

REPORT:

Sefton Economic Strategy – Consultation Summary



OVERVIEW

Overview of Consultation Response

Sefton Council are seeking to update Sefton's Economic Strategy to reflect the changing economic situation following the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of the process, a consultation took place to allow members of the public, local businesses and any other organisations to have their say on the content and themes that will shape the strategy.

A consultation survey was published on the Sefton Council website for 4 weeks. In total, 192 people took part in the survey. Of these, 60.4% were members of the public who live in Sefton and 27.6% were local businesses. Several other stakeholders and organisations also submitted responses to the consultation outside of the survey that have been factored into the analysis. These included responses from LCRCA, People First Merseyside and Youth Advisors, among others.

Overall, there was support for the chosen themes: Employment and Opportunities for Work, Business Growth and Investment, Regenerated Places, and Social Inclusion and Access for All. Generally, there was agreement that the themes work well together due to their interconnectedness,

but that growing and investing in business is the starting point for the other themes to follow from.

The survey asked respondents to rate the themes and corresponding key issues based on how important they are to them. On average Employment and Opportunities for Work was rated the highest. The results of the quantitative questions are presented in this report.

Survey respondents were also given the opportunity to answer qualitative questions. The comments have been analysed and summarised to represent the frequently recurring key points and combined with feedback taken from consultation sessions and individual contributions outside of the survey. Key issues included parking and transport, sustainability, and support for both the younger and older generations.

The results of this consultation will feed into the final Sefton Economic Strategy.



METHODOLOGY

Consultation

- Sefton Council's Economic Growth & Housing service led the public consultation exercise which started on 20th July and ended on 17th August 2022
- The development & delivery of the Sefton Economic Strategy falls under the remit of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Skills while consultation is the responsibility of Cabinet Member Regulatory, Compliance & Corporate Services
- Proposals for consultation were approved by the Sefton Public Engagement & Consultation Panel on 15th July
- The draft evidence base report was circulated (on two occasions) to over **2,600** businesses, developers/investors with a link to an online survey
- A dedicated Council webpage and on-line consultation portal were produced
- The consultation report and questionnaires were also produced in easy read formats:



- The report was circulated to a wide range of internal and external groups, networks and organisations to maximise reach including:
 - *Sefton CVS*
 - *Community organisations*
 - *Sefton Council members and MPs*
 - *Sefton Council Senior Leadership Board*
 - *LCR Combined Authority*
 - *LCR Growth Platform/Local Enterprise Partnership*
 - *Industry sector groups/boards*
 - *LCR Local Authorities*
 - *Chambers of Commerce*
 - *Southport BID*
 - *Federation of Small Businesses*
 - *Marketing Southport*
 - *Housing Associations*
 - *FE/HE Colleges*
- Corporate Comms and InvestSefton provided weekly updates on a wide range of social media platforms

Specific face to face briefings and online consultation forums included:

- *Sefton Economic Forum-15 July attended by over 100 business delegates*
- *Sefton in Mind-27 July attended by over 10 representatives*
- *People First Merseyside-11 August attended by over 20 Board members*
- *Sefton Partnership Board-15 August attended by over 15 board members*



QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Comments on the proposed 4 themes and key data findings.

Overall, there was generally positive support for the choice of themes. In particular, a frequent comment was that business growth is the starting point for success in the other 3 thematic areas, and the interconnectivity between the themes should be highlighted in the strategy.

A recurring theme was sustainability. In their response, LCRCA suggested that the Net Zero theme could flow throughout the whole strategy.

The following thematic comments appeared frequently throughout the consultation:

Employment and Opportunities for Work

- More opportunities for training and reskilling to fill vacancies.
- Provision of advice and guidance, and opportunities for employment and gaining skills, particularly for school leavers and young people.
- Ensure that messaging around public sector employment does not come across as negative. Focus on boosting private sector employment that will automatically reduce public sector role.

Business Growth and Investment

- Support for SMEs to grow. Suggestions include financial support, community events, advertising via networks etc.
- Concerns raised about the lack of affordable, usable office space and employment land available in Sefton.

