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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 8th July, 2021

Time: 6.30 pm

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Suite

Contact: S. Tautz (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

Email: committeesection@southend.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

3 Questions from Members of the Public

4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2021 (Pages 1 - 4)

**** **ITEMS CALLED-IN/REFERRED DIRECT BY CABINET - 15 JUNE 2021**

5 COVID Update (Pages 5 - 26)

Minute 53 (Cabinet Agenda Item No. 4 refers)

Called-in to all three Scrutiny Committees by Councillors Cox and Davidson

6 ASELA Governance (Pages 27 - 52)

Minute 61 (Cabinet Agenda Item No. 12 refers)

Called-in by Councillor Cox and Davidson

7 Management Arrangements (Pages 53 - 60)

Minute 62 (Cabinet Agenda Item No. 13 refers)

Called-in by Councillors Cox and Davidson

**** **ITEMS CALLED-IN/REFERRED DIRECT BY CABINET - 5 JULY 2021**

8 The Council's response to the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) public consultation in Old Leigh / Chalkwell area

Cabinet Agenda Item No. 3 refers

Referred direct to the Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Executive Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment) to follow.

**** **ITEMS FOR PRE-CABINET SCRUTINY**

None

**** **ITEMS CALLED-IN FROM THE FORWARD PLAN**

None

**** **OTHER SCRUTINY MATTERS**

9 In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2020/21 (Pages 61 - 80)

Report of Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) attached.

10 Summary of Work 2020/21 & In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2021/22 (Pages 81 - 94)

Report of Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) attached.

11 Exclusion of the Public

To agree that, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

12 Confidential Appendix - Management Arrangements (Pages 95 - 96)

Minute 71 (Cabinet Agenda Item No. 22 refers)
Called-in by Councillors Cox and Davidson

Members:

Cllr D Garston (Chair), Cllr S Habermel (Vice-Chair), Cllr S Buckley, Cllr D Cowan, Cllr T Cox, Cllr T Cowdrey, Cllr M Davidson, Cllr M Dent, Cllr S George, Cllr M Kelly, Cllr D McGlone, Cllr J Moyies, Cllr D Nelson, Cllr I Shead, Cllr A Thompson, Cllr S Wakefield and Cllr P Wexham

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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 17th March, 2021

Place: Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

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Present: Councillor D Garston (Chair)
Councillors D Nelson (Vice-Chair), B Ayling, D Burzotta, D Cowan, T Cox,
P Collins, M Davidson, M Dent, S George, S Habermel, H McDonald,
D McGlone, I Shead, M Stafford, S Wakefield and P Wexham

In Attendance: Councillors I Gilbert, T Harp, C Mulroney, M Terry, R Woodley (Cabinet Members), Councillor K Evans, E Cook, G Halksworth, A Lewis, S Moore, J Ruffle, A Smyth, S Tautz and J Williams

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 9.40 pm

914 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence from the meeting.

915 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

- (a) Councillors I Gilbert, T Harp, C Mulroney, M Terry and R Woodley (Cabinet Members) - Interest in the called-in items; attended pursuant to the dispensation agreed at Council on 19 July 2012, under S.33 of the Localism Act 2011.
- (b) Councillor D Garston - Minute 918 (Selective Licensing Designation Report) - Sons are landlords of properties within the areas of designation for the proposed Selective Licencing Scheme (but not within specific roads covered by the proposed scheme); trustee of trust that is landlord of property within the areas of designation for the Scheme (but not within specific roads covered by the scheme) - Non-pecuniary interests.
- (c) Councillor M Dent - Minute 918 (Selective Licensing Designation Report) -Private sector tenant of property within the areas of designation for the proposed Selective Licencing Scheme – Non-pecuniary interest.
- (d) Councillor D Nelson - Minute 918 (Selective Licensing Designation Report) – Parents are landlords of property within the areas of designation for the proposed Selective Licencing Scheme – Non-pecuniary interest.
- (e) Councillor M Davidson - Minute 918 (Selective Licensing Designation Report) and Minute 919 (HRA Land Review Phase 4 (Lundy Close)) - Non-Executive Director of South Essex Homes - Non-pecuniary interests.
- (f) Councillor S George - Minute 918 (Selective Licensing Designation Report) – Council’s representative on the South Essex Alliance of Landlords and Residents (SEAL) - Non-pecuniary interest.
- (g) Councillor I Shead - Minute 918 (Selective Licensing Designation Report) - Local landlord and owns property within the areas of designation for the proposed Selective Licencing Scheme – Disclosable pecuniary interest (withdrew).

- (h) Councillor R Woodley - Minute 918 (Selective Licensing Designation Report) - Non-pecuniary interest.
- (i) Councillor S Habermel - Minute 918 (Selective Licensing Designation Report) - Landlord of property not within the areas of designation for the proposed Selective Licencing Scheme - Non-pecuniary interest.
- (j) Councillor D Cowan - Minute 919 (HRA Land Review Phase 4 (Lundy Close)) - Previous involvement with residents of Lundy Close on this matter - Non-pecuniary interest
- (k) Councillor D McGlone - Minute 919 (HRA Land Review Phase 4 (Lundy Close)) - Previous involvement with residents of Lundy Close on this matter - Non-pecuniary interest.

916 Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the public relating to the responsibilities of the Committee.

917 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 February 2021

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 February 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

918 Selective Licensing Designation Report

The Committee considered Minute 856 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 February 2021, which had been called-in to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, together with a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director (Growth and Housing) and Executive Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment) presenting the results of the public consultation on the proposed introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme within specific neighbourhoods of the Milton, Kursaal, Victoria and Chalkwell wards and setting out the work required to move the scheme forward.

Resolved:

1. That the matter be referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration, as the Committee felt that further clarity and information was required in respect of aspects of the proposed Selective Licensing Scheme.
2. That in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 39, the matter be referred to full Council for consideration.

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor I Gilbert

919 HRA Land Review Phase 4 (Lundy Close)

The Committee considered Minute 857 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 February 2021, which had been called-in to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, together with a report of the Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director (Growth and Housing) providing an update on the progress of the HRA Land Review Phase 4 (Lundy Close) following the Public Notice for the appropriation of land on the North Site of Lundy Close, and setting out the next steps for the development.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That the responses received following a Public Notice and the considerations and mitigations in regard to these as detailed in section 3.6-3.14 of the submitted report, be noted.

2. That the development of the north site of Lundy Close for Council Housing based on the conclusion detailed in section 3.15 of the report, be approved.”

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor I Gilbert

920 In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2019/20-2020/21

The Committee was informed of progress on the current in-depth scrutiny project and advised that it was intended that the report and recommendations arising from the project would be brought to the next meeting for consideration.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny Function

921 SO46 Report

The Committee considered Minute 867 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 February 2021, which had been called in to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, together with a report setting out action with regard to the delivery of a Costa Coffee drive-through unit at the entrance to Southend Airport Business Park that had been taken by the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 46.

Resolved:

That the following decision of the Cabinet be noted:

“That the submitted report be noted.”

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor I Gilbert

922 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the item of business set out below, on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

923 SO46 Report Confidential Sheet

The Committee considered Minute 869 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 February 2021, which had been called in to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, together

with a report setting out action with regard to the delivery of a Costa Coffee drive-through unit at the entrance to Southend Airport Business Park that had been taken by the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 46.

Resolved:

That the following decision of the Cabinet be noted:

“That the submitted report be noted.”

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor I Gilbert

Chair: _____

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Chief Executive
To
Cabinet

On
15 June 2021

Report prepared by: Tim MacGregor, Policy Manager

Agenda
Item No.

