

# Peer Review Position Statement





**Sefton  
2030**

**An amazing place to live, work and  
have some fun** Sefton Council Vision 2030

The perfect place to enjoy your life.

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# Welcome to Sefton

We have a lot to be proud and confident of in Sefton and being an ambitious Council we're always striving for further improvements, both for our communities and for Sefton the place. We live and work in an amazing borough which holds great natural beauty and a heritage to be proud of. You may not know but Sefton is home to the Grand National and 2017 saw us host the British Open which generated £20m back into the local economy. But our 22 miles of beautiful coastline is our biggest draw and we marked 2017 by celebrating the Year of the Coast.

Sefton is beautiful but it is the people that make it sparkle. They are happy and proud to share their gifts of the head, heart and hand to make it such a great place to live, work and visit. Our communities have a great sense of fun, are caring and enjoy being part of energetic local neighbourhoods with their own



unique identities and sense of pride. Our strength in volunteering is second to none and 2018 is our Year of the Volunteer as we celebrate and champion their incredible work and the resilience that they provide.

I hope that you will find out a bit more about all these wonderful things during your time here.

## Opportunity to share, learn and celebrate

We welcome the opportunity the Local Government Association's Peer Review provides for us to learn from colleagues, helping us to go further with our ambitious agenda. We have a strong Vision 2030 and a route map for how this will be achieved but we are keen to learn how we can do better to meet the challenges we face along the way.

We have a real desire and drive to make life better for local people, improve organisational performance, workforce morale and to explore and deliver innovative solutions. We look forward to the peer team's insight and advice on our improvement journey, growth and transformation plans and we intend to fully embrace the learning from this review.

**Cllr. Ian Maher**  
Leader, Sefton Council

## Our collective vision – the journey to a more prosperous 2030

One thing we're proud of is the exciting vision for the future of Sefton, which we developed with our communities and partners - it underpins everything we do. Our Imagine Sefton 2030 consultation engaged thousands of people, local businesses, visitors and potential investors to create a vision that collectively promotes shared prosperity, coordinated public investment, and a healthy environment and population.

Our Vision 2030, agreed in November 2016, will help us to stimulate growth, set new levels of aspiration, see our communities thrive and focus on what is important for Sefton. Our Core Purpose and major change programme - the Framework for Change – sets out our contribution to achieving the vision and supports us on this journey. This approach, combined with a policy driven budget, has proven to be robust yet flexible and most of all aimed at achieving the best possible outcomes for our communities and a financially sustainable Council.

The impact of the austerity agenda, national policy changes and demographic pressures on our ability to improve outcomes for our communities cannot be overestimated. We will have lost 51% of Government funding between 2010 and 2020. This is equivalent to £722 from every household in Sefton. But we remain confident and ambitious for the future. Balancing the protection of our most vulnerable people with what people quite rightly expect on an everyday basis, such as emptying their bins, remains a key priority for us.

We are determined that we will build on our proven track record of delivery and our ability to truly listen to our communities. We also recognise the need to become more commercially astute and creative to ensure the Council is financially sustainable so that we can lead the achievement of our 2030 ambitions.

I have great confidence in the ability of both my Cabinet and Leadership teams in driving us forward on this journey. We have taken a very proactive approach to ensuring that we have the right team to achieve our current plans and to develop a clear pathway to 2030 and beyond. I am proud to see the strides that we have made in improving the gender balance both politically and at a senior officer level. We couldn't continue to deliver without the talent, creativity and resilience of our workforce, who never cease to amaze me. Every day they do exceptional work that makes such a difference to people's lives and I am sure that the peer team will be impressed by them.

We have as a core principle the desire to work with others. We have a strong history of partnership working in Sefton, we will continue to build on this and the next few years will see us working more closely than ever with our partners particularly around early intervention and prevention. We will continue to grasp the opportunities presented to us.

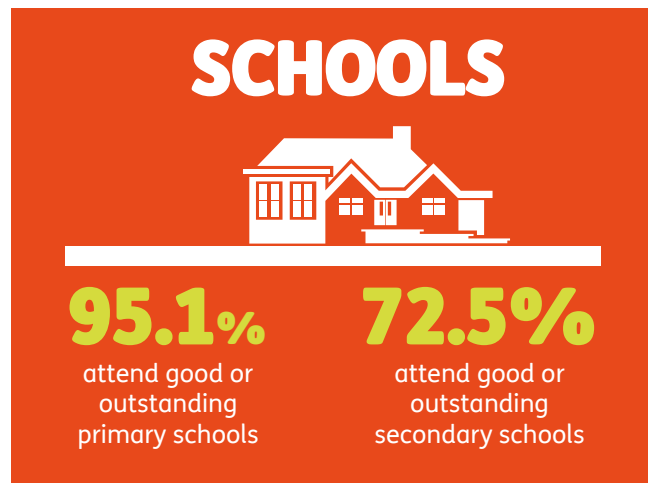
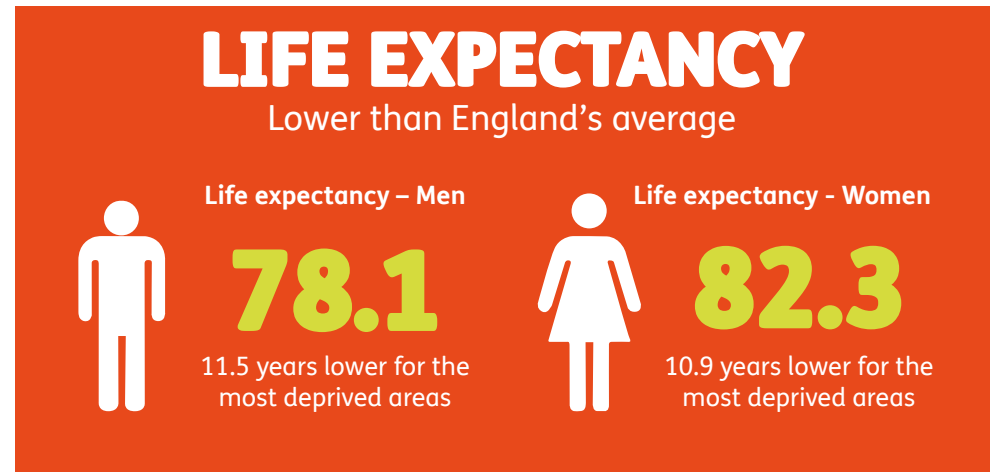
I am confident that the LGA Peer Review will provide assurances that we are on the right track. This is a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase Sefton, our talented workforce, our ambitions for the future and all the things we have done that we are proud of, and to learn and receive insight from peers to help guide our next steps.

