

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 13th February, 2025

Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor I Gilbert (Chair)
Councillors I Ferguson (Vice-Chair), Sam Allen, M Borton,
C Campbell, J Courtenay, T Cox, M Faulkner-Hatt, N Folkard,
J McMahon, R McMullan, J Moyies, S Wakefield, N Ward and
C Webster

(*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 30.)

In Attendance: Councillors D Cowan, L Burton, P Collins, M Dent, A Jones, M Sadza
and M Terry
J Chesterton, G Ireland, S Newman, A Richards, C Shuter and S Cox

Start/End Time: 6.30 - 7.40 pm

53 Chair's Introduction & Apologies for Absence

(a) Chair's Introduction

Prior to the consideration of the matters set out in the agenda, the Chair outlined their expectations of the standard of conduct and behaviour to be shown at the meeting.

(b) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Garston (no substitute).

54 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

- a) Councillor M Borton, (general business of the meeting) – concessionary bus pass holder and Board Member of South Essex Homes.
- b) Councillor S Wakefield, (general business of the meeting) – sub-contractor of South Essex Homes.
- c) Councillor A Jones (Cabinet Member), Board Member of South Essex Homes.

55 Questions from Councillors

There were no questions from Councillors received.

56 Questions from Members of the Public

The Committee noted the response of the Cabinet Member for Community Safety to a question presented by Mr Webb.

The Committee also noted the response of the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Healthier Communities to a question presented by Ms Mitchell.

57 Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 30th January 2025

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Thursday, 30th January 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

58 Corporate Performance Report Q3 2024/25 (October to December 2024) including Corporate Delivery Plan Actions update Q3 2024/25

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director (Strategy & Change), by way of pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, that provided an update on the corporate performance indicators and delivery plan actions for quarter 3 (October to December 2024).

The Committee discussed the report and asked questions that were responded to by the Leader of the Council and the relevant Cabinet Members, these related to:

- The total number of households in temporary accommodation (indicator CP03.07) and an update on the planned homelessness prevention meeting between Essex and Thurrock.
- The number of anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents reported to the Community Safety Unit, (indicator CP.02.01), which reported the seasonal dip and therefore was an improvement over the reporting period.
- Generation of income on CCTV assets with Castle Point and how this would work in practice, as back-end functions funnelled through Southend's CCTV assets but utilising Castle Points existing CCTV network.
- Measures being introduced to support minimising business closures.
- Percentage of complaints responded to in time (CP04.02) ongoing monitoring to improve this indicator and measures to be put into place to improve performance in this area over the next quarter.
- Any measures to be put in place to be able to reduce the volume of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, for example through making more information publicly available on the website for common queries, tracking issues to identify common themes. (Indicator CP04.03)
- The difference between the 'one council' programme and the 'front-door project.'

Members of the Committee were keen to work cross-party with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members to consider initiatives to make it easier for businesses to access the Council framework.

The relevant Cabinet Member(s) and Executive Directors undertook to provide written responses to questions raised by members of the Committee, with regard to:

- Total number of households in temporary accommodation (indicator CP03.07), the number of private properties currently let at a nightly rate, the total cost of the nightly net rates and the prevention work to mitigate the use and reliance on the nightly rate lets as a form of temporary accommodation.
- The date the next Local Plan was expected to be published and the timetable around this, including the consultation period. Questions were raised as to how this would be impacted by Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution.

Resolved:

That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive function

Cabinet Member: Councillor D Cowan (Leader of the Council)

59 Approval of the Annual Procurement Plan for 2025/26

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director (Finance & Resources), by way of pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, that set out the Annual Procurement Plan for 2025/26, as well as draft tabs for the years 2026/27 and 2027/28.

The Committee welcomed the new Head of Procurement.

A number of questions were asked which were responded to by the relevant Cabinet Member.

A brief discussion took place on the parameters to local businesses to access the procurement framework, which included the new Corporate Procedure rules introduced in January 2025 and the implementation of the next tranche of changes being introduced by the Procurement Act 2023.

A number of suggestions were made to present the information differently going forward, particularly in relation to highlighting grant funding and extension of contract dates. The Leader of the Council committed that that updates would be included at the mid-year review point and in next year's annual procurement plan reporting.

Resolved:

That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillor P Collins (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Assets, Investments and Public Transport)

60 Quarter Three Treasury Management Report - 2024/25

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director (Finance & Resources), by way of pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, that presented the quarter three treasury management report for 2024/25.

The Cabinet Member provided an update in relation to the Lothbury Property Trust, and that further detail could be circulated to the Committee in this regard.

Questions were raised in relation to cash balances, the revenue budget and the interest equalisation reserve.

Resolved:

That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor P Collins (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Assets, Investments and Public Transport)

61 South Essex Councils - Joint Committee

The Committee received the draft minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee of South Essex Councils held on Tuesday, 3rd December 2024.

Resolved:

That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee of South Essex Councils held on Tuesday, 3rd December 2024 be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function

Chair: _____