5

The Council's response to Covid-19 - update

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Policy and Resources; People; Place
Cabinet Member: Councillor Gilbert
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report and desired outcomes

To update Cabinet of the action taken by the Council in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and its approach to protect and support residents, local businesses, staff and the borough in general.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That Cabinet note the action taken to date in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

3. Background

3.1 Cabinet received an outline of the Council's response to the Covid pandemic in June and September 2020, and this report provides a further update on action taken to manage, and live with, Covid going forward.

3.2 Tragically, over 127,500 people have died in the UK as a result of Covid, with over 609 deaths in Southend-on-Sea, including, very sadly, two members of council staff (figures based on death within 28 days of testing positive. It has had an all-consuming impact on the day to day life of everyone and on the services, policies, finances and governance of all local authorities.

3.3 The Council is very proud of its response, and that of the community and partners, which has saved lives, alleviated a breakdown of health services and supported the most vulnerable in the community. Excellent relationships and work with partners from areas, including health, community safety, education, voluntary sector, business, local authority, civil service and others has been key to a successful response, and these strengthened relationships bodes well for future partnership working. This has enabled: the ongoing provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); getting essentials to those in need via the helpline service; securing accommodation for rough sleepers; getting

financial support to businesses; ensuring residents and visitors are safe on the seafront and elsewhere; ensuring the safety of those in care homes; keeping education going and supporting and rolling out test and trace and the vaccination programme. All this, while keeping day to day services going, was achieved with remarkable speed, dedication and with many staff going way beyond the call of duty. In recognition of this work, and in line with the example of other councils, it has been agreed to grant staff, a one off, extra day of leave and to continue to develop other appropriate forms of recognition.

3.4 A series of reports and research have highlighted that the virus and its impact has disproportionately affected the elderly, those with underlying health conditions, those who are less well-off and those from some ethnic minority communities. The equality impact assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on equality groups for the borough has, therefore, been updated and a summary is attached at **Appendix 1**.

3.5 The key areas of the Council's response are outlined below.

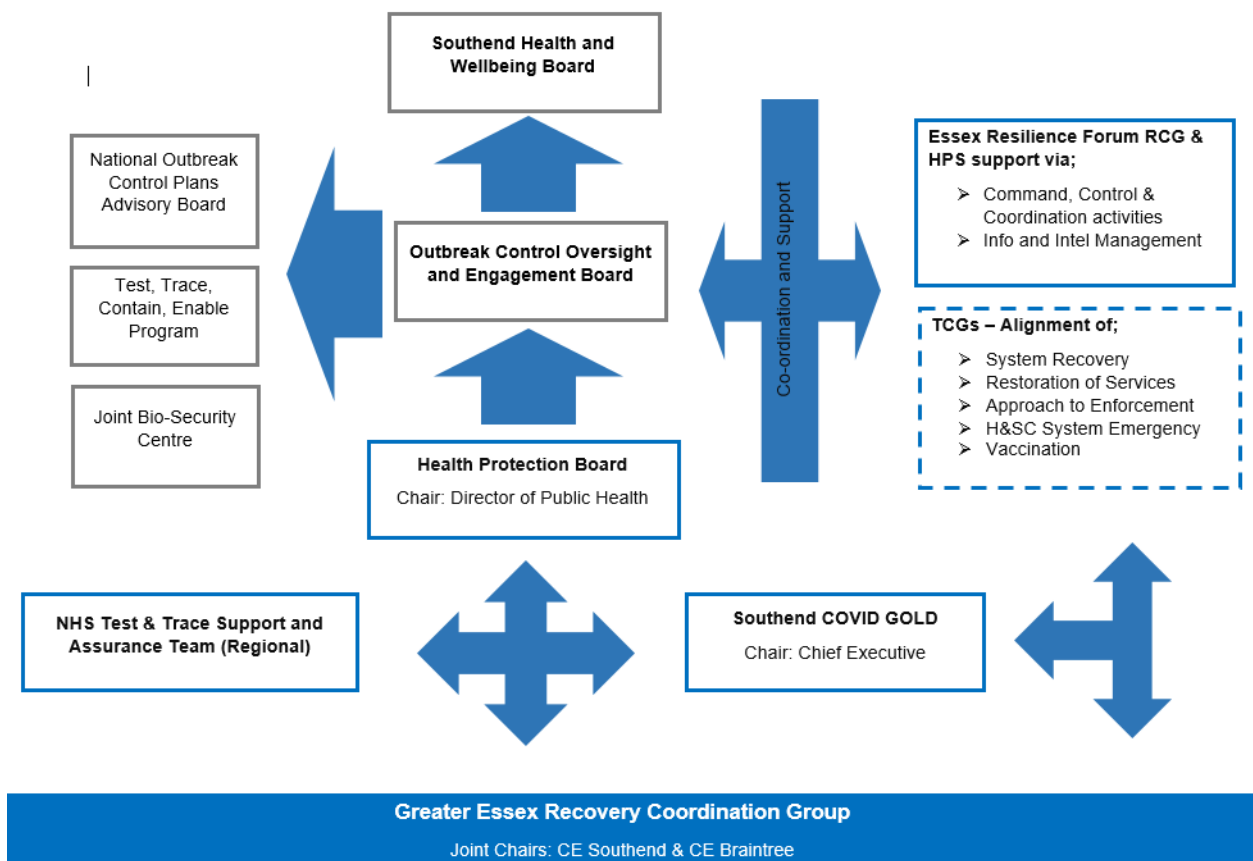
4. Pandemic management

4.1 The Council's **civil contingency** arrangements have aligned closely to Government requirements and have been shaped by the collective response of the Essex Resilience Forum (ERF). These arrangements adapted over time, with strategic (gold) and tactical command (silver) staff working with partner agencies in leading the response. Further support in managing the response and recovery has been driven by three 'recovery cells' of senior officers and partners focussed on:

- Pandemic Management & Recovery;
- Economic Crises & Recovery and
- Budget, Sustainability & Transformation

4.2 The **Covid-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP)**, produced in June 2020 provided the framework for local implementation of the national Test, Trace, Contain and Enable (TTCE) programme and has been central to controlling the rate of reproduction ('R') and reducing the spread of infection. This has been overseen by the **Outbreak Control Oversight & Engagement Board (OCOEB)** of key councillors and the **Health Protection Board**, of key officers and health partners, with the latter meeting weekly (fortnightly from April 2021) to review progress on vaccination, testing, contact tracing, advice on compliance and enforcement of rules and restrictions, infection and mortality rates and to review any local outbreaks and impact of new variants. Engagement with the two MPs is also facilitated by the Director of Public Health. The LOCP was updated in November, and in March 2021 was replaced with a Local Outbreak Management Plan in line with changing circumstances.

Pandemic governance arrangements – Southend and Essex (fig 1):



- 4.3 The local response has, therefore, meant adapting to the latest Government requirements of the borough, including entering tier one (medium) from 12 October, tier two (high) from 2 December, tier three (very high) from 16 December and the new tier four from 20 December, followed by the third national lockdown from 4 January (see **Appendix 2** for the timetable of Government announcements on tiers and lockdowns).
- 4.4 Regular data reviews and analysis have been, and will continue to be, undertaken under the direction of the Pandemic Management’s Consultant in Communicable Disease and the Director of Public Health. Deep-dive analysis is also undertaken by the Data and Intelligence Cell, with independent additional public health intelligence capacity brought in as and when required, with a number of key areas being monitored:
- Change in trends and variation in any defined population groups;
 - Identifying outbreaks and risk to ensure a swift response;
 - Burden of Covid in relation to hospitalisation, mortality, daily infection rate and R rate;
 - Specific areas such as excess mortality in care homes, infection level across wards and more disadvantaged communities, exploring the outputs of Incident Management Teams.
 - Review of Variants of Concern and Mutants (VAM) and need to respond.
- 4.5 Southend has been operating three Lateral Flow Devise asymptomatic and four PCR symptomatic testing sites, with additional testing being provided in

collaboration with schools and community home testing and the use of the Twenty One venue on the seafront. The LOMP outlines the detailed arrangements for local testing, the Essex and Southend Contact Tracing Service (ESCTS) and the processes for dealing with outbreaks. The ESCTS provision for the borough is currently under review, with a view to being directly managed by the Council, rather than Essex County, from September 2021.