# Our Sefton

## Our People

Sefton is not a borough of demographics and statistics! Sefton is a confident, connected borough because of its people. People enjoy living in Sefton, with 80% of residents saying that they are either very or fairly satisfied with their

local area as a place to live. We have been identified as one of the happiest places to live in the UK.





**Sefton**  
**2030**

## Our people look out for each other

**Sefton Council Vision 2030**

We look for our similarities and diversities but never on our differences,  
we work together to live a fruitful life

# 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.





**Sefton**  
**2030**

## Visit, explore and enjoy the Sefton countryside

**Sefton Council Vision 2030**

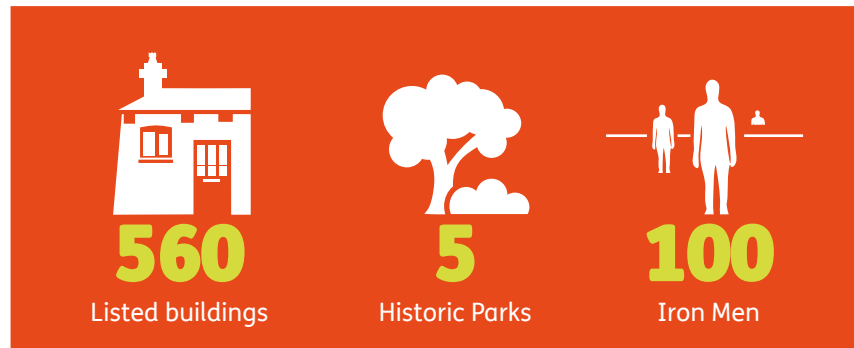
We enjoy activities on our beaches and floral greenspaces, while the rush of adrenaline at Southport Air Show brings visitors from far and wide.

# 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. We are record breakers, have many famous faces and even some of our animals are well known too – remember Red Rum?



# Sefton 2030



# Home to International events

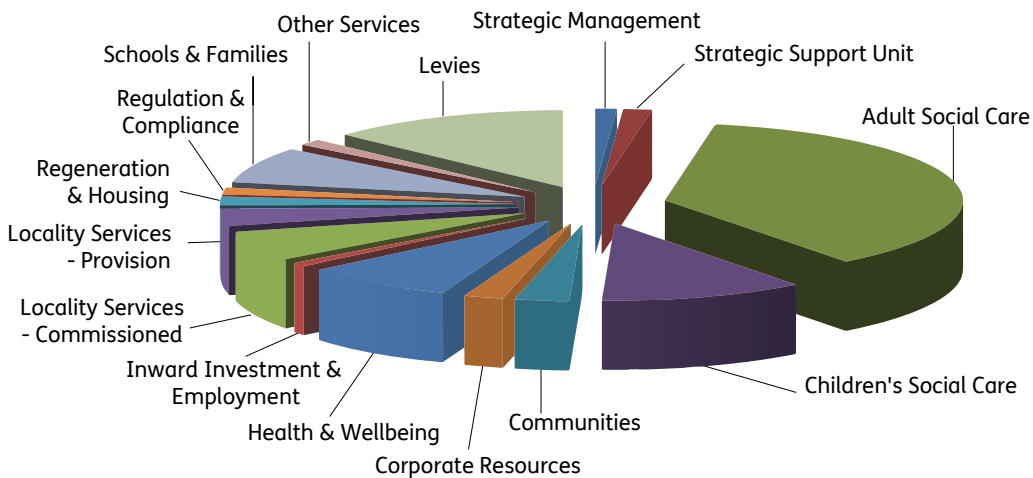


# Our Sefton

## 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.

### Budget breakdown



**93.9m**  
On Adult Social Care



Have given  
**£930,000**  
community grants in  
the last 12 months



Spent nearly  
**£170,000**  
on Emergency support  
for those in welfare crisis



**66**  
Councillors



Over  
**3,500**  
strong workforce



Over  
**100**  
One Council Champions



**150,000**  
bins emptied  
every week



**166**  
Parks and green  
spaces cared for



Over  
**60**  
Apprentices



**7**  
Libraries



**6**  
Leisure Centres



Have prepared  
**14,000**  
School meals  
every day



**607**  
miles of road maintained

# Understanding of the Local Place and Priority Setting

One of our greatest strengths is our deep understanding of our communities. We have a proven track record in actively listening through our recognised best practice consultation and engagement techniques. Our partnership approach to this is a model that many other local authorities regard as best practice and is something we are very proud of. The voice of our communities is prevalent in our Vision 2030.

Our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and a wealth of data and intelligence is used to help understand place and to inform resourcing our priorities, how we commission and work with others to improve the health and wellbeing of local people and reduce the health inequalities that exist in the borough. Our understanding of the wide gap in health inequalities is good and we know that it will take a whole systems approach to effect significant change alongside a proactive approach with our communities.

We know that a good education helps people to live happier, healthier and more prosperous lives and we have clear aspirations for our children and young people. However, the performance of some of our secondary schools challenges this. The clear majority, 95.1%, of our primary school age children attend a good or outstanding school but for our young people attending secondary school this falls to 72.5%. Our secondary school performance in the south of the borough is poor and educational attainment for some of our most deprived areas needs to be raised. We have too many secondary school places and this is having an impact on the quality of teaching in these Schools and

we are working hard with the Regional Schools Commissioner and other school leaders to address this to improve attainment as well as support those young people on the edge of care.

We recognise our demographic pressures to support our older citizens and this is stretching our services, putting pressures on hospitals and having an impact on the care market. These are challenges that we are addressing in several ways including developing new extra care housing across the borough and introducing new assessment approaches to support vulnerable people.

We have good networks with our business community and the 2017 Economic Assessment updated our understanding of Sefton's business base. At a macro level our Economic Strategy outlines the opportunities for growth in certain sectors. Our understanding of the professional services and maritime sectors is deep; however, we need to improve our understanding at a more granular level, relating to specific business sectors which are growing rapidly and those with high growth potential. This will enable us to target our support more effectively.

We know that the outdoor environment, its accessibility and sustainability is important to local people, who are very proud of where they live. This is evidenced in many ways such as our recycling performance, green flag parks and the many friends of groups. Core Council services are much valued and universally expected.

## On our transformation journey

Over the last ten years we have engaged with our community extensively, for example, as we developed the JSNA and throughout every budget cycle. In 2016 our communities took another opportunity to tell us what really mattered to them through Imagine Sefton 2030 and their views will help us to shape the future of our borough. Much of the feedback received was not new but it brought together our communities aspirations.

