THIS SET OF MINUTES IS NOT SUBJECT TO "CALL-IN"

CABINET

MEETING HELD AT THE ASSEMBLY HALL, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON 23 JULY 2026

PRESENT: Councillor Atkinson (in the Chair)
Councillor

Councillors Dowd, Hart, Moncur, Diane Roscoe and Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harvey, Christine Howard and Lappin.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests or personal interests were received.

28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2026 be confirmed as a correct record.

29. AWARD OF NEW CONTRACTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SEND TRANSPORT

Further to Minute No. 130 of 5 March 2026, the Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director - Education Excellence that followed a previous report in March 2026 that sought delegated authority for the Assistant Director - Education Excellence to run a competitive tender process via the Council's new transport provider framework for contracts to transport eligible SEND children and young people to and from their place of learning. The report now presented sought authority to award those contracts on completion of the tender process, planned for August 2026, and the new contracts included replacements for existing contracts expiring in August 2026. The new contracts needed to be in place in time for the start of the new Academic Year in September 2026 and would be let for a two-year term. There were also some additional contracts for new eligible students starting in September 2026 and there might be some changes to contracts or additional contracts required during that two-year period for changes in needs and any new students becoming eligible during that time. These would also be procured compliantly via the framework.

Cabinet Members raised the following matters:

- The importance of both a successful journey and learning travel skills for children and young people, to and from their place of learning.

Decisions Made:

That

(1) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director - Education Excellence, in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Children, Schools and Families, to let contracts for a period of two years to the winning bidders on completion of the current procurement process;

(2) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director - Education Excellence, in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Children, Schools and Families, to authorise appropriate officers within the SEND Travel Support Service to run any additional procurements required via the framework and let contracts to the winning bidders for any changes or new students during that two-year term; and

(3) the contents of the report and the benefits that have started to be realised as a result of the implementation of the SEND Travel Support Improvement Project, be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

Sefton Council was under a statutory duty to provide travel support to eligible SEND children and young people to get to and from their place of learning.

The SEND Travel Support Service improvement initiatives, including the retendering of route contracts, were a critical element of the Council's Corporate Transformation Programme to ensure that this important service for vulnerable children and young people in the Borough could be placed on a sustainable footing in the face of significant pressure from rising demand and costs of transport.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. There was no compliant option other than to procure a new pa23 compliant framework as the previous framework (procured under the 2015 regulations) had expired.

2. There was an option to award route contracts for less than 24 months, which might have allowed 100% route optimisation using the new system to be achieved earlier, but this was rejected on the basis that it would not have been acceptable to families for whom the resulting level of change for many would be highly disruptive to children and young people with complex needs if taking place for a second time within a short period.

3. There was an option to direct award routes, which would have negated the need for the time and work required to run a competitive tender process, but this was rejected on the basis that it would have limited the number of suppliers able to receive contracts, putting too much reliance on a small group of companies and removing the benefit of better pricing from competition amongst the full cohort of providers.

30. SEFTON CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY SUPPORT FRAMEWORK (SCCSF)

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director - Children's Social Care and Education that provided an overview regarding the upcoming expiration of the Knowsley Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing System for Support Services for Children, Young People and Families (Knowsley PDPS). The PDPS had been essential in supporting a wide range of services for children and families in the community. In considering the expiration, the report sought approval to undertake a procurement exercise to develop a new Sefton Children's Support Framework (SCCSF). The new SCCSF would be compliant with the Procurement Act 2023 and procured under the rules for light touch contracts. The new framework would create a pathway for commissioning community services tailored to the diverse needs of Sefton's children and their families, ensuring the Council continued to foster a nurturing and supportive environment for their growth and development.

The following appendix was attached to the report:

- Equality Impact Assessment.

Cabinet Members raised the following matters:

- A request to amend the recommendation regarding the approval of waivers, to include the relevant Cabinet Member.