- 4.6 The NHS, via Primary Care Networks and Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT), were able to quickly put in place a successful **vaccination programme** from December, with five sites operating across the borough by mid-January, and a further two, including the Cliffs Pavillion, added. The programme has included identifying and setting up local sites, training staff, recruiting volunteers and developing new processes and procedures. The success of the programme, overcoming operational difficulties such as intermittent supplies early on, is a testimony to excellent collaboration between GP practices, Southend Clinical Commissioning Group, the Council, the voluntary sector and EPUT. This collaboration has also enabled targeted vaccination of the most vulnerable, including care home residents and staff, front line NHS and social care workers, former rough sleepers and to engage with those population groups where there is vaccination hesitancy. As at the end of May 70% of over 15 year olds in the borough had received their first dose and over 44% their second.
- 4.7 The OCOEB has overseen the refreshing of the messaging to the public and stakeholders, which has included regular webinars with schools and businesses, multi-media campaigns to promote key messages on, for example, maintaining social distancing, hand hygiene and using face covering in the appropriate settings. Regular community engagement webinars continue to provide reassurance, responding to local concerns and to gain more insight to support the local response.
- 4.8 The **Covid helpline** has continued to operate during the pandemic, providing advice and support on a range of issues. Calls grew steadily during the Autumn and jumped dramatically to over 1300 in January, with calls mainly relating to schools testing policy and then peaking in March, with testing related queries, including chasing test results. Numbers of calls have since fallen significantly and the need to use re-deployed staff and the operation of the helpline is being reviewed accordingly and to align with the contact tracing service.

5. Social care

- 5.1 Throughout the pandemic there has been severe pressure on health and social care services, and the hospitals in particular, with peaks in April and November 2020 and early January 2021. The Essex Resilience Forum declared a major incident in December 2020, based on the critical demand on the NHS and the resulting heightened demand on social care. This led to enhanced and swift collaboration and escalation in bed management, to allow the hospital to free beds safely. The Council also reviewed other social care provision, such as domiciliary care, supported living and day centres to ensure the right level of support was in place.

- 5.2 A major focus was placed on infection control in all care homes, which included the management and restriction of care home visits, the management of outbreaks among residents and staff and the knock on impact in service provision. This required putting a number of contingencies in place, including using pool staff and volunteers and a re-launch of the Priory House unit in January for the recently discharged from hospital with a covid test. The unit provides capacity for 12 beds to support people before they return to their care home or go to another Covid-19 free care home. In addition, the key worker parking permits scheme for NHS and care workers, enabling them to park when carrying out essential work, was extended to the end of June.
- 5.3 An in depth joint health/social care business continuity plan to manage future outbreaks, and a potential further 'wave' on easing of lockdown and for the coming winter, has been developed. This was been complemented by the development of an Essex wide Adult Social Care Escalation Framework (LAPEL – the Local Authority Pressures Escalation Levels), by the ERF, in January, with specific triggers and thresholds identified to escalate action further and which was seen as good practice beyond Essex.
- 5.4 There has been a particular focus on learning how to enhance services by doing things differently, including using digital methods for social care assessments and Project 49's 'on-line 49' innovative day opportunity for adults with learning disabilities, offering classes and social contact, which has gone from strength to strength. However, there is a real awareness of some of the challenges ahead in relation to social care, including an anticipated increased demand for mental health services.

6. Compliance, enforcement and community safety

- 6.1 Compliance with Government Covid regulations and advice has generally been extremely good, with only a few incidents of serious non-compliance requiring more formal action that led to closure or a fine. Covid 'compliance ambassadors' have been in place since October 2020, and remain in place, providing advice and guidance to business and others (supported by £95,000 government funding). Regulatory Services and Community Safety Officers have also been provided advice and guidance as well as more formal interactions with businesses as necessary. Officers have undertaken regular joint visits with Police to hospitality premises, including those in the night time economy, to ensure compliance and respond to reports of breaches of Covid legislation.
- 6.2 With hospitality premises being closed, there has been a growing number of groups gathering outdoors in open spaces and beaches with their own alcohol - often in large numbers and from outside Southend. This has resulted in more incidents, some serious, of anti-social behaviour. This has all put additional pressures on a number of front line Council services, and on occasions, the Police have put Dispersal Orders in place (such as in Old Leigh) to prevent issues from escalating, where large groups have been involved. Concerns also remain with the impact on levels of domestic abuse, including potential under-reporting of cases. This gives heightened focus to the on-going work to prepare for the new requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act.

7. Re-opening Southend

- 7.1 The Council led and developed its multi-faceted plan, 'Operation Heatwave' to ensure the borough was fully prepared to welcome back visitors and keep residents safe as national restrictions eased. The plan was developed with a local stakeholder group of traders that includes Southend Business Improvement District, Southend Tourism Partnership and Leigh Town Council. The measures and resources will focus on town centre, open spaces, seafront and beaches. Action has included:
- Further use of the 'compliance ambassadors' to work in the community and visit premises to check compliance and signpost to guidance.
 - Extra resources being deployed from end March, including toilet attendants, additional temporary toilets and medical support.
 - Additional litter picking and bin emptying in parks at weekends and during the school holidays.
 - More of the larger 'EuroBins' along the seafront and additional cleaning of parks.
 - Extra seasonal foreshore staff to provide information, advice and first aid.
 - Providing guidance to businesses on reopening safely.
 - Enhancing community safety via a new security base at Jubilee Beach and more resource on monitoring the seafront.
 - The re-opening of car parks and parking enforcement from 29 March 2021.
- 7.2 The group has been working hard to help the local economy bounce back and help businesses to reopen safely while keep residents safe. Promotion of 'Visit Southend Safely' has seen local businesses being provided with signage, poster templates and guidance, with extensive signs being put in shopping areas across the borough.

8. Local economy

- 8.1 While the UK economy is now predicted to have its strongest economic growth (7.25% for 2021) since the Second World War, this follows a drop of 10% in 2020 and the Bank of England says that the economic outlook remains 'uncertain' following the phased ending of furlough support by September. This coupled with the tapered end of a range of other government support measures, the lifting of the business evictions ban and ending of the £20 a week Universal Credit uplift (taking £340,000 a week from local residents), highlight the need for ongoing focussed support for the local economy.
- 8.2 Local businesses, therefore, continued to be supported with a range of government grants and local exemptions provided to cover increased costs or disruptions to cash flow from the various restrictions. Millions have been via Business Grants; Restart Grants; Additional Restriction Grants; discretionary grants; Small Business; Christmas Support Package and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure grant, (see Appendix 3 for detail).
- 8.3 Phase 2 of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) opened at the end of April for Southend businesses that are not covered by other grant schemes, of

particular benefit to micro-businesses of which Southend has a high proportion. Applicants need to demonstrate business related costs and a reduction in their income of at least 25% since November 2020.

