc. All councillors elected and re-elected at the local Elections in May 2022 will be invited to attend the Member Induction Programme.

The Chief Planning Officer will continue to deliver monthly training to members and substitute members of the Planning Committee. Members of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee will attend a mandatory training session with legal and licensing officers before they can sit on meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee.

A programme of Audit and Governance Committee training will include an Introduction to Audit and Governance and an annual session on Treasury Management plus the members of this committee will be offered a Treasury Management session facilitated by the Council's Treasury Management Consultants.

Co-producing solutions with communities and partners will continue to be an essential element of enabling change in Sefton.

Over the next year we will explore the use of digital technologies supporting members with community engagement.



Looking Forward

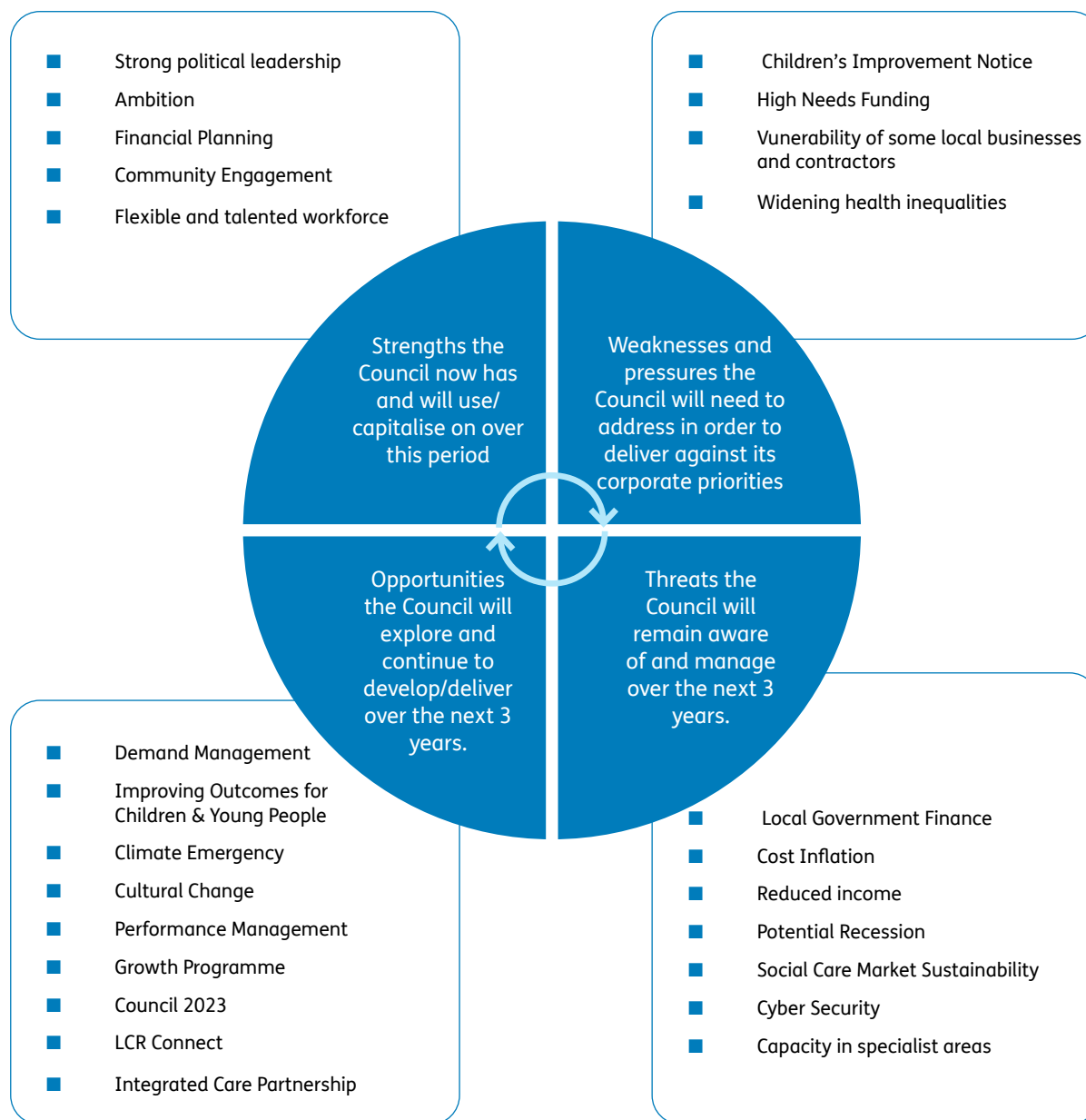
The last two years have brought challenges that few anticipated. We believe that we are well placed to continue to support as together we face the challenges of funding, recovery, the cost-of-living crisis, climate change and health inequalities.

We are proud of and passionate about what we do. We remain ambitious for the borough, determined to deliver and commission services that will improve outcomes for local people and committed to partnership working. We have a proven track record in terms of delivery and financial sustainability, we are determined to make the required to make the required improvements to Children’s Services and will fully maximise the opportunities that the Leeds Family Valued model presents us.

The diagram below identifies the internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential challenges and opportunities that the Council faces.

