

# **SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL**

## **Meeting of The Council**

**Date: Thursday, 20th March, 2025**

**Place: Council Chamber - Civic Suite**

**Present:** Councillor R Woodley (Chair)  
Councillors Sam Allen, S W Allen, S Ayles, S Badger, M Berry, M Borton, K Buck, L Burton, C Campbell, O Carley, J Courtenay, D Cowan, T Cox, A Dear, M Dent, F Evans, M Faulkner-Hatt, N Folkard, I Ferguson, D Garston, I Gilbert, S Habermel, J Harland, L Hyde, A Jones, D Jones, P Kinsella, J McMahan, R McMullan, J Moyies, K Murphy, S Nadeem, C Nevin, J Norman, M O'Connor, D Poulton, D Richardson, K Robinson, M Sadza, L Salter, M Terry, S Wakefield, N Ward, J Warren and C Webster

**Start/End Time:** 5.00pm - 6.18 pm

### **124 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Collins, Davidson, Longstaff, Mulronee and Nelson.

### **125 Declarations of Interest**

The following declaration of interest was made:

(a) Cllr Gilbert – Minutes 126 (LGR Interim Plan submission) and Minute 127 (Council's response to MHCLG's devolution consultation) – works for MP involved in LGR and devolution discussions.

### **126 Submission of an Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Essex**

The Council considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Essex. The report also sought endorsement to submit the Interim Plan to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025. This matter was considered in conjunction with Minute 127 (Southend Council's response to the MHCLG devolution consultation) below.

During consideration of this matter a number of comments and concerns were raised, summarised below:

- Fast-paced nature of the submission process with tight timescales.
- Impact of LGR on local democracy such as delays to local elections.
- The financial cost of LGR and the impact on the city.
- Concern regarding the future of Southend's ceremonial Mayor.
- Accountability of an elected Greater Essex Mayor.
- Potential size and scale of the new authorities in terms of number of Councillors.

During consideration of the matter an amendment was proposed by Councillor Cox and seconded by Councillor D Jones 'to amend Southend's consultation response from 'strongly agree' in relation to the principle of an Elected Mayor for Greater Essex.

On being put to the vote the proposed amendment was not carried.

Resolved:

That Cabinet be recommended to approve the recommendations set out in the report to Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025:

1. That the content of the Interim LGR Plan, set out at Appendix 2 to the report to Cabinet and its submission to the MHCLG on the 21 March 2025, be approved.

2. That, in principle the five unitary model, including a unitary authority covering the current authorities of Southend-on-Sea City Council, Castle Point Borough Council and Rochford District Council, as its preferred structure for local government in Greater Essex, be supported.

3. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and Executive Director (Strategy and Change), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any final changes to the Interim LGR Plan prior to submission by 21 March 2025.

4. That a programme of engagement and briefings for Councillors be developed and delivered, as more information is known, during the period between now and the final deadline for submission of proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in September 2025.

\*In accordance with Standing Order 3.48, Councillor Cox had his name recorded against the above recommendations.

**127 Southend-on-Sea City Council's response to MHCLG's Greater Essex Devolution Consultation**

The Council considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the Council's response to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Greater Essex devolution consultation. This matter was considered in conjunction with Minute 126 (LGR Interim Plan) above.

During consideration of the matter an additional recommendation was proposed by Councillor Cox and seconded by Councillor D Jones 'to agree that there should be no Council Tax precept rise above the referendum cap to cover the costs in relation to LGR.'

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be recommended to approve the recommendations set out in the report to Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025:

1.1 That the Council's formal response to the MHCLG's Greater Essex Devolution consultation, be approved.

1.2. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and Executive Director (Strategy and Change), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any final changes to the response prior to submission by 13 April 2025.

2. That there should be no Council Tax precept rise above the referendum cap to cover the costs in relation to LGR for Southend-on-Sea City Council.

\*In accordance with Standing Order 3.48, Councillor Cox had his name recorded against the recommendations in 1.1 and 1.2 above.

**Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_