- 8.4 The Economic Recovery Cell has developed strong partnership working with Southend Business Partnership, Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice and Southend Adult Community College among others to provide support. Work has focussed on six work streams of: economic hardship; business support; employment; communications; major projects and procurement, social value & procurement. Work to support the unemployed, including the opening of a temporary Jobcentre Plus advice centre in the high street to meet increased demand. Zero percent loans have been offered to bring empty town centre units back into use, along with grants to encourage businesses in central Southend to revitalise their shop fronts (both funded by South East Local Enterprise Partnership). The Council also bought the Victoria Shopping Centre to demonstrate its commitment to the future of the town centre.
- 8.5 Work has also been linked to the Council's kickstart programme of work placements for young people, taking advantage of the Community Renewal, Levelling up and Community Ownership funds, the ASELA (Association of South Essex Local Authority (ASELA) Recovery Taskforce, promoting economic regeneration and growth across south Essex and support for business in relation to Brexit. There will be further work on matching data to benefit needs, planning for effective allocation of food vouchers over holiday periods and links to food and fuel poverty, with a focus on 18-25 year olds and ethnic minorities who have been particularly hit by the loss of entry level and less secure jobs.

9. Developing community resilience & engagement

- 9.1 Test and trace and the vaccine roll out have helped to drive better connectivity with different sections of the community. More regular and more informal 'community listening sessions' are now being held with stakeholders and public, including in relation to young people, those with a disability, those from ethnic minority and faith communities and in relation to homelessness.
- 9.2 The Southend Emergency Fund, set up last year, has continued to support grass roots organisations assist those who need immediate help. Led by Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS), resources have been pooled from the Council, residents and businesses. The fund has enabled the provision of food, IT, mental health support and help with utility bills among many other things, with grants of up to £3000 via an easy access platform.
- 9.3 The Council also facilitated the Southend food alliance to bring new and more established grass roots food bank and schemes together, to share resources and knowledge - supplementing community support for provision of free school meals to those in need with a £15 pre-paid card food scheme and agreeing to appoint officer and member food champions.
- 9.4 The [Livewell Southend Directory](#) with over 1000 entries has become an essential tool for the local social prescribing programme which brings together the NHS, the Council and the voluntary sector, linking residents with resources

in their communities to help them stay well and connected. The site also hosts the SEND Local Offer information.

- 9.5 The Council, SAVS and partner organisations have built on the willingness of the local community to be involved and developed a cohort of ‘community connectors’, to help pass on or signpost people to support/information on the pandemic. Those who sign up are provided with training to develop skills on using local networks and social media, and receive twice weekly briefings, helping to provide key messages and counter misinformation. The scheme has real potential to grow significantly and develop into a network of influencers that share community, council and partner related information and intelligence – reaching those that more traditional methods currently fail to do.
- 9.6 The Council and partners also recognise the essential role played by neighbour to neighbour interaction highlighted in the mutual aid work which began in March 2020, celebrating hyperlocal street networks and acts of kindness via a crowdsourcing of stories and ideas on Good Neighbours. In addition, a ‘pulse’ survey of local residents was undertaken to discover what the impact of Covid and the lockdown has been, to help shape the borough’s recovery priorities.

10. Housing & Homelessness

- 10.1 The successful programme to get rough sleepers into accommodation has continued and developed, with successful funding bids to MHCLG providing a strong position for the Council and partners to continue to provide ongoing support and accommodation. The Council, with help from partners, housed 138 rough sleepers in temporary accommodation with the vast majority being moved into more permanent tenancies, with ongoing support in place. The Council also launched the ‘Rapid Assessment Hub’ project, which includes:
- Providing single COVID-safe rooms available via Southend’s homeless charity, HARP;
 - Carrying out rapid assessments for accommodation pathways for rough sleepers;
 - Finding private tenancies for former rough sleepers to move onto, and
 - Providing former rough sleepers with lessons in life-enhancing skills, such as cooking.
- 10.2 Multi-disciplinary teams of support have been introduced, including mental health outreach workers, in addition to multi-agency outreach worker teams, continuous GP support, a volunteer befriending service and a vaccination programme, covering over 200 former rough sleepers so far. The Council has also used the Next Steps Accommodation Programme and Housing Revenue Account funding to buy additional homes to support the Housing First scheme.
- 10.3 Work has continued in anticipation of the ending of the evictions ban at end of May, by working with social and private landlords to mitigate the impact on tenants and housing supply.

11. Education and Early Years

- 11.1 Working in partnership, the Directors of Education and Early Years and of Public Health, continued to offer support to all setting, school and college

leaders over the past 6-9 months. Significant disruption due to transmission rates towards the end of last year saw services and school provision stretched to meet the needs of those pupils attending and the school's remote provision for those at home. The work of the Education Cell, involving all phases of setting leaders worked throughout to support the production of localised guidance. In addition very regular webinars continued between head teachers and the two directors in order to offer support, guidance and challenge.

- 11.2 Through these meetings, the Council took various positions in relation to the return to schooling at the start of the Spring Term 2021 and the policy on the introduction of secondary school testing. These were sometimes at odds with the position recommended by the Department for Education, but our stance was always guided by what would be in the best interests of our residents. It is fair to say that the relationship between the Council and all settings and schools throughout the pandemic has strengthened.
- 11.3 In addition, the Council has also ensured that direct delivery of services and resources to schools has continued in some form, including the distribution of digital devices to support home learning, and more recently running successful holiday activities for pupils in partnership with schools and providers. Throughout, the Council has also worked very closely with all school leaders to support them in ensuring as far as possible the safety and wellbeing of those pupils not attending school, in particular those classified as vulnerable.
- 11.4 More recently, conversations with school leaders and governors have started of what the 'recovery' curriculum may look like to ensure that any gaps in lost learning as a result of the pandemic are made up over time.
- 11.5 Southend Adult Community College (SACC) was one of the first adult education providers in the country to return to face to face learning and is now delivering 80% of its provision safely across three sites. Remote learning remains in place for 20% of adult learners who are predominantly studying at higher levels. Vulnerable adults and older learners report that being back in college is rebuilding their confidence, improving their mental health and reducing their sense of loneliness. Apprenticeship numbers are slowly growing and demand for skills for employability are increasing with new provision planned to meet local demand. Retention rates are high at 97% and learners say they now feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe in college, at work and in the community. Welfare checks on adults and young people not attending classes continue to ensure the reasons for non-attendance are monitored. Provision for young people has continued throughout the pandemic with 70% of construction learners securing an apprenticeship, progression course or employment to date.
- 11.6 SACC worked alongside the Council to establish an on-site testing centre for its young people and vulnerable groups who were not attending community testing sites. The college prepared people for home testing and used this time to show adults and young people how to test properly. This would not have been possible without the support of the Council as adult education settings were excluded from the government roll out to schools and colleges. The testing site contributed to the creation of a safe environment for people to work and learn.

- 11.7 The college also fulfilled its role in the community through the preparation and delivery of 4,500 meals for the homeless to provide capacity for the voluntary sector. SACC continues to prepare hot meals for the homeless and those in need within its community.
- 11.8 SACC followed a phased reduction in face to face teaching following the same guidelines as schools, finally closing before Easter. Teaching has continued online with high levels of engagement from 14-16 and 16-19 cohorts, in particular, and community learning. Community learning provision, for example, has 60 courses running with participation rates on average of 86% and rates for Maths, English and ESOL running at around 60%. Welfare checks were undertaken with learners and plans made for a phased return from 15 June, in line with Government guidance, with all learners being risk assessed and only vulnerable young people encouraged to attend in the first instance.