Decisions Made:

That

(1) procurement for a new Sefton Children's Support Framework (SCCSF) be approved, to be established for two years with an

option for two, twelve-month extensions, under the light touch regime of the Procurement Act 2023;

(2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director - Children's Social Care and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Children, Schools and Families, to award the contracts resulting from the procurement and to award any extension thereof, subject to evidence of good performance and utilisation of the SCCSF;

(3) authority be delegated to the Executive Director - Children's Social Care and Education to draw down from the SCCSF for individual packages of care and support, as outlined in the Scheme of Delegation; and

(4) approval of waivers be delegated to the Executive Director - Children's Social Care and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Children, Schools and Families, during the absence of a formal route to market, in line with assessed needs and the Scheme of Delegation.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The impending expiration of the Knowsley Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing System necessitated the establishment of a new SCCSF to ensure continued support for community services. This proactive approach was vital for maintaining a steady provision of services that catered to the diverse needs of children and families throughout Sefton. By initiating the procurement exercise, the Council was reaffirming its commitment to the wellbeing of vulnerable populations in the community, ensuring they received the support they needed to thrive in nurturing environments.

The proposed SCCSF, compliant with the Procurement Act 2023, highlighted the Council's ambition to enhance service delivery through a competitive and cost-focused procurement process. By allowing individual providers the freedom to set their own prices while implementing quality standards, the Council aimed to foster a dynamic marketplace that encouraged innovation and responsiveness from service providers. This careful balancing act would lead to improved outcomes for children and families by ensuring that services were not only affordable but also of the highest possible quality.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

a) Do nothing and do not recommission – This option was considered unviable because the current route to market was nearing its natural conclusion and Knowsley Borough Council could not extend the existing arrangement.

b) Development of a Liverpool City Region Children's Community Support Framework – The Commissioner from Sefton met with officers from across the Liverpool City Region to explore this option. However, this option was deemed unviable after Knowsley shared its experiences of managing the existing arrangement and the challenges it faced in coordinating across the region. However, since the announcement of Sefton hosting the Regional Care Cooperative (RCC), this might provide future opportunities for collaboration across the strategic footprint.

c) Establishing a new local Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing System (PDPS) – Following the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023, this option was no longer available.

d) Open Framework – This option was considered but rejected because of the human resource required to open the framework and evaluate new providers at set intervals.

e) Establish an additional Lot on the existing Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing System (PDPS) for the provision of Domiciliary Care Services – This option was considered but ultimately rejected because establishing a new LOT would involve following the same process as establishing a new framework. Therefore, it would not be advantageous in terms of time and resources. The PDPS was awarded in 2023 under the previous regulations (PCR 2015). In February 2025, new procurement regulations were enacted, and it was considered best practice to procure under them.

31. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2025/26

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Resources / S151 Officer that provided a review of the Treasury Management activities undertaken during 2025/26 and an update to 30 June 2026. The Cabinet and the Council received the outturn report to allow monitoring against the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy approved by the Council in February 2025 and the revised Prudential Indicators 2025/26 approved by the Council in September 2025.

Cabinet Members raised the following matters:

- The Government was now recognising the High Needs deficit.
- The Council's total borrowing had not exceeded the statutory limit.

Decision Made:

That the Treasury Management position during 2025/26 and the update to 30 June 2026, be noted, together with the review of the effects of decisions taken in pursuit of the Treasury Management Strategy, and consideration of the implications of changes resulting from regulatory, economic and market factors affecting the Council's treasury management activities.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Council had a statutory duty under the Local Government Act 2003 to review its Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Activities.

The Council had acted in accordance with the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and had reviewed its Prudential Indicators to comply with legislation and was acting prudently in that its capital expenditure proposals remained affordable.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

32. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2026/27 TO 2029/30 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2026/27 – JULY UPDATE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Resources / S151 Officer informing the Cabinet of:

1) The current position relating to the 2026/27 revenue budget.
2) The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2026/27.
3) The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of June 2026:
    - The forecast expenditure to year end.
    - Variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members.
    - Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects.
4) The latest prudential indicator information for 2026/27.

The following appendix was attached to the report:

- Appendix A – Capital Programme 2026/27 to 2028/29.