Finances

The Council has maintained an excellent record with regard to financial management over the last 12 years that has required it to meet a budget shortfall of £233m. This has continued to be predicated on medium term financial planning and setting multi-year budgets that enable effective planning of service delivery and the inevitable transformation activity. Delivering balanced budgets and



in year underspends has continued during the pandemic alongside a strategic approach to increasing reserves that will improve financial sustainability. We have a 3-year medium term financial plan that at this time is deliverable based on the assumptions within the comprehensive spending review.

The management of the Council's finances over the next 3-5 years however will rely, as with all local authorities, on the receipt of appropriate funding from central government. Adults' and Children's Services will continue to face significant budget pressure and the position on the High Needs Budget has required escalation in recent months.

We do not underestimate the degree of change needed within our Children's Services. We have invested heavily in this area and will ensure that we effectively resource the delivery of our Improvement Plan.

Government have promised reform of Business Rates and a Fair Funding review, and these will be key in determining how the Council approaches financial sustainability and contains a number of risks that have been identified in the recent budget report that was approved by Council.

Levelling Up

We continue to proactively pursue all funding opportunities to support regeneration and growth across the borough. This will include pursuit of the next round of Levelling Up funding, for which the prospectus is expected in Spring 2022. During the first bidding round for Levelling Up funding in 2021, we supported the CA-led bid for transport projects and were successful in obtaining significant funding as part of this scheme for the Maritime corridor in Sefton.

Capacity to Deliver

Overall, our ability to deliver on our ambitions remain strong, with a good mix of influential leadership, a committed workforce, collaborative partnerships and closer working with communities to build capacity further. The organisational

structure has remained stable with some changes being made in order to prepare for the Integrated Care Partnership and aid the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan.

Our Executive Director roles continue to ensure we have flexible strategic capacity to take forward our key priorities and achieve the required changes and outcomes needed though clear, strategic leadership.

Capacity to deliver remains a challenge with recruitment difficulties reflecting the local and regional situation in such areas as Children's Social Care and enabling roles such Procurement, Business Intelligence and a variety of roles to deliver the Growth Programme. Liverpool City Region Chief Executives and the Combined Authority have agreed a joint project with HR and Procurement leads on Social Worker recruitment.

The Communications and Personnel teams are working closely with service areas to address these challenges, but we recognise that this skills gap will be a challenge in some areas over the next couple of years. Succession planning and skills development will be critical in the next few years, and this will be addressed through the work of the Council of 2023. Where needed, we will need to commission the required resources in order to deliver against our ambitious plans.

Our apprenticeship programme continues to be valued. Consideration will be given to how to make the most of such opportunities across the organisation and how this may help to address some recruitment challenges.

Throughout the pandemic our communities showed time and again how they pull together in times of adversity and support the most vulnerable. Once again, the generosity and kindness of the people of Sefton is on display for all to see, given the number of enquiries the Council has received from local people and our own workforce asking how they and their communities can help the people of Ukraine, especially any Ukrainian refugees who may come to Britain.

Whilst still in its infancy, the nationally led Homes For Ukraine scheme, is already generating much interest in Sefton and we expect to see a number of Ukrainian families move to the borough over the coming weeks and months. What is yet to be determined, is the local impact of this, on our school admissions, demand for Children's and Adult social care, the impact on the local health sector such as demand for GPs and dentists.

Sefton Council has excellent relationships with partners across the board, only strengthened through our close working during the pandemic, and we will, of course, work hand in glove with them to ensure we can deliver excellent services, not only to our local population, but to our Ukrainian friends.

Throughout the pandemic we have administered a large number of grants and schemes diverting resource from across the Council. The recent announcement regarding the £150 energy rebate payment is good news for many of our residents, however, to ensure prompt payment to local people we will, once again, need to prioritise activity and divert knowledgeable resource. Should this trend continue, we will need to consider how best to resource and process such activity in the future.

Sickness absence levels have been a risk to our capacity to deliver throughout the pandemic. We have ensured that employees are well supported, with a focus on emotional health and wellbeing balanced with robust procedures to deal effectively with the monitoring and management of sickness absence. Our Personnel Team, including the Health Unit, and Health and Safety Team have continued to work closely with managers, providing advice and appropriate levels of support, advising on informal processes and assisting with the more formal levels of sickness absence management and risk assessments.

We have recently launched a new Council website which is the first step in a range of new technological innovations and improvements that will support new ways of working in how residents and businesses interface with the Council.

The coming months will see more staff begin to return to the office. One of the goals of the **Asset Management Strategy** is to enable a fit for purpose and maximised estate. This will in part be achieved by reducing the building footprint through the future ways of working agile project which in turn links back to the climate change and ICT strategies.

Community capacity is a real strength in Sefton and this capacity swelled during the pandemic. Our incredible community led scheme which funds ideas that create more vibrant, resilient and connected communities is set to return in 2022. The community project funding opportunity is part of Sefton Crowd, a Council initiative that aims to give anyone who lives locally with ideas about how to improve their area the opportunity to gain funding via the UK's leading civic crowdfunding platform Spacehive. The aim is simple – to fund and deliver exciting and innovative ideas to improve Sefton put forward by the local community, for the local community. The Council has an allocated a dedicated fund of £50,000 for projects taking part in the programme, where there is an opportunity for local projects to get a pledge from the Council of up to £5,000. Successful projects will support Sefton Council's 2030 Vision, but this year we are also looking to support projects that look to help residents and communities in tackling the climate change crisis in Sefton.