12. Leisure & Culture

- 12.1 Leisure and tourism venues, including museums and galleries, closed from 5 November as part of the second national lockdown, opening briefly in December. They were closed again as Southend entered the highest tier for restrictions and the third national lockdown. Libraries re-opened from 12 April, as did Garons and the Pier, with the other leisure centres, museums and galleries opening on 17 May. The temporary closures saw services adapt, where possible, to on-line provision and also enabled the Beecroft gallery to undergo improvement works, including putting in place a better reception experience for visitors. The Cliffs Pavillion, having been successfully used as a vaccination centre, will re-open in August, with the Palace Theatre due to re-open in September.
- 12.2 Dialogue with Fusion Lifestyle has continued throughout the pandemic to ensure leisure facilities were viable and able to open as soon as possible. The company received £1.2m from the Council and had management fees waived (to be recouped through the Government's income compensation scheme) and were also supported by a successful bid for £400,000 from Sport England's National Leisure Recovery Fund. Discussions have continued on future operating models, accounting, for example, for the greater use of outdoor classes.
- 12.3 The seafront has often been busy with residents, and visitors on warmer days, and seasonal staff were recruited a month earlier than usual this year, helping to cover hot spots. The volunteer beach welfare officer cohort has been expanded for 2021 to cover an increased area and is also extended beyond weekends.

13. Communications

- 13.1 The Council's communications continued to focus on being a trusted source of information, ensuring local people are clear on the frequently changing national restrictions and their impact locally. This particularly related to the consequences of the various lockdowns and placement of the borough in specific tiers. Key areas of communication and campaigns have included:

- Urging the public, businesses and other local organisations to comply with government guidelines, such as maintaining social distancing, wearing masks, sticking to the rule of six and hand washing, to stop the spread of the virus and protect the NHS, particularly as case numbers were rising.
- ‘Stay safe, stay apart, stay local’ campaign to urge residents to adhere to national guidelines.
- Stay at home and ‘Don’t Visit Southend’ campaigns to urge visitors to stay away during lockdown, reminding them, for example, that all seafront parking and visitor attractions were closed.
- Publicising the test and trace programme, in its various forms as it evolved during the crises.
- ‘Get Tested’ campaign to promote the variety of testing offer in the borough, including PCR and LFD testing sites, community collect, and also encourage uptake of testing.
- Publicising the vaccination programme in terms of availability, location, eligibility and with targeted messages at groups with low take up.
- ‘Thank you’ messages, including marking the national day of reflection, for council, NHS staff and other key workers and to communities and groups for their response to the pandemic. This included those who went out of their way to be good neighbours - ‘shining a light’ on Southend’s neighbourly spirit.
- ‘Shop Local, Shop Southend on Sea’ campaign to help local businesses.
- Facilitating and encouraging a number of print and broadcast interviews to promote and explain key public health measures.
- Publicising the availability and process for obtaining the various grants and loans made available to businesses.
- ‘Visit Southend Safely’ - welcoming back visitors and keeping people safe as national restrictions eased.
- Notifying residents of council service availability, including closures and re-openings, as restrictions changed.

14. Staffing, future ways of working and Southend 2050

- 14.1 The vast majority of council staff have continued to work remotely, with staff only using council buildings where absolutely necessary or where personal circumstances mean there is no alternative. Covid has transformed the way the Council works and accelerated the way digital is part of the fabric of the organisation, benefiting from a re-designed ICT operating model. This has enabled the rapid deployment of new laptops and softphones, better use of collaboration channels and enhanced network security.
- 14.2 There is a widespread recognition that the Council will not be going back to the way it operated before Covid, and, therefore, conversations are continuing with staff on their experiences of remote working and how this can be best blended with using council and other workplaces and reviewing the Council’s overall building requirements going forward. While remote working does not suit everyone, there are also notable air quality, carbon reduction and reduced congestion benefits to the town in reducing staff travel and these benefits are shared with staff in reduced commuting times and costs and the ability to

benefit from improved work-life balance.

- 14.3 Clearly the impact of Covid on the borough, its people and the Council has been huge. In this light a review of the Southend 2050 ambition and desired outcomes is required, along with a fundamental shift in the Council's approach to its change programme. This includes: learning lessons from Covid; integrating the pandemic work streams and the transformation programme (Future Ways of Working) into 2050; working with partners to re-frame desired outcomes, work streams and leads and putting more structure and resource behind the drive for change.

15. Governance and 2021 Election

- 15.1 New governance arrangements put in place to ensure councillors could continue to make key decisions and ensure access by the public by holding on-line or hybrid meetings continued up until the permission to do so expired on 6 May 2021. Despite representations from the Local Government Association and others, formal Council meetings have since been held in person. The pandemic highlighted the need for agile, timely and effective decision making (a theme of the recent LGA 'Health Check' of the Council). A new administration and the easing of lockdown restrictions provides an opportunity to review and revise many aspects of this, including the Council's constitution, supporting councillors to undertake their role and strengthening councillor-officer relations.
- 15.2 The **May 2021 borough and Police & Crime Commissioner elections** posed huge logistical challenges to ensure the democratic process could continue, while the safety of all concerned remained paramount. This included: risk assessments and careful planning for all premises being used; revised layouts to polling stations and count centre to enable social distancing; additional equipment (pencils, masks, screens, sanitisers etc..) being purchased; restrictions on numbers allowed at the count and special arrangements for briefings to candidates and election staff. These measures, among many others, enabled the elections to proceed successfully, including having a turnout that was in line with previous elections.

16. Financial Assessment and Overview

- 16.1 The current financial landscape and operating environment for the Council remains extremely challenging and uncertain. While the Council remains financially resilient from both the impact of Covid and the range of local demand and spending pressures, the Council is currently predicting a cumulative budget gap of £20.7m to the end of 2025/26. The Council's 10 year Financial Sustainability Strategy, agreed in 2020, will, therefore, be reviewed again in the autumn. At the time of writing Government has not yet announced their intentions regarding the next Comprehensive Spending Review or the planned implementation date of previously announced local government finance reform. The future funding challenge is, therefore, clearly very difficult to assess.
- 16.2 The scale and impact of the pandemic has also resulted in an unprecedented national policy and funding response from Central Government. The range, volume and value of different targeted financial support packages have been

issued on a scale never seen before. New announcements have been made on a regular basis containing a varied range of funding/grant support to be either passported on to local eligible businesses and residents or to be used directly by the Council to support our local response to the pandemic.

- 16.3 The total level of Covid-19 related grants allocated to Southend-on-Sea for 2020/21 is outlined at **Appendix 3** and totals nearly **£136 million**. The terms and conditions attached to some of these grant support mechanisms were sometimes issued late or retrospectively, which is perhaps understandable given the scale and urgency to provide funding. A number of funding streams have either been extended into 2021/22 or new funding allocations have been issued for this financial year as the country continues to put in place measures to control further outbreaks of the virus and to try to support local economic recovery.
- 16.4 The Government has also introduced other financial support arrangements such as the Income Guarantee Scheme to help with the impact on the local collection of council tax and business rates. A compensation scheme for sales, fees and charges to try to help to partly offset significant reductions in other local income streams. Finally, additional financial support has been issued to help local authorities cope with a range of additional administration and new burdens associated with assessing and issuing passported funding to eligible businesses and residents where appropriate. To put this into context around 12,000 eligible applications from local businesses have been processed. The scale of this overall level of additional financial support to the Council and associated claims to Central Government are still being finalised as part of the year-end closure of the 2020/21 accounts.
- 16.5 A Budget Transformation Programme for 2022/23 – 2025/26, was agreed as part of the Council's overall budget package, with areas identified to be scoped and developed further during 2021/22. This will support the Council's future financial sustainability, help target resources and avoid a financial 'cliff edge' that would need drastic action over a short time frame.
- 16.6 Other measures to support the Councils drive towards financial sustainability and shape our priority focus include: on-going budget reviews; implementation of outcome-based budgeting; better linking of business planning and budgeting to service outcomes; effective and creative management of service demand; review of major contracts; further implementation of the Commissioning Framework; exploring new commercial opportunities; a range of income generation initiatives and a future business transformation programme.
- 16.7 Outcomes Based Planning and budgeting, started in 2019/20, looks to repurpose and align our resources towards agreed priorities and outcomes. In line with that is a 'Getting to Know Your Business' programme for service managers, introduced in 2020/21, with the first phase helping to establish a baseline for all services on costs, income generation, value for money and relative performance.
- 16.8 This combined assessment, together with a comprehensive 'strategic-fit' review against our Ambition, economic recovery aspirations and delivering better outcomes and value for money, therefore, influenced the development of the

investments, savings, income generation proposals and level of council tax agreed for 2021/22.