Decisions Made:

That

Revenue Outturn

(1) the current position relating to the 2026/27 revenue budget be noted;

(2) the actions being taken to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced position be noted;

(3) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2026/27 revenue budget be recognised and it be acknowledged that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed, and remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved;

Capital Programme

(4) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme, as set out at paragraph 7.1 of the report, be noted;

(5) the latest capital expenditure position as at 30 June 2026 of £5.000m, as set out at paragraph 7.7 of the report; and that the latest full year forecast is £148.489m, as set out at paragraph 7.8 of the report, be noted;

(6) it be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director - Corporate Resources / S151 Officer to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council, as set out at paragraphs 7.11-7.13 of the report;

Prudential Indicators

(7) the forecasts for the Prudential Indicators relating to capital expenditure and financing as at 30 June 2026, as set out at section 8 of the report, be noted; and

Restart Programme

(8) a Supplementary Revenue Estimate for £682,031, funded by a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Restart Grant, covering the period July 2026 to June 2028, be approved.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure the Cabinet was informed of the current position in relation to the 2026/27 revenue budget.

To provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep Members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2026/27 and agreed allocations for future years.

To progress any changes that were required in order to maintain a relevant and accurate budget profile necessary for effective monitoring of the Capital Programme.

To approve any updates to funding resources so that they can be applied to capital schemes in the delivery of the Council's overall capital strategy.

To ensure the Cabinet was informed of the latest prudential indicators.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

33. FINANCIAL AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE 2025/2026

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Resources / S151 Officer that informed of the revenue and capital outturn position in relation to the 2025/26 financial year. The report will outlined key variations and, where appropriate, any impact on future years' financial performance.

The following appendix was attached to the report:

- Appendix A – Corporate Risk Register – June 2026.

Decisions Made:

That

Revenue Outturn

(1) the fact that the General Fund net deficit of £10.427m for 2025/26 will reduce the Council's General Balances, be noted;

(2) the increase in Schools' balances of £0.995m for 2025/26 and the net reduction of non-schools centrally retained DSG balances of £39.232m, be noted;

(3) the overall deficit on the High Needs Budget of £106.052m, be noted;

(4) the changes to Earmarked Reserves in 2025/26, be noted;

Capital Programme

(5) the total capital outturn of £68.978m for the financial year 2025/26, be noted; and

(6) the successful delivery of a number of schemes, as set out in section 10 of the report, that have supported the delivery of the Council's core purpose, be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The production of a revenue and capital outturn report was a key feature of effective financial management and allowed Members to make informed decisions that would support service delivery and medium-term financial sustainability.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

34. PROCUREMENT OF SOLAR PV CONTRACT (2026-2028)

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Regeneration, Economy and Assets that set out the process for, and appointment of, a solar PV contractor, to provide repair, maintenance and new solar installation services. The contract would have the option to run until 31 March 2028 and provide a compliant route to appointment, should any external funding become available for solar P.V. works (up to a total value of £1M).

Cabinet Members welcomed the proposals as good news.

Decisions Made:

That

(1) the appointment of Energy Gain UK to provide solar PV repair, maintenance and installation services on a 1+ 1 year contract (2026-2028), be approved; and it be noted that the contract will not require orders of any size to be guaranteed, but would secure the works/pricing schedule under the framework to be available to the Council should it wish to authorise specific works, including repairs, maintenance and new arrays; and

(2) responsibility for any approval of works under the contract be delegated to the Executive Director - Regeneration, Economy and Assets to authorise on a case-by-case basis.

Reasons for the Decisions:

Corporate sites had solar PV arrays that were currently switched off or partly switched off, due to the need for a service and repair. The Council required the PV systems to be safe and operational again, in order to reduce energy consumption, fuel bills and carbon emissions on those sites.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to carry out the work to procure a solar PV contractor would mean non-compliance against the procurement act, should work be awarded.

35. SEFTON COUNCIL AND SOVINI GROUP – LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Further to Minute No. 76 of 6 November 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Regeneration, Economy and Assets indicating that in November 2025, the Cabinet had agreed a Local Strategic Partnership with Sovini to bring forward new social and affordable housing across Sefton. The initiative aimed to address the significant challenges residents faced in securing suitable, quality homes and to better meet local housing demand. An initial phase of potential residential development sites was identified to provide Sovini exclusivity to develop housing proposals to be brought back for consideration. The report provided an update on progress since the Sefton 2030 Partnership was approved by the Cabinet, as well as bringing forward recommendations for a second phase of sites to be included in the partnership.

The following Appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 – Site Plans:

- Former TT Cables/Peoples Site
- Former Ainsdale Hope School
- Site Plan Formby Professional Development Centre

Cabinet Members welcomed the proposals and the progress being made and raised the following matters:

- The Partnership with Sovini would bring forward new social and affordable housing across Sefton.
- When development would commence, if planning permission and community consultation were successful.
- Detail on apprenticeships and training opportunities.
- The allocation of future homes.
- Thanks to officers for their work on the project and links to work with NEET (not in employment education or training).