- Emphasise Sefton's growing sectors in the strategy e.g. Southport's technology industry opportunities.

Regenerated Places

- Concerns raised about the unregulated growth of private accommodation in tourist areas, and growing unaffordability of housing.
- Prioritise attractive town centres that will attract and retain young people.
- Focus on making tourist areas and town centres accessible for all local residents by creating sustainable local transport hubs.
- The strategy needs to consider the sustainability agenda.
- More green spaces around Sefton.

Social Inclusion and Access for All

- Consider the environment, sports, recreation facilities etc. and how these can impact health and wellbeing in Sefton.
- Emphasise how deprivation impacts health inequality and consider the infrastructure needed to improve this e.g. schools, healthcare facilities etc. Address the impact health inequality has on economic activity rates.
- Consider how town centres need to adapt to manage the impacts of an ageing population.



QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Any other key issues consultees felt should be an area of focus for Sefton.

Below is a summary of comments that appeared frequently throughout the consultation:

Regeneration and Sustainability

- The issue of parking was the most frequently occurring comment on the key issues question of the survey. Consultees asked for more parking options, that are affordable with electric charging points.
- Improve the quality of Sefton's tourism offering, including green tourism.
- The need for more green spaces was strongly supported.
- More even distribution of investment outside of tourist areas that will make Sefton more attractive.
- Use high quality marketing to promote Sefton as a place to work, visit and live.
- Include a focus on the sustainability agenda in the strategy.

Business

- Provide support to small businesses. Suggestions included:
 - Support to take on apprentices
 - Support to compete against larger companies
 - Local community business hubs to share best practice and network

Inclusivity

- Improved disabled access across Sefton.

- Consideration for the elderly in the strategy. Suggestions include employment/reskilling opportunities and social/support groups.
- Consideration of digital inclusion.
- General agreement that one size does not fit all across the borough due to large disparities between areas.
- Ensure public transport is accessible by all.
- Educate employers about learning difficulties, mental health and physical needs. Promote organisations that support these people into work.

Education and Employment

- Prepare children for working/adult life from school age.
- Provide employment support and opportunities for young people and focus on retaining young people to start their careers in Sefton.
- Consider links between education and R&D between Sefton and Liverpool City Region.
- Understand local employment opportunities generated by the Port.



QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Ranking of Themes

Participants of the consultation survey were asked to score each of the four suggested themes out of 1-5 depending on how important they regard them to be, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest.

When taking the mean score for each theme, the theme that ranked as most important was **employment and opportunities for work** with a score of 4.55. 130

respondents (68.4%) ranked this theme as 5, the highest level of importance.

However, the difference between the 4 themes is small. The lowest ranking of the 4 was **social inclusion and access for all** with a mean score of 4.12. 101 respondents (52.6%) scored this theme a 5 for importance.



QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Employment and Opportunities for Work

The respondents were then asked to rate key issues relating to each theme from 1-5 associated with the level of importance the issue has for them, with 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest.

The issue with the highest average score was to **deliver a range of progression pathways to better connect Sefton's young people with opportunities in the local labour market and make successful transition to the adult world of work**. 118 respondents (61.5%) rated this as a 5, the

highest level of importance.

Second was to **deliver accessible learning for residents of all ages to gain the skills required by our employers and move into or move up in work**. This is also related to gaining skills and opportunity for progression.

When ranking all 25 key issues from across the 4 themes against each other, 4 out of 5 of the Employment and Opportunities for Work key issues appear in the top 10. Therefore, this is clearly an area of high importance for consultees.

Rank	Key issue	Average score
1	Deliver a range of progression pathways to better connect Sefton's young people with opportunities in the local labour market and make successful transition to the adult world of work.	4.16
2	Deliver accessible learning for residents of all ages to gain the skills required by our employers and move into or move up in work	3.91
3	Provide support for people with disabilities or poor health to reach their full potential in learning and work.	3.90
4	Develop innovative partnerships with employers to deliver better quality careers and improve progression routes for Sefton residents, prioritising the most vulnerable such as care leavers.	3.89
5	Provide advice and support for workless and inactive people disconnected from the labour market to enter sustainable, decent work.	3.84



QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Business Growth and Investment

Survey respondents rated 7 key issues relating to Business Growth and Investment between 1-5 based on the level of importance to themselves.