Using all this feedback we developed, with partners, our Vision 2030, which sets out the blueprint for a confident and connected borough. We also led on the creation of a partnership Vision Outcomes Framework. Again, using this feedback, we reviewed our Core Purpose, priorities, shaped our budget plans and developed our major change programme.

The Framework for Change is about:

- Creating more and better jobs for local people – Economic Growth
- Working together to deliver affordable services which achieve the best possible outcomes for our communities – Public Sector Reform
- Making every £ count in everything we do – Service Delivery Options
- Investing wisely and creatively to make and save money, grow faster and enable our communities to thrive – Strategic Investment

The narrowing of inequality of wellbeing, raising aspiration and achievement are key challenges and priorities. People clearly recognise jobs as the cornerstone to improving outcomes and that connectivity is key to delivering economic growth. We know that to stimulate growth we need to continue to invest and work with others to ensure success.

We have a record of clear and transparent communications about the Council's financial position but in the last couple of years we have taken new approaches to communication and engagement, telling our budget story with greater use of social media. This has led to our communities now quoting key facts and figures in conversations between themselves. The introduction of MySefton.co.uk council and community online news channel has changed how people access local news.

# Sefton 2030

A confident and connected borough



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



We will continue to listen to our communities, work hard to balance our budget and work on the priorities that will take us further on our journey to 2030. We are making great strides to invest wisely, prioritise our resources and work creatively to make and save money, to grow faster so enabling our communities to thrive. Looking back in our second year of delivering the priorities, as defined within the Framework for Change, we have achieved so much and are keen to press on to improve outcomes for local people.



## Growth & Strategic Investment - we have in the last 2 years

- Worked in partnership with others to create the Maghull North train station, enhancing public transport locally and in the wider Liverpool City Region, connecting thousands to greater employment and leisure opportunities.
- Purchased The Strand Shopping Centre, already making a return of over £500k and this has been re-invested back into some of our services.
- Purchased James Dixon Court, a local residential home, to provide quality care for vulnerable older people in partnership with our Social Care Company – New Directions.
- Secured funds for a major refurbishment of Southport Pier, which will attract more visitors.
- Decided to create a Housing Development Company to boost housing numbers and achieve a financial return.
- Continued to support the goal of thriving town centres through our town centre investment and development frameworks for Bootle, Crosby and Southport.
- Worked hard to provide over 60 apprenticeship opportunities per year within the Council.





## Public Sector Reform - we have in the last 2 years

- Begun to bring our teams together to provide more joined up support through our localities model because people told us that that it would really make a difference to their lives if our teams were more joined up. This new model will underpin our drive to ensure that people are supported at the right time, in the right ways, rather than feeling as though they are being passed from pillar to post.
- Changed our planned approach to introducing Family Wellbeing Centres after we engaged with and listened to our communities. This will see a redesigned offer covering a wider age range from 0 to 19.
- Dedicated 2017 to the Year of Sefton's Coast as we celebrated 22 miles of fantastic coastline. This came about because people told us that we needed to do more to celebrate and promote Sefton's many assets.
- Taken a joined up strategic approach to reduce the health inequalities gap and reliance on our services through our 'Together a Stronger Community' work, which is focused on universal prevention across all our communities and workforce.
- Launched our Green Sefton team, a joined-up approach to the management, development and oversight of our coastline, parks and green spaces. It will also encourage more community users, more involvement in activities and volunteering across Sefton.
- Made great progress in the first phase of a major ICT transformation programme which is making a huge difference to the way our teams can work and productivity. Several of our buildings have been transformed to help bring about this change.

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## It doesn't stop there, we have

- Introduced an innovative, partnership-led approach to improving health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities through Well Sefton, which is happening in one of the poorest parts of our borough as part of the Well North programme.
- Worked hard in partnership with our schools to put in place the infrastructure to improve secondary school performance, putting school leaders at the heart of this as they are the best people to meet the challenge of underperformance in our schools.
- Introduced a new, more informal and relaxed way for local people to engage with local councillors and our partners - Constituency Forums.
- Refreshed our People and Place and Ward Profiles, providing our Councillors with added insight to the areas that they represent.
- Become the first local authority to receive the Merseyside and Cheshire Navajo Charter Mark, recognising our good practice, commitment and knowledge of the specific needs and barriers faced by our LGBTIQ community.



- Commissioned our Living Well Sefton free service to focus on supporting people with issues that may be affecting their health and wellbeing. A collaboration of various Sefton organisations use their expertise and knowledge to share with others. This approach includes Living Well Mentors who work with individuals on a one-to-one basis to see where small tweaks can be made that may have a big impact on improving health, such as exercise, eating better, stopping smoking, coping better with stressful situations, and help with debt and benefits.
- Adopted our Local Plan which met our identified housing and employment land requirements up to 2030 while balancing our legal requirements.
- Engage with our communities, supporting groups and local people to contribute to the national Draft Clean Air Strategy consultation, a subject that has been a challenge for our communities and a passion for our members for many years. Through this engagement we also want to increase knowledge about what we are already doing to improve air quality and to generate a greater sense of commitment and ownership about making changes at a community and individual level.
- Implement phase two of our localities model that will see the further co-location of Children's and Adult Social Care Teams so that they are working alongside our Locality Teams in advance of our third phase, which will focus on the co-location of partner agencies.

## Next we will

- Progress our plans to redevelop The Strand, a much-loved community asset. We will explain the opportunities of doing so to our community as we believe that the regeneration will benefit many and the financial gains will enable us to reinvest in everyday Council activity.
- Continue discussions with potential investors and developers across each of our town centres to bring viable development sites and projects to fruition.
- Establish the Housing Development Company, taking account of external pressures such as the implications of Brexit and local pressures such as the demand for social housing.
- Use data more effectively to inform more consistent, intelligent decision-making and commissioning as well as tracking performance as we are currently data rich but need to consistently apply an intelligence-led approach.
- Embed the School Improvement Groups who are committed to providing the best possible outcomes for all our children and young people through the raising of standards and the elimination of underperformance.
- Introduce capacity into our leadership team through focusing a new role for education excellence to ensure that we deliver on our aspirations for young people.

# Leadership of Place

Leadership of place requires the Council to make sure that what we and others do is in the best interests of Sefton and our residents through true collaboration, mutual trust and rigorous prioritisation. This requires strong and effective leadership and influencing skills that enable us to bring together partner organisations to raise aspiration, work towards common goals and build a sense of pride and belonging in the borough. It also means that we must carefully assess and balance the benefits and opportunities of economic growth with the impact some of the associated changes may have on our communities.