Decisions Made:

That

(1) it be noted that each site will be reported back for further approval on a case-by-case basis in line with the Asset Disposal Policy and Council Constitution and once terms have been negotiated with Sovini;

(2) Ainsdale Hope and the Formby Professional Development sites, as shown edged red on the plans at Appendix 1, be declared surplus to operational requirements;

(3) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be authorised to issue a licence to Sovini to allow feasibility work to be progressed for the Ainsdale Hope site;

(4) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be authorised to issue a licence to Sovini to allow feasibility work to be progressed for the former TT Cables/Peoples site;

(5) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be authorised to issue a licence to Sovini to allow feasibility work to be progressed for the Formby PDC site; and

(6) the commitment to working with community partners to ensure new and enhanced provision to replace the affected Ravenmeols Community Centre, be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

All three Development Package 2 sites identified were sites allocated for housing development in the Sefton Local Plan and had the potential to come forward for housing development. Social and affordable housing delivery was a priority for the Council and bringing forward through the Sefton 2030 Partnership with Sovini would help to maximise the offer and provide a tenure and house type mix that responded to the local areas supporting the Transformation Programme.

Through the Sefton 2030 Partnership, benefits of training and employment opportunities, as well as local supply chain benefits, would be realised. The sites subject to valuation would deliver a capital receipt for the Council, supporting the approach agreed as part of the Capitalisation Direction approved in-principle with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Option 1 – Not bring the sites forward for development and leave them as they were currently used.
Risk: The Council was progressing an Asset Rationalisation Programme considering all assets across the Council’s portfolio. The purpose of the programme was to make better use of existing assets as well as bringing forward disposal of assets that had significant revenue implications for the Council and were no longer fit for purpose.
As part of the programme the Former TT Cables/Peoples site was already on the disposal pathway but unfortunately the sale had fallen through and in any case was required to be disposed under the terms of the GFA with Homes England.
The Former Ainsdale Hope School and Formby PDC, though currently in use, had been identified as being surplus to operational requirements and identified for disposal. Both sites were allocated housing sites in the Sefton

Local Plan, therefore exploring the residential development potential of the sites was considered the most appropriate course of action. If the sites were retained the Council would need to continue to fund the revenue costs associated with the management, maintenance and insurance of the buildings, as well as foregoing any incoming capital receipt.

Option 2 – Bring the sites forward for disposal on the open market. An open market disposal would enable the Council to test the market and generate offer from a range of organisations which might include Registered Providers and housebuilders.
Risk: The risk with this option was a significant amount of work required to bring all three sites to the market. Two months would be needed to appoint a commercial agent via a framework to lead the marketing process. The capital receipt would also be delayed as an extended period of time would be required for formal marketing and selection of preferred purchaser. Whilst higher offers might be forthcoming through this option, all offers would be a gross price which would still be subject to deductions determined through feasibility and as the scheme progressed through the planning process.

36. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To comply with Regulation 5(2) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, notice had been published regarding the intention to consider the following matter in private for the reasons set out below.

The Leader of the Council indicated that the agenda suggested seeking to exclude the press and public to enable the Cabinet to discuss confidential information that supported the item at agenda 12. However, as the information was confidential only because it contained commercially sensitive valuation evidence, it was proposed to continue in public and move straight to Agenda Item 14 – 486 Hawthorne Road, Bootle - Disposal (Minute No. 38 below refers).

Decision Made:

That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

37. 486 HAWTHORNE ROAD, BOOTLE - DISPOSAL - EXEMPT APPENDIX

The Cabinet had received exempt information provided by the Executive Director - Regeneration, Economy and Assets in relation to 486 Hawthorne Road, Bootle - Disposal and the exempt information would be considered as part of the report in relation to 486 Hawthorne Road, Bootle - Disposal, in order that an informed decision might be made. (Minute No. 38 below refers).

