

Meeting: Council

Date: 21 March 2024

Classification: Part 1

Key Decision: No

Title of Report: **Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group – Final Report and Recommendations**

Executive Director: Claire Shuter, Executive Director of Strategy and Change

Report Author: Stephanie Cox, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Executive Councillor: Councillor Tony Cox, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Constitutional Affairs

1. Executive Summary

To present the final report and recommendations of the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group.

2. Recommendations

That the final report (attached at Appendix A) and recommendations arising from the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group, as set out below, be agreed:

- 2.1 That with effect from the commencement of the municipal year 2024/25, Southend City Council no longer appoint representatives to the outside bodies tabled in Appendix 1.**
- 2.2 That with effect from the commencement of the municipal year 2024/25, Southend-on-Sea City Council appoint representatives to the Outside Bodies tabled in Appendix 2.**
- 2.3 That the number of Outside Bodies to which the Council currently appoints Councillor representatives is regularly reviewed using an appropriate set of criteria for establishing whether Councillor representation is appropriate. An annual ‘light-touch’ review should be undertaken each year by Democratic Services and Executive Directors, with a more detailed review to be undertaken in consultation with Councillors every 4 years (or as appropriate). The criteria to which appointments should be made to an Outside Body are where:**
- a) The authority has a statutory duty to be involved.**
 - b) It is essential to the work of the Council and delivery of its service area.**

- c) **Cabinet Members / Councillors are required to attend because of their specific role in the Council.**
- d) **The Outside Body / City Council would derive a significant benefit from the engagement of a Councillor.**

2.4 That consideration be given to appointing Councillors according to their knowledge and expertise of a subject.

2.5 That all Councillors who are appointed to Outside Bodies will be expected to provide a monthly update (if appropriate) and an annual report to feedback any key points from their attendance on the Outside Bodies (reporting template attached at Appendix 3).

2.6 That Democratic Services support Councillors appointed to Outside Bodies by Council or Cabinet, in accordance with the process set out at Appendix 4.

2.7 As part of the induction process Councillors are supported in developing an understanding of their role and responsibilities regarding participation on Outside Bodies and provided with appropriate guidance. Role profile attached at Appendix 5.

2.8 That an Outside Body is free to request an alternate Council representative on the understanding that the replacement will be chosen by Council, not the outside body (for example, repeated non-attendance at meetings without good reasons offers valid grounds for an Outside Body to request an alternate Council representative). The Council should also be permitted to replace its representative(s) on the grounds of regular non-attendance at meetings of an Outside Body without other good reason.

2.9 An Outside Body is free to inform the Council at any time that Council representation is no longer required (if its Constitution allows it to do so).

2.10 That for ease of reference, Cabinet Member only appointments be separated (if possible) from the main Outside Bodies appointee list but circulated for information only.

2.11 Those nominations to Local Government Association sub-groups, special interest groups or commissions be determined by the Leader of the Council (as Cabinet Member appointments).

2.12 That officer only memberships should be removed from the Outside Bodies appointment list, as this is dealt with under a separate process.

3. Background

3.1 The Scrutiny Chairs Forum met on 27 June 2023. The Membership of this forum is constituted from the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of each of the Council's three scrutiny committees.

- 3.2 At this meeting the membership and representation on Outside Bodies was identified as a potential topic for review, subject to agreement by Scrutiny Committees. The Place, People and Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committees agreed to establish the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group at the meetings held in July 2023.
- 3.3 The final report and recommendations of the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Review were considered by each of the three Scrutiny Committees at the meetings held in February 2024, comments are summarised at section 5.

4. Reasons for Decisions

4.1 The Task and Finish Group reviewed all outside bodies to which Members were appointed to in the 2023/24 municipal year and looked at improving the method for reporting back on Outside Bodies to ensure they are adding value to Southend-on-Sea City Council.