The key issue with the highest average score was to **provide more support for businesses of any size or sector (including social businesses) seeking to grow and create new jobs**. 102 respondents (53.1%) rated this key issue as a 5.

Closely followed in second was to **focus more support on retaining existing companies, helping them to grow in the borough**. This also received 101 votes for 5 (52.6%). Therefore, it is evident that the survey respondents would like to see business support to promote growth.

Almost all of the key issues within this theme received a relatively high average score with small differences in score between each one, with 3 ranking in the top 10 out of all of the themes.

Rank	Key issue	Average score
1	Provide more support for businesses of any size or sector (including social businesses) seeking to grow and create new jobs	4
2	Focus more support on retaining existing companies, helping them to grow in the borough	3.99
3	Promote Sefton to seek and attract new inward investment opportunities	3.89
4	Focus support on businesses trading in Sefton's town centre's	3.84
5	Support Sefton businesses seeking to secure local supply chain opportunities from large public sector contracts	3.83
6	Deliver support to create new opportunities for people wanting to start their own business	3.8
7	Develop adequate land and business premises for employment to meet the borough's needs	3.47



QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Regenerated Places

The Regenerated Places theme was scored on average as the 3rd most important of the 4 themes in the survey. The top key issue within this theme was **using vacant and underutilised floorspace to support other uses. (e.g. vacant shops /offices etc)**, with 103 respondents (53.6%) scoring the importance as a 5.

Closely behind this with an average score of 3.96 was to **provide a mix of different housing types and tenures,**

including housing that people can afford. 104 respondents (54.2%) rated this as a 5. Therefore, providing space for living and working is a high priority.

Also important according to the average scores are key issues relating to improving town centres and local attractions. Scoring lower were key issues related to sustainability.

Rank	Key issue	Average score
1	Using vacant and underutilised floorspace to support other uses. (e.g. vacant shops /offices etc)	4.00
2	Provide a mix of different housing types and tenures, including housing that people can afford.	3.96
3	Creating quality outdoor environments in our town centres which support health and wellbeing for different age groups (Younger/Older People) and support diversity.	3.82
4	Marketing Sefton's excellent visitor destinations, quality attractions and events to enhance the growth of the Borough's economy and boost its status as a place to work, live and do business.	3.79
5	Providing town centre's with a diverse range of services and uses to support the business and residential communities around them. e.g. health & social care, more social business opportunities	3.76
6	Undertake housing led regeneration in less popular parts of the borough where our oldest housing stock is found.	3.72
7	Encourage and celebrate local cultural, heritage and local identity.	3.49
8	Encourage town centre living to help create diversity and support local economic resilience	3.37
9	Developing a shared drive to net zero and climate adaptation for all who work and live in Sefton and ensure we avoid negative impacts on our most disadvantaged communities	3.32
10	Moving away from car based to more sustainable travel transport and encouraging active travel throughout the borough	3.10



QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Social Inclusion and Access for All

The theme of Social Inclusion and Access for All was rated as the least important theme overall by respondents to the survey. The individual key issues all ranked low in comparison to all 25 key issues in the survey.

The issue with the highest average score within the theme

was **supporting sustainable improvements in health and wellbeing through both policies and delivery of economic development projects**. 95 respondents (49.5%) rated this issue as a 5 for importance.

Rank	Key issue	Average score
1	Supporting sustainable improvements in health and wellbeing through both policies and delivery of economic development projects	3.86
2	Ensuring equality and diversity is central in all our activities to help support a more inclusive, creative, and innovative economy	3.54
3	Ensuring the benefits of digital transformation and inclusion across all Sefton's communities and businesses	3.53