## A strong local leader

The Council Leader, Cabinet Members, Chief Executive, Executive Directors and Director of Social Care and Health are widely recognised by partners, the City Region and beyond as providing strong, clear and effective leadership. This solid foundation gives us the opportunity to lead and further develop our partnership working, allowing us to convene, co-ordinate and facilitate discussions with our key strategic partners.

Our Councillors are passionate, committed and engaged in the work of the Council in a variety of different ways. They are visible in their local communities and neighbourhood leadership is good from both a member and officer perspective. Recently this strong local voice led to NHS England reversing their decision to close Hightown's GP Surgery, a much-valued local asset.

Our strength in community consultation and engagement is firmly embedded in our governance in the form of the Public Consultation and Engagement Panel. This has been running for nearly 10 years with members from all groups, officers and partners fully invested in its principles.

Our Cabinet work with our young people in a 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.



The Office of the Mayor is 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 business community.

## A collaborative leader

Locally the Chief Executive chairs Sefton Leadership Collaborative (SLC) where strategic partners come together on a regular basis.

A real jewel in our crown is our New Realities deal, a 'can-do' collaborative agreement between ourselves and the voluntary, community and faith sector meaning that we share skills, expertise, costs, learning and risks. All partners are signed up to this common purpose, with the New Realities Steering Group ensuring that together we are embedding the key principles of the agreement in all aspects of our day-to-day work and as a result is making a real difference in Sefton.

Feeling safe, supported and free from discrimination and harm is important to our communities. The Safer Communities Partnership Group, facilitated by us, looks at community issues from a crime and disorder perspective. Together we take a whole systems approach to tackling serious organised crime. Our innovative use of funding enables us to build community resilience and contribute to the early intervention and prevention agenda.

We take a lead role when it comes to events management and work with colleagues from across the region and locally through the Sefton Events Safety Advisory Group where we coordinate our many partners to ensure that everyone enjoys events safely.

Our Invest Sefton team has 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.

## A key player in the Liverpool City Region and beyond

Working closely with the leaders from the other five local authorities and Metro Mayor, we 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 Employment and Skills, the lead strategic voice for improving the employment, skills and productivity of the City Region's residents and workforce. Having influential voices on several committees and overseeing policy and resources, strategy and delivery means we are ensuring that funding and resources are being targeted at the right issues for our area.

We hold key positions that are integral to the health and social care agenda, as well as driving forward key strategies to benefit the business community, such as the Investment Hub, Apprenticeship Hub, Business Growth Programme and Visitor Economy, and we're also on the Transport Advisory Group.

We are the lead on a key project looking at developing a strategic programme on wealth and wellbeing across LCR aimed at embedding health and wellbeing into all regional policies and strategies. Our Chief Executive is the LCR lead for Health and Social Care and the lead Chief Exec for the Cheshire and Merseyside Public Health Collaborative Service where Directors of Public Health work together to maximise improvements to health and wellbeing within our communities.

Our influence has a wider impact on the big priorities for the Liverpool City Region. For example, our role in reviewing the Single Investment Framework has resulted in a new Investment Strategy for the LCR to guide and direct city region funds into projects that will deliver the greatest impact. Plus, we led on the development of an integrated Visitor Management Strategy which will provide a single consistent mechanism to address the impact of development which leads to increasing visitor pressure on land with high conservation value.

Having these leadership roles firmly rooted within the LCR enables us to speak with a powerful voice and deliver improved outcomes for our communities.

## On our transformation journey

Longstanding, true partnership working is key to our success, it's just what we do around here, and we probably do not celebrate this enough.

When we began to envision what Sefton might look like in 2030 we knew that we could not develop our vision without speaking and listening to our communities and collaborating with our partners. Cross-party discussions about the need for and the importance of a vision quickly gathered support and under the leadership of the Cabinet's Member Sponsors we brought together key strategic partners and asked them to work with us.

Early discussions with the SLC gained agreement that the time was right to develop a vision for Sefton and that this would connect partners' thinking and action. From these conversations and further conversations with the Council's workforce, Imagine Sefton 2030 was born.

**Peer Review** Position Statement 2018

This truly collaborative engagement really captured the imaginations of our communities and since then we have achieved a lot.

## We have

- With our partners in the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership developed, consulted on and adopted the Sefton Coast Plan. This enables the strategic management of this much loved, important asset so that together we conserve and enhance important natural and cultural sites, habitats and species; local communities benefit from sustainable economic growth and we adapt to coastal and climate change; and it provides long term benefits for the health and wellbeing of local communities, businesses and visitors to the coast.
- Completed an innovative land transfer deal at Formby with the National Trust. The National Trust will invest in the visitor experience and maintain the land.



- Through the Multi Agency Localities Working Group ensured that partners have been involved in our locality model from its inception and throughout its ongoing implementation. Our partners at CVS have also recently transitioned to a new model mirroring ours. We are already making plans to co-locate with partners.
- A Welfare Reform Member Reference Group, formed in 2013, has worked tirelessly with our partners to minimise the impact of this national policy direction on local people. Our joined-up strategy and action plan has made effective use of data intelligence and insight, enabling us to target support where it is most needed.
- Supported more than 1,500 businesses and helped to support local businesses in attracting new investment worth £35m into Sefton, which led to the creation of more than 1,530 job opportunities in 2017/18.
- Strong links between Invest Sefton and our Commissioning and Procurement teams, together encouraged local businesses to be part of the Council's supply chain and since 2015 has resulted in about 50% of contracts being awarded to businesses within Sefton or the Liverpool City Region and 65% to SMEs.

## Next we will

- Develop Sefton's place branding into one coherent narrative and create an ambassador movement that will build on the already strong sense of local pride in our beautiful borough
- Take forward our plans to establish a Council-owned housing development company, providing a wide range of housing, within strong resilient communities. Meaning that the Council plays a big part in providing a wider housing choice alongside other housing developers and registered providers.
- Continue to embed our business-friendly approach.
- Develop and implement our social value action plan.



# Organisational Leadership and Governance

We operate an Executive Cabinet model, made up of the Leader and eight other Councillors. With most members of Cabinet being in place for several years, there is real maturity and stability around the decision-making processes and strength in understanding across portfolios. There are open and honest relationships between Cabinet Members and Strategic Leadership Board (SLB). Informal Policy Cabinet creates the space for informal discussions between Cabinet Members and SLB for shared thinking and policy development. Coupled with Cabinet Member Briefings we have a coherent approach to our work programme, with members and officers working together to respond to very challenging decisions and processes whilst retaining strong ambitions for the borough.