17. Other Options

- 17.1 The Council could choose not to outline its response to Covid-19. However, that would mean failing to recognise the huge impact the crisis has had on the borough, its people and the Council along with the Council's approach to recovery.

18. Reasons for Recommendations

To ensure the Council has an opportunity to review action taken to date to tackle the Covid crisis and to consider the appropriate approach to be taken to enable the borough and council to recover.

19. Corporate Implications

- 19.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 ambition, outcomes and road map**
The report outlines the range of measures taken by the Council to address the Covid 19 crisis. A separate report for a future Cabinet meeting will outline the Council's approach, and outcome, to reviewing the 2050 ambition and outcomes in the light of the huge impact the crisis has had on the borough, its people, the Council and other stakeholders.

19.2 Finance and value for money implications

The significant financial implications are addressed in paragraph 16.

19.3 Legal Implications – none specific

19.4 Equalities and Diversity Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to assess the impact Covid-19 has had on equality groups throughout the pandemic. A summary of this is attached at **Appendix 1** and will continue to be updated as more information, becomes available.

19.5 Other corporate implications:

19.6 People Implications

A number of the aspects of the impact of the pandemic on council staff are outlined in paragraph , including the need to adapt to new ways of working, dealing with the need for new forms of communication, contact and networking and maintaining good staff morale. Future working arrangements are likely to look very different for many staff and the implications for this and how that is managed will be a key element of the recovery work undertaken.

19.7 Property Implications

The Council will need to review the current use of buildings and facilities in the light of the re-mobilisation programme, in the context of recovery, and the on-

going need to meet the health requirements of staff and visitors.

19.8 Empowerment, co-design/production and consultation

The report highlights that the response to the pandemic has been one of community, partners, staff, councillors and other stakeholders continuously working closely to ensure the best possible outcomes in very difficult circumstances. The approach to recovery will look to continue this approach, develop new tools for engaging communities and partners to adapt to circumstances and continue to use co-design and co-production approaches in particular service areas.

19.9 Green City/Environment/Climate Change

Indications are that the environmental benefits that were derived from the first period of lockdown, with falls in emissions of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, have largely been reversed, with, for example, levels of traffic returning to 'normal' levels. However, the Council's Green City Action Plan was agreed by Cabinet in January 2021, outlining the initial steps that the Council will undertake to become a Green City and fulfil its obligations after declaring a Climate Emergency in Autumn 2019.

19.9 Risk Assessment

The Council has reviewed the Corporate Risk Register in the light of the impact and implications of the pandemic.

20. Background Papers

- The Council's response to Covid-19 – report to Cabinet, 9 June 2020
- Southend 2050 milestones & measures – refresh in response to Covid-19 – report to Cabinet, 15 September 2020.
- Full Covid-19 Equality Impact Assessment

21. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Summary Equality Impact Assessment, Covid-19

Appendix 2 - Tier and Lockdown measures affecting Southend on Sea

Appendix 3 – Government Grant Support for Covid-19, 2020/21

Appendix 1

COVID-19: Southend Equality Impact Assessment – Summary

The Equality Act 2010, requires public authorities to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups. There is also a requirement that public authorities foster good relations between people from different groups with protected characteristics. This includes, for example, ensuring such groups have the ability to access information and eligible services on an equal basis and to have reasonable adjustments made to enable that to happen. The duty to ‘advance equality’ requires the Council to be pro-active in reducing inequalities.

The impact of, and response to, coronavirus affects people differently, with evidence showing the impact will be disproportionately higher on those who are already disadvantaged in other ways.

This EIA assesses the impact of COVID-19 upon protected groups in Southend, by reviewing national and local evidence, where available. Much of the evidence is formed of rapid data reviews – with new research being regularly published, so that the EIA has been reviewed and revised to reflect this. Potential equality risks and impacts are, therefore, assessed for the nine protected characteristics (Disability; Age; Gender reassignment; Marriage and civil partnership; Pregnancy and maternity; Race; Religion or belief; Sex; Sexual orientation) and additional areas such as socio-economic and carers. In addition, the cumulative impact on those in multiple groups is explored, where possible.

Key findings

Race – The Public Health England ‘[Beyond the Data](#)’ report (June 2020) looked at impacts on BAME groups during the first wave, pointing to a range of longstanding inequalities and socioeconomic factors which may be leading to poorer outcomes from COVID-19 among these populations. A Government review into the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups (August [2020](#)) was published, which, along with, the [ONS](#) (October 2020) release, and [Public Health Matters, \(February 2021\)](#) reports, also concluded that a large proportion of the difference in the risk of COVID-19 mortality between ethnic groups can be explained by demographic, geographical and socioeconomic factors, such as where you live or occupation. Ethnicity continues to be a major factor in the health outcomes of communities during the 2021 pandemic waves with deprivation also a key factor.

Non-white individuals form 8.1% of Southend’s population (2011 Census):

- Black African groups (2.1% of Southend residents).
- Pakistani groups (0.61% of Southend residents).
- Bangladeshi groups (0.54% of Southend residents).
- Black Caribbean groups (2.1% of Southend residents)
- Indian groups (1.04% of Southend residents).

Vaccine hesitancy among ethnic minorities has been a focus of the vaccine programme, with take-up of a Covid-19 vaccine lower among all ethnic minority groups compared with the White British population ([ONS](#)). [Figures](#) on vaccination

rates for first doses in the over 50s in England show that the lowest uptake was among people identifying as Black Caribbean and Black African followed by people from Pakistani backgrounds. Data showed that vaccination rates differs by religious affiliation with the lowest rates among those identifying as Muslim and Buddhist. Factors found to play a part in vaccine uptake, including language and deprivation.

Age – The majority of deaths involving COVID-19 have been among people aged 65 years and over. Nationally, in the week ending 7 May 2021, 53% of deaths involving COVID-19 were in people aged 75 years and over. For the South East NHS region, Cumulative total number of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 from the start of the pandemic up to 16 May 2021 is 53,021, of these:

- Around 34% of all COVID-19 patients admitted to hospital are aged 18-64.
- Around 40% of all COVID-19 patients admitted to hospital are aged 65-84.
- Around 23% of all COVID-19 patients admitted to hospital are aged 85+.

Southend's care homes have seen 93 deaths involving COVID-19 occurring in care homes this year ([ONS, 1 Jan to 14 May 2021](#)). Compared to 148 local authority areas with social care responsibility, Southend is 31st highest in England.