Moreover, community partners remain integral to the Strand Shopping Centre and its future. Partner organisations such as **Y-Kids** and **the Big Onion** continue to drive footfall in the centre while also delivering important outcomes for our communities.

Increases in cost inflation will have a significant impact on the Council's spending power. Whilst funding is usually considered in cash terms the Council is subject to material increases in costs through pay inflation, provider fee increases (significantly impacted by the additional costs from increases in the National Living Wage) as well as general inflation. This is also relevant for our capital programme, where funding may not be spent for a number of

years due to the complexity of schemes – scheme costs will increase whilst the funding is fixed, reducing the spending power of the capital funding received. This is particularly relevant currently as inflation reaches record levels.

The Council continues to work through and monitor the impact of coming out of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine- one such area that will be addressed is in respect of energy costs- like all local authorities the Council pays for its energy in advance as part of a consortium and as has been illustrated in recent price articles 100% increases will be incurred- this will require a short term financial plan to meet this challenge in addition to reviewing options to reduce cost- at this stage it is unclear as to the future years impact but this will be considered in advance of the formal annual Medium Term Financial Plan report that is presented in the autumn of 2022.

Climate Emergency

We are pledging that 2022 will be the greenest year yet as several key projects reach or move towards completion and significantly reduce the carbon footprint generated from Council operations. Work at Bootle and Southport town halls is due to be completed later this year and this will result in carbon savings resulting in a 32% reduction in gas consumption. Across the Borough the installation of LED streetlights is continuing with 3,311 lanterns installed so far along with 213 full column replacements. This has meant a saving 148,852 kWh of electricity already.

We have made progress towards a net zero carbon target of 2030 over the past two years and we are set to embark on key projects this year to reduce emissions borough-wide. We have approved plans for over £3 million to be spent on retrofit measures in over 500 homes in the Borough which will make homes more energy efficient, cheaper to run and better for the planet.

Schools in Sefton are also getting involved in green projects like the AirWatch project to monitor air quality in playgrounds and set about improving it. Alongside partners, businesses and schools we will honour those pledges made during COP26 as part of our #IPledge campaign which saw over 50 business and schools make pledges towards a greener future.

Our Green Sefton Team has pledged to manage more of its outdoor spaces in a way that will boost biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Working alongside community groups and businesses we will manage sites for nature, to ensure that we are using sustainable methods and to create havens for not only people to enjoy, but wildlife too.

Digital

Our **Digital Strategy** outlines our vision to become a place connected by people, supported by technology, with connected communities that thrive; with support for local people and businesses that are empowered to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by digital technology. We are all living in a time of unprecedented change; the growth of consumer technology is changing the way we all live, work and play and we will work hard to ensure that local people and business are empowered to take advantage of innovative technology to support both personal and economic growth. We have recently launched Ask SARA, a new online self-assessment tool and guidance tool, to allow people to browse a range of products and services to suit their needs and help them to live independently for longer.

We will continue to maximise the changes that have enabled our workforce to work from home over the last couple of years. The changes we are continuing to make provide us with an excellent foundation for future adaptability and meeting the changing expectations of residents.

Culture

A new organisational culture programme started to be rolled out in March 2022. This will consider the impact of increased remote working and we will look to learn from others in this respect.

The Council was once again awarded the Navajo Charter Mark for displaying good practice and commitment towards its LGBT+ staff and community.

We remain committed to supporting the diverse needs of all employees and the communities we serve and are committed to creating a more diverse and inclusive organisation and ensuring that all of our staff feel welcome and heard. In line with our One Council values, we have established a number of staff networks. These contribute to addressing and solving problems right across the Council. Our staff networks offer a place for staff to come together, share experiences and facilitate learning and development. The staff networks include:

- Sefton Council Christian Workplace Group
- Sefton's Black and Ethnically Diverse Staff Group
- Sefton LGBT+ Staff Network
- Sefton Disability Staff Network
- Sefton Women's Network



Community Engagement and Partnerships

We will continue to be a listening and collaborative Council constantly striving to improve consultations across the borough. We will continue to build upon the strong partner relationships, working together to improve outcomes for local people and businesses. Our consultation processes are not events, but ongoing conversations on the challenges and opportunities ahead for Sefton.

Key documents

Vision 2030

Core Purpose

Revenue and Capital Budget Plan 2022/23 – 2024/25

JSNA Overview (sefton.gov.uk)

Early Help Annual Report v2.pdf (sefton.gov.uk)

Please take a few minutes to watch our Public Health Annual Report.

Southport Town Deal – investment plan

The Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan





Together
a stronger
community



A borough for
everyone




A clean, green
and beautiful
borough



Living, working
and having fun




On the move



Visit, explore
and enjoy



Ready for the
future



Open for
business



Sefton Council