Given the historical makeup of governance within Sefton, namely the 26-year history of a power sharing Cabinet prior to 2012 the opposition groups have expressed frustration with the Executive Cabinet model. The Leaders of the opposition groups have regular one-to-one meetings with the Chief Executive and opposition group meetings also regularly take place providing an opportunity for the opposition to engage with senior officers on important issues.

There are established and effective arrangements in place to ensure timely scrutiny and challenge, including member-led Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups. We believe that these working groups enable us to harness elected members' experience. Having members from all groups adds value to policy

development, challenges and leads to decisions grounded in evidence, for example in the area of Children and Adolescent Mental Health.

Prior to each Council meeting all members are invited to take part in topic specific discussions. The subject matter is varied, ranging from for example Corporate Parenting to the budget process. Members actively take part in these sessions and engage well in thematic areas, such as the Year of the Volunteer and most recently the launch of Green Sefton was supported across the parties.

The quality of member-officer relationships is 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.



During times of significant change and in everyday activity good risk management is essential. We operate a system of risk management at corporate, service, team and project level. Accredited training helps to provide managers with the skills needed to manage risk effectively. To ensure robustness our risk operating system is reviewed and updated regularly, presented to and considered by Audit and Governance Committee.

There have been significant changes impacting on the workforce in recent years and throughout we have maintained a strong Trade Union partnership. Joint Trade Union meetings take place every two weeks and there are weekly meetings on budget options. Our joined-up approach has led to significant workforce change without industrial unrest. Our Trade Unions are key members of our Health and Safety committees and take an active role in working groups for example when looking at stress in the workforce.

## On our transformation journey

Everyday Council activity is varied and complex. This combined with the delivery of a major change programme and membership of the Liverpool City Region requires strong and effective governance. The review of the Council's constitution and other key documents is a well embedded process that actively considers major change. There are times when decision-making processes can feel overly complex and/or untimely especially when there is City Region involvement. We have tried to do our best to overcome these challenges.

We have worked hard to review our internal approaches, procedures and controls but know we have more to do in a few areas.

## We have

- Regularly refreshed our Constitution, Members Code of Conduct, Financial Procedures and Contract Procedure Rules with the latest updates being agreed by Council in July 2018. Both the review of Financial Procedures and Contract Procedure Rules help to simplify and speed up the decision-making process whilst maintaining effective rigour.
- Developed our customer work following an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group on Customer Experience (Claiming Financially Administered Benefits) producing an action plan that was implemented. This work led to the introduction of the Improving Information Group, where local people with communication needs come together to help us to make our information more accessible.
- Ensured clear governance arrangements are in place for Framework for Change, with the Programme Board being chaired by the Chief Executive.
- Maintained good visibility of risk management activity across the Council and the extent to which Senior Managers engage with the process and employ risk thinking has increased hugely in recent years but we know that we have more to do, given the scale of change being progressed.
- Put considerable effort into the development of the Performance Management Framework which has perhaps been one of our greatest challenges in the last couple of years in this area. Our most recent employee survey also highlighted performance management as a key concern amongst our workforce. We have invested significant leadership capacity in trying to get this right.



- We have appointed a dedicated Internal Communications Officer to allow greater focus on engagement and to support the delivery of a coordinated, managed and consistent approach to internal communications.
- Improved internal communications in recent years introducing some good channels/initiatives, including:
  - Yammer, with almost half of employees signed-up, this encourages staff to share successes, ask ideas of others, collaborate and praise colleagues. Yammer Hour with our Chief Executive is a regular and increasingly popular feature where staff can interact with the CEO in real time.
  - Twice yearly Senior Management Conferences, providing an opportunity for all the leaders to get together to discuss our future direction, ambitions and to promote the One Council ethos. Managers are encouraged to talk to their teams, share their learning and feedback and to also communicate any thoughts from the conference on channels such as Yammer.
  - One Council Brief, produced monthly and includes news and information from across the Council.
  - Conducted a communications survey to find out how managers communicate with their teams, what channels they use, what levels of engagement they currently have and how they feel they could be better supported in communicating with their teams. Their feedback will help us build a picture of where work needs to be done.
  - Introduced a weekly media round-up to help SLB keep abreast of Council-wide media coverage.

## Next we will

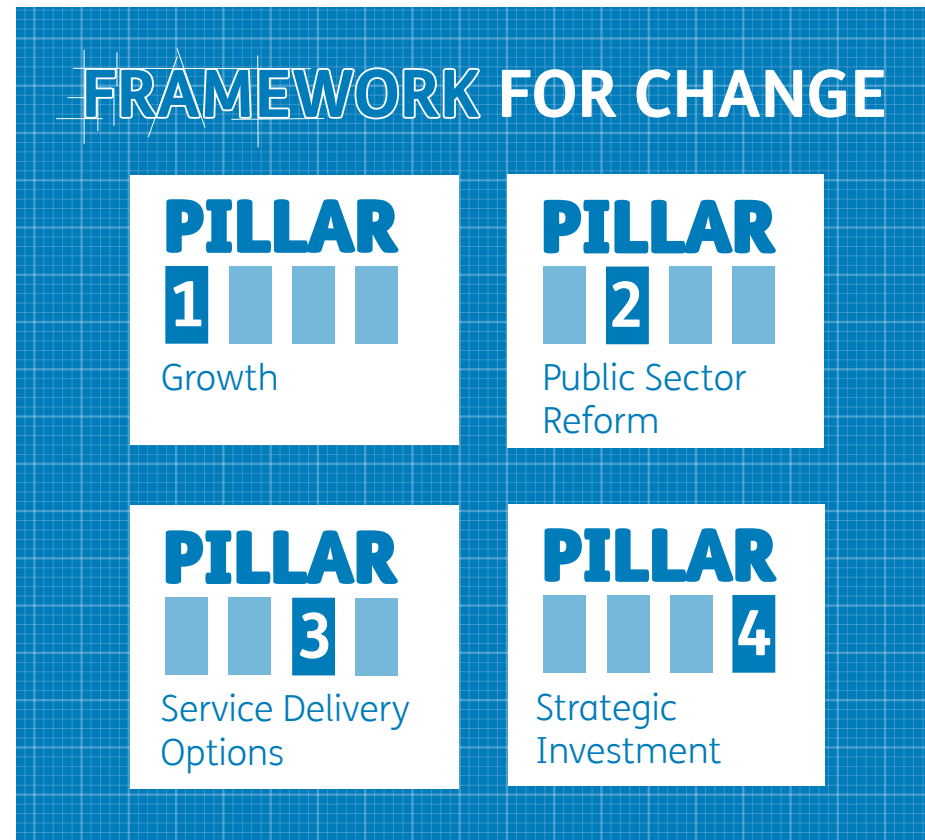
- Further develop our programme, financial and change management controls and systems as our programme of work develops and grows to ensure that we remain focused on the priorities that will achieve the best for our communities within the resources that we have available. This will require us to invest in our workforce to ensure that they have the right skills to continue to drive change forward.
- Take the time to truly embed a consistent Performance Management Framework and culture across the organisation and ensure that our new approach to performance management is meaningful, easily understandable and efficient. We will do this by the leadership team working closely with our Organisational Development (OD) lead to support and train managers to effectively manage performance and be clear about what they expect.
- Continue to strengthen risk management in our activities and fully harness the benefits a robust approach to risk can bring.
- Develop an internal communications improvement plan to ensure there is a healthy mix of top down, sideways and bottom up engagement to provide employees with essential, accurate information to enable them to do their jobs and feel supported. There will be a greater focus on using data and intelligence to inform our internal communications in the future.
- Continue to take a One Council approach to change our culture and truly embed values. SLB will lead this from the front, increasing their visibility, encouraging senior managers from across the organisation to work together to embed our values across the workforce.