Residents aged 70+ make up 15% (26,867 people) of Southend's 184,882 residents (ONS Population projections, 2020). For all age groups, including children, there are equal risks of contracting COVID-19 (ONS, 14 May). Vaccine rollout is by age group, with priority access for some of those working on the frontline or with conditions making them more vulnerable to COVID-19. For children, while complication risks are lower, multiple factors exist which will result in long-term impact:

- Exposure to stress is most difficult for youngest children to manage and leads to an increased stress response, with long term negative impacts in multiple areas.
- Risk of physical development delay due to overcrowding and reduced access to outdoor play. In Southend, 33.2% of households are in flats/maisonettes/apartments, or temporary accommodation.
- During lockdown, there was no in-school provision for those with draft EHCP plans or needs assessments. Guidance has since been updated with [recommended approaches](#) that local authorities, educational settings and parents should follow.

A survey in April 2021 showed those between 16 to 29 years [reported](#) the highest rates of vaccine hesitancy, among age groups.

Disability – This group is most likely to have underlying health conditions, raising risk. 45.1% of disabled adults felt worried about COVID-19 vs a third of non-disabled adults, and two thirds (64.8%) felt these concerns affected wellbeing (ONS, 2020). There are messaging concerns for effective communication. PHE is analysing COVID-19 deaths of people with learning disabilities and autism as this impact is currently unpublished. 820 working-age individuals in Southend receive Disability DWP payments, and 7490 receive ESA and incapacity benefits – however the true number of those with disabilities is higher as non-working age individuals are un-counted (DWP, 2016). Vaccine rollout is by age group, with priority access for some of those with disabilities, although ONS has reported some disparity in vaccination rates among disabled people who reported being 'limited a lot' in their day-to-day activities compared with those who were not-disabled. Since April 2020 women have reported

worse mental health and wellbeing than men, however this was also true before the pandemic ([Gov.UK – Gender Spotlight, Apr 21](#)).

Sex – There are higher mortality rates for men than women as a result of Covid, although in Southend that difference is marginal (51% against 49%). Southend has 55,500 men of working age (16-64), and 50,100 who are economically active (IMD, 2019). Women form the majority of the frontline health, social care and educational workforce and are more likely to be informal carers for children and elderly, so these groups may face increased risk to contracting COVID-19. Concerns of an increase in the incidents of domestic abuse during lockdown remain, with women being in the highest risk category. Since April 2020 women have reported worse mental health and wellbeing than men, however this was also true before the pandemic ([Gov.UK – Gender Spotlight, Apr 21](#)).

Sexual orientation - Due to a number of health inequalities that LGBT people experience, some sections of LGBT communities may be at higher risk from being severely affected by the virus.

- LGBT people aged 50+ are more likely to be living with long-term health conditions (International Longevity Centre UK, 2019), increasing risk of serious illness.
- 51% of those diagnosed with HIV are gay and bisexual men (THT, 2018). Severe COVID-19 could be greater for those not receiving HIV treatment (Avert, 2020).
- 24% of homeless people aged 16-24 are LGBT, affecting ability to self-isolate and access care.
- 52% of LGBT people experienced depression in 2017-18 (Stonewall, 2019). COVID-19 related factors can cause detrimental effects for those living with long-term mental health conditions which disproportionately affect LGBT people.
- Older LGBT people are more likely to be socially isolated, and LGBT people of all ages are more likely to have 'chosen families'. Lockdown may lead to separation from those closest, or exposure to LGBTphobic families.
- LGBT Foundation's helpline saw 70% more calls about transphobia and 36% more calls about homophobia this 16th March to 5th April than last year.

Socio-Economic – People living in deprived areas have higher diagnosis rates – Greater than the inequality in mortality rates in previous years, indicating greater inequality in death rates from COVID-19 (PHE, June 2020). 6.15% of Southend's 4963 households are 'Families with limited resources who budget to make ends meet', a group likely to face financial hardship during the pandemic. Characteristics include; age 31-35, household income less than £15k, with children, and routinely facing limited resources and tighter budgets. [A map visualises coronavirus cases](#) in Southend since the start of the pandemic (to February 2021) - With Victoria ward worst affected, followed by – Milton, Chalkwell, Westborough and Prittlewell. Of Southend's 17 wards, the three most deprived are: Kursaal (6.71% of Southend), Victoria (6.78% of Southend), Milton (6.43% of Southend) (IMD LSOAs, 2020), 19.92% of Southend residents live within these three most deprived wards.

Equality Impact Assessment on groups with protected characteristics

	Impact				
	Yes			No	Unclear
	Positive	Negative	Neutral		
Race		X			
Age		X			
Disability		X			
Gender reassignment		X			
Marriage and civil partnership				X	
Pregnancy and maternity		X			
Religion or belief		X			
Sex		X			
Sexual orientation		X			
Carers		X			
Socio-economic		X			

Descriptions of the protected characteristics are available in the guidance or from: [EHRC - protected characteristics](#)

Overarching mitigating responses across all groups have tailored to different audiences and centre around four key pillars:

1. Prevention - to prevent spread and encourage the public to use track and trace and take up vaccinations. PHE assets used as much as possible and localise if required. Widespread “push” messages disseminated out across all owned channels, both from SBC and partners.

2. Management of Outbreaks. A local contact tracing service delivered by the Essex and Southend Contract Tracing Service. There is a generic communications approach tailored to relevant audiences. Template guidance for communication issued by PHE is followed and adapted where appropriate.

3. Local action in response to outbreaks/R number/additional insight – Implementing local action to further prevent the spread of infection, communicating the process around local action decisions, and impacts.

4. Support – Our strategy for people who need to isolate. Activity focuses on providing those who need to isolate with effective support and guidance of how best to support themselves during a period of isolation (including financial support/guidance around sick pay). Contact tracers are able to pass on the details of the Essex Welfare Service (EWS) to individuals who are asked to self-isolate.

Tier changes and lockdowns affecting Southend-On-Sea

Monday 23 March 2020 - First national lockdown, with restrictions lasting into July.

Monday 12 October 2020 - [Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus](#)

- Three tier system of local Covid Alert Levels - medium, high & very high introduced.

Tuesday 13 October 2020 - Southend-on-Sea enter the Tier System at Tier one (Medium).

- Essex CC request to move to tier two (high alert).

Thursday 5 November 2020 - [Tier system paused, as the Government's four-week national lockdown begins.](#) (in place until 2 December).

Wednesday 2 December 2020 - [Southend-on-Sea enters Tier Two \(High\) local Covid restrictions.](#) The same tier as Essex and Thurrock and the whole of East of England.

Wednesday 16 December 2020 -

- [Southend-on-Sea enters Tier Three \(Very High\) local Covid restrictions.](#)
- [Southend joins nine other districts in Tier Three, from the Essex County Council area, Thurrock, the whole of London and four areas of Hertfordshire.](#)

Sunday 20 December 2020 - [Southend-on-Sea enters Tier Four restrictions.](#)

Wednesday 30 December 2020 – [Southend-On-Sea to remain in Tier Four.](#)

Monday 4 January 2021 - [A third national lockdown](#) was confirmed.

March 8 2021 - Roadmap for England – Part One

- Schools, colleges and some university students return
- Distanced outdoor 1:1 socialisation

March 29 2021 - [Roadmap for England](#) – Part One

- Up to 6 people may meet outdoors
- Outdoor sports possible
- Parent and child groups possible, maximum of 15
- Stay at home order lifted, remain local
- Work from home where possible
- Holiday travel aboard remains illegal

April 12 2021 - [Roadmap for England](#) – Part Two

- Non-essential shops, libraries, zoos, theme parks, gyms, self-catering accommodation and salons reopen.
- Outdoor hospitality possible, maximum of 6
- Funerals up to 30, Weddings up to 15 attendees.

May 17 2021 – [Proposed Roadmap for England](#) – Part Three

- Indoor dining possible
- Remaining outdoor entertainment possible
- Cinemas, soft play, museums, hotels, exercise classes return
- Weddings and funerals, up to 30
- Capacity limits for large public events
- Results to be announced on international travel review

June 21 2021 – [Proposed Roadmap for England](#) – Part Four

- No legal limits on social contact
- Nightclubs reopen
- Large events possible
- No limits on weddings, funerals or other life events.