4.2 Specifically the review and recommendations, had the following aims:-

- To identify which appointments continue to be beneficial.
- To identify which appointments may no longer be required, for example if the Outside Body is now defunct and no longer functioning.
- To identify any Outside Bodies which may need a different number of representatives.
- To identify any new bodies which may benefit from Member representation.
- To improve contact and relationships with Outside Bodies and strengthen internal processes, for example how Outside Bodies will be notified when new appointments are made.
- To deepen understanding of the work of each Outside Body and the capacity in which they would like Members appointed, for example a decision-making capacity (member of management committee, board of directors, committee of trustees) or in an 'observer' capacity undertaking a monitoring role.
- To investigate ways by which all appointed Members can provide regular feedback to the Council on the work of their Outside Bodies.

4.3 All 58 Outside Bodies that the Council currently appoints to were surveyed. Following the results of the review it is proposed that:

- 22 Outside Bodies to cease appointments to from 2024/25.
- 46 Outside Bodies proposed to appoint to from the municipal year 2024/25.

**Subject to any further updates that may be received prior to Appointments Council in May 2024.*

4.4 There were a number of recommendations arising from the review which are set out in section 6 of the final report (attached at appendix A). These have been agreed by the Task and Finish Group Members.

- 4.5 Each of the three Scrutiny Committees were asked to endorse the final report from the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group, for agreement by Council. Comments and updates about outside bodies received from Scrutiny have been incorporated into this report.
- 4.6 The report and recommendations arising from the completion of the In-Depth Scrutiny Project will be presented by Councillor C Mulroney, as Chair of the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group.

5. Comments from Scrutiny

As a joint Task and Finish Group, each of the Council's three Scrutiny Committees endorsed the final report and recommendations, and the following comments were noted:

5.1 Place Scrutiny Committee

- The Committee discussed the findings and recommendations in the final report in some detail, including the merits of the Council only appointing representatives to the Airport Consultative Committee from wards primarily affected by the airport (e.g. Ward Councillors whose residents were living under the flight path).
- With reference to recommendation number 8 of the final report, the Committee suggested that the Council should also be able to replace its representative(s) on the grounds of regular non-attendance at meetings of an Outside Body without other good reason.

5.2 People Scrutiny Committee

- Agreed with the importance of giving consideration to appointing Councillors according to their knowledge and experience of a subject.
- That further comments should be provided for Active Southend, Relate, National Association of Councillors, North Sea Commission for information purposes. Advised that Southend Arts Council ceased to exist.
- To clarify that Southend University Hospital had been replaced by Mid and South Essex Trust.
- Whether 'Committee List D' of working parties, forums and other panels could also be reviewed in due course (such as Holocaust Memorial Day, SACRE) and for Councillors to report back on such activities.

5.3. Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

- Councillors felt that it was important there was a method of accountability and mechanism for reporting back for Councillors.

5.4 Appendices 1 and 2 of the final report (listing which outside bodies to cease and continue appointments) were updated following the comments raised by Scrutiny. It is intended that the list of Outside Bodies to appoint to is considered a "living document" and updated as appropriate by Democratic Services.

6. Financial Implications

As described in the report of the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group (section 4.1).

7. Legal Implications

Statutory Powers – Local Government Act 1972.

8. Policy Context

8.1 It is important that Council is represented on Outside Bodies which may have a direct or indirect influence on Council decision making.

9. Carbon Impact

It is important to ensure that the most effective use of member time and reduce the need to travel and ensure the capabilities of Outside Bodies to minimise these in both their interests and the environment.

10. Equalities

It is important that when representing the Council members have the right expertise and knowledge for the particular role.

11. Consultation

All 58 Outside Bodies that the Council current appoints to were surveyed, using a combination of letters, emails and telephone calls. A good level of response was received, however there were some organisations for which little or no information could be obtained.

All Elected Members were consulted during this process, alongside the Corporate Management Team.

The final report and recommendations have been considered by each of the Council's three scrutiny committees at the meetings held in February 2024.

12. Appendices

Appendix A: Final report of the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group – Outside Bodies Review 2023

- Appendix 1: Outside Bodies to cease appointments.
- Appendix 2: Outside Bodies to appoint to from 2024-25 onwards.
- Appendix 3: Annual Feedback Form
- Appendix 4: Appointment to Outside Body – Information Sheet
- Appendix 5: Draft Role Profile

13. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	12/03/24
Monitoring Officer	Kim Sawyer	12/03/24
Executive Director(s)	Claire Shuter	12/03/24
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor T Cox	13/03/24