# Financial Planning and Viability

Like many other councils the impact of the government's austerity programme has had a significant impact on our financial sustainability since 2010. Our three-year Medium Term Financial Plan to 2020 was refreshed in March 2018. The health of Sefton Council finances is reflected in the 2018 budget report and good governance ensures that SLB, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and External Audit are kept well informed of the current and forecast position. Since the current austerity programme commenced we have had a good track record of delivering balanced budgets. This has been primarily through the delivery of sustainable savings with the use of one-off savings being limited. Despite the challenges we face, through robust financial management we have consistently underspent against our budget since 2010. This has enabled us to set aside resources to support our transformation work whilst doubling our general balances to a level appropriate for the size of the authority. We believe that this is one of our key strengths.

The key facets of our budget plan mirror the four pillars of the Framework for Change. We are now in the second year of this budget plan and remain confident that our continued strategic approach to budget planning alongside good financial management and extensive community engagement, means that the plan continues to develop on solid foundations, remains flexible and will secure financial sustainability to 2020 and beyond.

Our key financial challenges are the government's austerity policy, grant reductions, business rates retention pilot and lack of capital resources. Like others we continue to suffer from lack of a clear national policy direction and experience exceptional additional demand for Adult Social Care services coupled with significantly increased associated costs. We are also faced with



an increase in the number of children and young people needing support from Children's Social Care and our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Teams. These are significant areas of concern to us as we remain committed to protecting the most vulnerable and improving life chances through our early intervention and prevention agenda.

We are the best performing local authority in the Liverpool City Region for collection of both Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates. The annual collection rate for 2017/18 showed that we had a Council Tax collection rate of 96.3%, while collection rates for National Non-Domestic Rates was 98.7%. These figures provide reassurance to residents that we are maximising our revenue to keep Council Tax down.

## On our transformation journey

Cabinet demonstrate strong political leadership in our financial management, planning and budget setting process, ensuring transparency through Overview and Scrutiny. We have a proven track record of delivering the reductions required since 2010 and have set three successive multi-year financial plans since 2013.

Our strong financial management skills have been essential since 2010, we have strength in our treasury management approach and our forecasting of the financial impact of funding changes.

For years we have effectively managed the relationship between the budget process and our change programme but we know there is always room to consider new approaches.

## We have

- Well embedded in-year budget management and monitoring processes for our current position, both capital and revenue.
- Begun to develop an ambitious Investment Programme based on a robust strategic investment programme linked to our MTFP. This investment may take several forms, but typically it will come under three headings: -
  - Invest to Grow;
  - Invest to Save;
  - Invest to Thrive.
- Demonstrated delivery against our bold ambitions in the first year of our budget plan with the purchase of Bootle Strand Shopping Centre and the creation of a wholly-owned Council Housing Development Company.

## Next we will

- Continue to develop our thoughts that will influence our plans through to 2025, with financial sustainability at the heart of our ambitions. However, our eyes are not just on the horizon but also on the present, so we are currently undertaking a mid-year review of the current MTFP.
- Upskill our managers in budget management and the wider workforce in financial management to ensure consistency of approach and process.
- In anticipation of the potential challenge of new national school funding formulae (we forecast a £3m reduction in school budgets) we will continue to support our schools as they work together to mitigate the potential impact, such as identifying areas to collaborate and consideration of joint funding submissions to DfE.

# Capacity to deliver

Overall, our ability to deliver on our ambitions is strong, with a good mix of influential leadership, a committed workforce, collaborative partnerships and closer working with communities to build capacity further. The significant reduction in senior management over recent years has impacted on our strategic capacity, however we have introduced several changes to strengthen it.

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

Sickness absence can at times be a risk to our capacity to deliver. We ensure employees are well supported and balance this with robust procedures to deal effectively with the monitoring and management of sickness absence. Our Personnel Team, including the Health Unit, 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.

## Workforce commitment

The workforce is committed and often go above and beyond the call of duty to provide excellent services to the community. There is a real sense of pride amongst our employees, with around 70% of us living in Sefton, and morale is generally good.



As part of our staff engagement programme we conduct employee surveys every two years but in 2017 we decided to take a slightly different approach to gathering staff views and used external support to do this and to facilitate 360-degree feedback for leadership. Around 400 employees from across the Council were asked to respond to various questions and the analysis of their feedback has enabled us to identify our top strengths and opportunities. Our workforce told us that people feel that they can do interesting and challenging work and that they understand how their work fits with the strategic direction. They also told us that we need to do more to address poor performance and simplify decision making.

## Outstanding Apprenticeships



We are keen to nurture talent and see apprenticeships as a means of unlocking people's potential, which has a positive impact on our capacity to deliver. On average, we take on around 60 apprentices per year and run a well-established programme providing individuals with valuable on-the-job experience and helping to increase their confidence to enter the working environment. Each year we bring together our apprentices for a celebration event to recognise the valuable

contribution they make to the Council's priorities.

We are proud of our apprenticeship programme, which was recognised at the prestigious Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Awards 2018.

## Ensuring the workforce is fit for the future

Our employees are our greatest asset and we are currently investing more in our Organisational Development (OD) capacity to ensure that all of us in the Council are ready for the future. In recent years we have had to reduce investment in the level of training and development and this has led to some skills and knowledge gaps. While many of our workforce continue to grow and shine there can be frustration in the lack of opportunity to develop and advance.

