

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for Corporate Services
to

Place Scrutiny Committee

8th July 2013

Report prepared by:
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Agenda
Item No.

In depth scrutiny report
Developing strong partnership links to encourage investment in the town and the supply of employment opportunity
A Part 1 Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek formal approval to the draft report of the scrutiny project "Developing strong partnership links to encourage investment in the town and the supply of employment opportunity".
- 1.2 The Chairman of the Project Team will be attending the Scrutiny Committee to present the report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report and the recommendations from the in depth scrutiny project attached at **Appendix 1** be agreed.
- 2.2 That the Chairman of the Project Team be authorised to agree any final minor / typographical changes to the draft report.
- 2.3 That in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (Part 4 (e) of the Constitution), to agree that the Chairman of the Project Team present the final report to a future Cabinet meeting.

3. Background

- 3.1 The former Economic & Environmental Scrutiny Committee selected its topic at the meeting on 12th July 2012 (Minute 136 refers).
- 3.2 The project plan was agreed by the Project Team and then the Scrutiny Committee on 29th November 2012 (Minute 539 refers) with the following objectives:
 - To gain an understanding of the current job market in the borough with particular regard to unemployment, job opportunities and the gap between job supply and demand.
 - To gain an understanding of the role of SBC in supporting the Town Centre Partnership, Southend Business Partnership, inward investment and promotion of employment and skills and how this is achieved through the Enterprise and Tourism function.
 - To identify how partnership working can be best used to stimulate the jobs market and to address any mismatch between supply and demand.
 - To understand the role of other Partnership Boards and teams in supporting inward investment and job creation and for consistent & coordinated approach.

- To look at the challenges and best practice in maintaining and developing strong partnership (within the council, with external parties from the public, private and third sectors) to encourage investment to Southend-on-Sea and the supply of employment opportunity and how this can be strengthened and broadened.

3.3 The outcomes/aims agreed by the Committee were to develop strong partnership links to encourage investment in the town and the supply of employment.

3.4 The Member Project Team, which was Chaired by Councillor Ian Gilbert, met on 5 occasions and considered a wealth of evidence, including statistics about economic activity, benefit claimants and skill levels and undertook 3 witness sessions in addition to receiving written evidence.

3.5 The responses from witnesses were wide were wide ranging and reflected different perspectives depending on their sector, background and experience of partnership working in the town.

4 Recommendations

4.1 The draft scrutiny report is now attached at **Appendix 1**. The report has been discussed by the project team and then shared with the witnesses. The conclusions and recommendations from the project are set out on page 4 of the report. It should be noted that approval of any recommendations with budget implications will require consideration as part of future years' budget processes prior to implementation.

4.2 Scrutiny is recommended to endorse the following conclusions from the review, for approval by Cabinet:

1	A Southend-on-Sea showcase event is developed in partnership to promote the town's offer to businesses in the area and to companies from further afield.
2	A Southend-on-Sea Skills Strategy is developed with partners considering apprenticeships, enterprise awareness and employability skills at all ages and increasing awareness and engagement between businesses and education providers. In particular, schools and colleges are to be encouraged and facilitated to form closer links with local business to enhance employability and understanding of the world of work
3	Appropriate external funding is applied for, incorporating partner views and support, to address key transport and infrastructure problems such as relieving congestion and town centre enhancements. The current economic impact and future growth resulting from the investment at London Southend Airport should be recognised as a key driver for inward investment, securing funding and promoting the town. It must be recognised that most sources of external funding require match funding from the Local Authority and/or partners. There is no revenue or capital current budgetary provision for such activities and therefore this must be taken into account before bids are submitted.
4	A multimedia PR campaign is undertaken to ensure everyone across the town 'sings from the same hymn sheet' with correct facts and figures and external perceptions of the town are changed. Work with partners to ensure a joined up approach, as far as possible, is taken with publicity and promotion, with particular regard to online/social media.
5	That the City Deal opportunity is actively pursued to find creative ways of managing and using derelict sites in the borough to maximise employment land in line with business demand.
6	Appropriate external funding opportunities are pursued from local, national and European sources in partnership with relevant stakeholders to maximise the impact of funding secured. This could include commercial sponsorship, in-kind support and utilising the developing talents of students from across the borough. It must be

	recognised that most sources of external funding require match funding from the Local Authority and/or partners. There is no revenue or capital current budgetary provision for such activities and therefore this must be taken into account before bids are submitted.
7	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council continues to host and support a range of forums which enable partnership working while reviewing and ensuring they are fit for purpose.

5. Other Options

Not applicable.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision and Critical Priorities – Becoming an excellent and high performing organisation.
- 6.2 Financial Implications – there are financial implications to some recommendations but as yet they are unquantifiable. However, any recommendations progressing with associated financial implications will need to go through the annual budgetary process before implementation, as currently no revenue or capital budgets exist for the proposals.
- 6.3 Legal Implications – none.
- 6.4 People Implications – none.
- 6.5 Property Implications – none.
- 6.6 Consultation – as described in report.
- 6.7 Equalities Impact Assessment – none.
- 6.8 Risk Assessment – none.

7. Background Papers –

- Project team meeting notes – meetings held on 29th October 2012; 17th December; 13th February 2013; 16th April; 10th June.
- Agreed notes from witness sessions – meetings held on 13th February 2013; 11th March; 16th April.
- Written evidence received from JobCentre Plus; South Essex College
- Other evidence as described in the report

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – draft project report