38. 486 HAWTHORNE ROAD, BOOTLE - DISPOSAL

Further to Minute No. 34 of 24 July 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director - Regeneration, Economy and Assets, indicating that the 486 Hawthorne Road site was shown edged red on the Site Plan at Appendix 1 to the report. Under a Grant Funding Agreement with English Partnerships (now Homes England) dated 2004, the Council was required to dispose of the site for development along with the adjacent former TTCables/Peoples site. In July 2025, the Cabinet approved the disposal of the TTCables/Peoples site, with the prospective purchaser obtaining formal planning pre-application advice in December 2025 and imminently due to commence site investigations. The 486 Hawthorne Road site lay immediately to the south of the TTCables/Peoples site and was currently occupied by civil engineering company, Dowhigh Limited and bus operator, Balmoral Travel. The Council was under an obligation to dispose of the freehold title to the site as part of conditions related to the historic grant funding award under the Housing Market Renewal programme. The site was used for a recycling plant for construction material and a coach hire vehicle storage. Externally and internally, the property was in very poor condition with Units 1,2,3 and 5 considered to be at the end of their economic life. The site was known to have contaminated land issues and a feasibility study undertaken in 2022 concluded that residential development on the site would not be viable, as a result. Housing and Property and Strategic Asset Management procured a valuation report to determine market value of the site, and to satisfy the Authority's fiduciary rules relating to the sale of assets. Heads of Terms had been agreed to instruct solicitors for the site disposal, and the land transaction would ensure that the site was redeveloped to retain the current employment use, whilst moving the current industrial processes operating from the site undercover, and to reduce the current levels of dust and noise emissions. This was concluded to be the most suitable option for the site, in the context of the historic grant liability, the site's contamination issues and improving the wider area.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 – Site Plan
- Appendix 2 – Heads of Terms - Exempt

Decisions Made:

That

(1) the disposal of the 486 Hawthorne Road site, as shown edged red on the Site Plan at Appendix 1 to the report, to Dowhigh Limited be approved, on the basis of the land transaction and gross purchase price set out at Appendix 2 to the report;

(2) it be noted that the final land price will be subject to deductions only for items agreed within the heads of terms, which will be determined through a stage of feasibility work to be progressed by Dowhigh Limited;

(3) it be noted that the Head of Terms of the disposal, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, meet best consideration requirements in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972;

(4) the deduction of up to 4% of the eventual capital receipt to cover the professional fees and incidental costs of disposal, as set out in Capital Accounting Regulations, be approved;

(5) authority be delegated to the Executive Director - Regeneration, Economy and Assets to conclude the land transaction, once feasibility work has been completed and the valuation report updated to verify the final land purchase price; and

(6) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be authorised to finalise the appropriate legal documentation to document the Transfer.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The building lease would provide the Council with a degree of control over the development by making the transfer of the freehold title conditional upon the practical completion of the scheme. The move of industrial processes inside a new building would alleviate the current levels of dust and noise emissions, which would create a better environment for new and existing residents in the Hawthorne Road area. The redevelopment of the site would support the overall regeneration of the Hawthorne Road/Canal Corridor area, which was identified as a ‘Regeneration Opportunity Area’ in the Bootle Area Action Plan.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Option 1 – “market the site for sale”: seeking offers on the open market from prospective purchasers.
Risk: Whilst under no legal obligation, the Council would need to help the current occupiers find alternative accommodation to secure vacant possession. Given the known issues of ground contamination and poor condition of buildings on the site, the Council would incur costs of progressing technical due diligence to be shared with the market to ensure that the financial offers from prospective purchaser factored in remedial works allowances.

Option 2 – “freehold disposal of the site to Dowhigh”: freehold transfer of the site to be conditional upon planning only. The benefit of this option was the timing of the capital receipt.
Risk: structuring the land transaction on this basis and omitting the building lease element would mean that the Council had less control over the future redevelopment of the site. The building lease mitigated the risk of the site remaining a nuisance under new ownership.

39. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE ON OUTSIDE BODY - MERSEY CARE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer requesting consideration of the appointment of the Council's representative to serve on the Outside Body named within the report, namely Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust – Council of Governors, for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2026/27.

Decision Made:

That Councillor Battle be appointed as the Council's representative to serve on the Outside Body – Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust – Council of Governors, for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2026/27.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Cabinet had delegated powers, as set out in Chapter 5, Paragraph 39, of the Council's Constitution to appoint the Council's representatives to serve on Outside Bodies.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.