We are now investing more in OD to ensure we have the right systems, structures and behaviours in place to embed a culture of continuous improvement in supporting the delivery of our ambitious plans for change. The team is building on the success of our One Council approach and working on different ways to build up resilience across the workforce to encourage staff to think and act differently, to embrace change and to ensure the workforce has the right mix of skills and expertise for now and in the future.

The OD lead supports SLB to embed our values and together they are developing a new leadership programme; growing and supporting the One Council champion network to work on reducing silos and to encourage more joint working; will be involving Councillors on the OD journey by launching training plans to support their ongoing development; using training budgets and Personal Development Reviews more wisely to invest in the right training and development that supports the needs of the organisation.

## Working with others to build capacity

We recognise that we can't deliver on the ambitions set out in the Vision 2030 without leveraging external capacity to deliver. The role partners play is vital, which we hope is clear throughout our assessment. Our New Realities approach is one way we do this, through the collaborative agreement between ourselves and Sefton's voluntary, community and faith sector, with the aim of sharing skills, expertise, costs, learning and risks.

Our new social investment plan, currently in train, will help us to create new relationships with the voluntary sector and increase levels of funding to the sector through alternative forms of finance so that they are less reliant on Council funding but can stimulate the growth and resilience of the sector.

## On Our Transformation Journey

We are very proud of how our workforce has responded to constant change and that since 2010 we have continued to deliver those services that people expect from the Council. In 2012 we began to adopt a One Council approach to everything we do, following the results of a staff survey. This network continues to grow, creating better internal relationships and adopting innovative approaches to tackle the challenges we face.

This group of volunteers has achieved so much, particularly improving internal communication, reducing silo working and celebrating success. They take part in the recruitment of senior officers and help us to spread the word

about change. Building on the passion and commitment of our workforce, there is now a network of more than 100 One Council Champions across the organisation who proactively support the 2030 Vision – acting as ambassadors for Sefton Council.

This ethos ensures that we're focused on our priorities under a single team approach with joined up thinking, actions and making sure we do what we promise.

## We have

- Developed the Special Thanks And Recognition Awards, known as our STAR Awards ceremony. This came about as celebrating success was cited as being important to our staff in previous staff surveys. The annual event, now in its fourth year, continues to grow in popularity and aims to recognise the unsung heroes across our workforce.
- Hosted an internal Commissioning Academy to help staff foster a commissioning mind-set, a recognised skills gap. We believe that this will help teams to work collaboratively with colleagues, other agencies and communities to achieve better outcomes for local people. The learning from this has been instrumental in guiding teams on how to commission the right way to achieve the best possible outcomes for our communities, improving awareness of the latest developments and innovations in commissioning practice and has equipped people with the right skills to deal with the challenges facing public services.
- Begun to modernise and upgrade our IT equipment and software to

enable us to make the most of all the opportunities new technology offers. The project supports our values and ambitions and enables people to work flexibly, helping us become a more agile workforce and providing us with a range of tools to support our collaborative working.

- Invested in our office accommodation by making better use of under-occupied office space, enabling us to not renew the lease on one of our larger offices and to make the most of our newly created community bases. The accommodation moves and investment offers brighter, more comfortable and effective workspaces that are encouraging more collaborative working.
- Set up a Stress Working Group and the survey they have carried out will help us to identify how working conditions could affect people's health and well-being and what we can do as an organisation to mitigate the risks as we are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees.
- Learnt from successes:
  - One of the most significant learning aspects in the last 18 months arose from the commercial acquisition of The Strand. We recognised that we needed to procure external expertise to support us in this, which included property, financial, commercial and legal expertise. A high-level team was assigned to the project and worked closely with this external capacity and expertise. This was a successful exercise and will help us in our approach to more commercial activity.
  - In 2016 children's services were deemed to require improvement by Ofsted and we invited the Local Government Association in

earlier this year to undertake a Care Practice Diagnosis (CPD) of Children's Social Care to review areas of progress following the Ofsted Inspection of Children in Need of Help and Protection and Looked After Children and Review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, (LSCB). A practice and performance workshop took place and the recommendations, which have all been accepted, were shared with frontline practitioners who had the opportunity to inform the actions they felt needed to happen to support them in taking recommendations forward, improve practice and to inform the development of the improvement plan. The children's social care improvement plan is in the process of being reviewed and refreshed to ensure that all recommendations are progressed as part of the learning process.

- Used external audit advice and guidance on procurement to develop an improvement plan which resulted in improved processes, an e-learning package and a series of Contract Management workshops and training sessions for teams from across the Council.
- Used the expertise and experience of an LGA Productivity expert to inform our commissioning public sector reform project.



## Next, We Will

- Ensure that our new Organisational Development approach is firmly embedded across the Council and the delivery of our Leadership Development Programme will play a pivotal role in the development of the senior team of the future.
- Continue to truly embed cultural change and our organisational values. We know that this is no easy task and we understand the challenge that faces us especially at a time when we will see more of our colleagues leave the Council because of change being implemented. We believe that through a combination of continuing to take a One Council

approach, visible leadership, good communication, creative involvement of staff through change, making sure that people have the training, equipment and the right environment to do their job, we are on the right path to see this becoming a reality.

- Host our 2018 Star Awards to recognise the valuable contribution that our staff continue to make.
- Carry out our 4th Employee Survey in 2019 to ensure we understand staff satisfaction levels and use feedback to ensure our staff continue to feel valued and motivated.
- Achieve Workplace Wellbeing Charter accreditation, which will demonstrate our commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of our workforce.
- Continue to embed the commissioning mindset culture across the organisation which will ensure we are continuing to commission well for the right results.
- Grow our apprenticeship base, providing opportunities for many as we recognise the valuable role that apprenticeships play.
- Make the most of our ICT Transformation project, which will prove challenging. We will be working with a new provider and all business areas will be keen to progress system changes which in their perspective have stalled during phase 1 of modernising and upgrading the current IT equipment and software. We have recently introduced a new role that will enable us to develop a clearly prioritised pipeline of projects and ensure that all our teams understand that changes have been prioritised on a business case basis.





# Spotlight on Developing A More Commercial Approach

We are not brand new to this arena, we have had our own social care company, New Directions for many years, which makes a return to the Council and some of our services operate this way.

However, to achieve financial sustainability we recognise that we need to take a more commercial approach. Not one of seeking to make a profit but an approach that ensures that the organisation operates in a more business-like and efficient way, increasing our ability to take advantage of commercial opportunities to benefit the Council and local people. We believe that this is a positive way of looking at service development rather than looking solely at solving financial challenges. Our aim is, where appropriate, to make a surplus and reinvest it to make a difference to local people and our local economy.

Our Public Sector Reform programme already contains initiatives that will see us operate more commercially in the future, finding new ways to trade, reduce subsidy and deliver services with a commercial edge while retaining social purpose.

We know that this way of working is not currently our strongest skill set, so to ensure that we have the leadership capacity to help us shape and deliver more on this agenda we have recently appointed a Head of Commercial Development.

Our plans include:

- The creation of a Commercialisation Board which will be chaired by the new Head of Service and include management team representatives from service areas. This group will:
  - act as first filter for all commercial ideas
  - review/challenge/support new initiatives
  - set and monitor income growth targets
  - identify and find solutions to key barriers
- Establish 'Bright Ideas Clinics' – supporting the development of ideas from staff through implementation to roll-out.
- Embed a commercial culture through 'Commercialisation Masterclasses' – facilitated workshops to share successful approaches and encourage new ideas and initiatives. We will ensure there is a clear understanding of the synergies and potential conflicts with other agendas through clear governance to provide good oversight and alignment of plans.

We see the Corporate Peer Challenge as an important milestone to review and assess the Council's progress to date, as well as providing a useful assessment of our future approach.

# Sharing Our Success

## Shopping centre acquisition brings asset back from foreign ownership and onto Council books

The purchase of The Strand marks a new era for Sefton Council, one in which we are taking greater control over the ways we generate the income we need to support local jobs and services for our communities.

A major provider of jobs in the area, The Strand is also an important place for local people to meet and shop. What we're proud of is bringing the shopping centre back from foreign ownership and onto the Council's asset books.

We used external expertise on property, taxation, financial and commercial matters, to ensure the transition was smooth. We also engaged our auditors in the process for assurances.

We didn't just acquire an asset, we bought 100% of the share capital of an off-shore registered company and then hived up the asset and liquidated the corporate structure, requiring diligence across two separate, legal, financial and tax jurisdictions. Just as importantly, the purchase was fully funded through a loan, with no expense to taxpayers.

The purchase will contribute significantly to the delivery of the Council's ambitious regeneration plans for Bootle Town Centre and is also providing much needed new revenue streams for us to support local services.

We are already seeing a return on the investment with a surplus of cash that has been ploughed back into local services and will benefit our communities.



## New Realities – a ‘can-do’ collaborative agreement between Sefton Council and VCFS

Partnership working and collaboration continues to thrive in Sefton because we recognise that the development of better, more equal and more productive partnerships between local authorities and local communities is key.

We do this through our New Realities approach, a ‘can-do’ collaborative agreement between the Council and Sefton’s voluntary, community and faith sector with the aim of sharing skills, expertise, costs, learning and risks.

All partners have signed up to this common purpose, embedding the key principles of the agreement in all aspects of their day-to-day work.

Strong leadership is the driving force behind New Realities to inspire and motivate teams to achieve a win-win – leading to better outcomes for residents and communities.

What makes New Realities different from other partnerships is that by being solutions-focused we can clearly demonstrate the strength of the partnership, measure achievements and benefits for our communities and residents.

For example, a strong partnership approach was essential in responding to the impacts of Welfare Reform in Sefton and having a joined-up strategy and action plan has resulted in many positive outcomes to support our vulnerable residents. This included four Trussell Trust food banks being set

up across Sefton, which to date have helped 4,162 adults and 2,760 children to eat; the development of a School Uniform Bank to recycle uniforms for struggling families; and recycling pre-loved furniture to help residents in crisis. A Welfare Reform Report is available which provides statistical analysis of need and response, joint working impact and outcomes (available at [www.seftoncvcs.org.uk/reform](http://www.seftoncvcs.org.uk/reform)).

New Realities really is ‘ahead of the game’, transforming services and making a difference in Sefton.

There is huge potential for replication of the model and work is being undertaken to understand the benefits of expanding New Realities across the North West as this presents a unique opportunity to share learning, resources and best practice.



## Strengthening consultation and engagement through partnership working

Sefton Council is very much a listening Council and has strengthened this ethos by setting up a Public Engagement and Consultation Panel with key public sector partners and Sefton CVS to improve consultations across the borough, avoid duplication and engage the public more effectively.

The panel includes representatives from the Council; health; the voluntary, community and faith sector; the youth sector; emergency services and other bodies. They meet every two months to review consultation and engagement proposals from all public sector partners to ensure that they meet the

standards set out in the Public Engagement and Consultation Framework and reach as many interested or affected people as possible. This is achieved by panel members working together to identify groups that need to be involved and using their networks to promote the consultation or engagement activity widely.

Creating the panel and adopting the framework has saved the Council and partners time and money. It avoids duplication and has ensured a more streamlined approach to consultation, making it simpler for residents to have their voice heard. Working in this way has had a positive impact on the success of consultations too as levels of participation remain high.

This approach has been running for nearly 10 years and it works for several reasons. Crucially the panel has full political and corporate support, with Members and senior officers acting as champions for it as well as several sitting on the panel. Partners are fully invested in the principles and all share a sense of ownership of the standards which means everyone is committed to ensuring all consultations and engagement activities meet the guidelines. There are strong processes for identifying local people who may be interested in or affected by the consultation or engagement activity. Working closely with the communications team also means that the panel communicates outcomes effectively which improves transparency, builds trust and enhances the reputation of the public sector in Sefton.

It's a model that many other local authorities regard as best practice, something Sefton is very proud of.



# Our Key Documents

Document Title	Date	Comment
Imagine Sefton 2030 Consultation report	November 2016	This consultation informed our Vision 2030
Vision 2030	November 2016	Our vision and Outcomes Framework
Core Purpose	November 2016	Our role in delivering the Vision 2030
Sefton People and Place Profile	Last Updated: 05/10/2017	Key information about Sefton
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	Published in 2014	Currently being refreshed
Medium Term Financial Plan	March 2017 refreshed March 2018	Framework for Change established. Chapter 5 of 2017 report details our Public Sector Reform plans
Public Sector Reform Progress Reporting	April 2018	Sample progress report
Framework for Change Newsletters	November 2017 & May 2018	One way that we keep our workforce informed of progress
Annual Governance Statement	July 2018	Agreed with Statement of Accounts
New Realities	2015	Collaboration agreement that is supported by Sefton Council, Sefton CVS, and other local voluntary, community and faith sectors.
Sefton Economic Strategy Framework	Cabinet considered draft July 2018	Cabinet agreed to delegate approval of the final version of the Sefton Economic Strategy and associated action plans to Cabinet Member Regeneration and Skills
Sefton Economic Tracker	June 2018	Sample tracking report
Sefton Coast Plan	September 2017	Cabinet and Council report