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Appendix 3

Central Government Grant Support for Covid-19 in 2020/21 Central Government Passported Funding/Allocations

Government Department	Grant Funding Stream	Amount £
BEIS	Business Rates Grants*	45,512,250
BEIS	Top-Up Grants to Businesses* (5% of £38,835,000)	1,941,750
BEIS	Local Authority Additional Restrictions Discretionary Grant Fund	5,289,209
BEIS	Local Restrictions Support Grant Open	408,838
BEIS	Local Restrictions Support Grant Closed	8,117,025
BEIS	Local Restrictions Support Grant Sector	11,034,000
MHCLG	Expanded rate relief discounts for retail and nursery providers	27,134,932
BEIS	Christmas Support Package	44,800
MHCLG	Council Tax Hardship Fund	1,661,945
MHCLG	Business Improvement District Support Grant	18,450
DHSC	Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund	2,734,683
DHSC	Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund (Round 2)	2,321,361
	Total	106,219,243

* 5% of intended spend of Business Rates allocation used to fund Top-Up Grants to Businesses

Central Government Additional Direct Grants

MHCLG	Local Authority Support Grant (Tranche 1)	5,393,935
MHCLG	Local Authority Support Grant (Tranche 2)	5,062,493
MHCLG	Local Authority Support Grant (Tranche 3)	1,571,465
MHCLG	Local Authority Support Grant (Tranche 4)	2,443,745
DHSC	Contain Outbreak Management Fund	4,421,161
DHSC	Test and Trace Service Support Grant	887,492
MHCLG	Local Authority Compliance and Enforcement Grant	95,357
DHSC	Support Clinically Extremely Vulnerable	267,164
DHSC	Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme	183,458
MHCLG	Next Steps Accommodation Programme (Short and long term)	2,304,546
MHCLG/ERDF	Reopening the High Street Safely	163,096
MHCLG/ERDF	Welcome Back fund	163,096
DFT	Emergency Active Travel Fund	1,236,000
DWP	Kick Start Scheme	881,000
DFT	Travel Demand Management	150,000
DFE	Additional Home to School Transport	515,300
DWP	COVID Winter Grant Scheme	573,690
DEFRA	Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies	212,603
DHSC	Community Testing Programme	270,190
DHSC	Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund	634,790
MHCLG	Workforce Capacity Fund	412,000
DCMS	National Leisure Recovery Fund	406,090
DHSC	Practical Support for those Self Isolating	41,036
DHSC	Infection Prevention and Control	826,509
DHSC	Rapid Testing Allocation	551,579
	Total	29,667,795
	Grand Total	135,887,038

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of the Chief Executive
To
Cabinet

On
15 June 2021

Report prepared by: Sarah Brown, Policy Advisor

Agenda
Item No.

6

Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) - update

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Policy and Resources;
Cabinet Member: Councillor Ian Gilbert
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report and desired outcomes

- 1.1 To provide an update on developments in relation to ASELA and to formally agree to become a member of a joint committee of constituent members to oversee ASELA and provide enhanced transparency and accountability in the new delivery stage of its work programme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Cabinet note the updates provided in this report.**
- 2.2 **To formally agree to become a member of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) Joint Committee in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, to oversee ASELA and provide enhanced transparency and accountability in the new delivery stage of its work programmes.**
- 2.3 **To approve the governance arrangements of the joint committee as set out in Appendix 1 and the related Joint Committee Agreement and Terms of Reference.**
- 2.4 **That the Leader of the Council is appointed to represent the Council on the Joint Committee.**
- 2.5 **That the Council appoints a deputy representative to substitute for the Leader, in line with the Part 7 of the Constitution.**

3. Background

- 3.1 On 22 July 2020, Cabinet, considered a report from ASELA that provided an update on progressing the economic agenda for the South Essex region. At that meeting Cabinet agreed to fully support a collaboration with South Essex Authorities to deliver regeneration across south Essex. It also agreed that the Council should:
- 3.1.1 *Discuss with Government and the Districts/Boroughs of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford and Thurrock, the formulation for South Essex of a joint arrangement to deal with a defined number of cross boundary and strategic*

matters. Such arrangement to be made up of elected members of the constituent local authorities, supported as appropriate by representatives of the local LEP and other relevant stakeholders, under terms of reference to be agreed by those local authorities;

- 3.2 The minute of that meeting was called in to a meeting of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee and referred to a special full Council on 30 July 2020, which noted the minute and agreed not to refer the matter back to Cabinet for reconsideration.
- 3.3 Since the Council meeting, briefings for all councillors were held in relation to the then anticipated Devolution White Paper and ASELA and the information provided made available to all councillors. In addition, the ASELA/Local Government Reform Working Party was formally constituted and has met on 2 September (informally), 28 October and 11 February to receive updates on ASELA and Local Government Reform.
- 3.4 The working party was informed that the Government has said that the Devolution White Paper will be produced 'in due course', and it will have a focus more on recovery than devolution.
- 3.5 ASELA Leaders have scoped the terms of reference of a new joint committee outlining the main features and how it would operate in practice. An outline proposal was agreed on 21 January 2021 and has been developed to share amongst prospective Councils.
- 3.6 On 10th February 2021, Thurrock Council Cabinet approved the establishment of a joint committee, as set out in **Appendix 1** Terms of Reference, to oversee ASELA.
- 3.7 The remaining local authority partners are expected to put decisions to their respective Council meetings in the 2021 new municipal year.
- 3.8 The ASELA/Local Government Reform Working Party also met on 7 June 2021, to consider this report and was content for the report to proceed (See minutes of the meeting elsewhere on the agenda).

4.0 ASELA Update

4.1 ASELA ambition

- 4.1.2 ASELA is a partnership of neighbouring councils that have come together to deliver growth and prosperity in the region. The local authority partners are Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock, and Essex County Council.
- 4.1.3 ASELA has spent the past three years looking at how working together across local government boundaries will help deliver improved infrastructure and economic growth. ASELA aims to support the south Essex region to be a UK leader in economic recovery, and drive sustained economic growth and prosperity within its communities. There is a bold and ambitious plan to create greater prosperity and quality of life for all its residents and for the benefit of the UK. Part of this plan will be to ensure its businesses and residents recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, improve the economy locally and nationally as well as deliver the housing targets set by government.

- 4.1.4 On 31 July 2020, ASELA submitted a [Growth and Recovery Prospectus](#) to central government. The ambition outlines ten delivery programmes across five key themes (Economy, Transport & Connectivity, Infrastructure & Housing, Climate & Environment, and Vibrant Communities) and will see south Essex contribute an additional £15 billion to the UK economy and create 100,000 new jobs by 2050.
- 4.1.5 These programmes will directly and indirectly benefit Southend and its residents. Specifically, in Southend, the programme has the potential to deliver:
- a. An uplift in economic value of £2.368bn per annum by 2050 (from £2.852bn to £5.220bn).
 - b. Increase the number of jobs from 76,700 to 100,600 – 23,900 new jobs.
 - c. Improve productivity per job from £37,200 to £51,800 - £14,600 per job.
 - d. 3,690 homes which already have planning permission but may otherwise be stalled (to contribute to the government’s housing need target of 23.5k homes).
 - e. The ambitions outlined in the South Essex Connectivity Strategy, and, to enable the ability to collaborate and deliver on Southend’s future road infrastructure needs (which, in part, sit outside of the borough).
- 4.1.6 On 11 February 2021, the ASELA/Local Government Reform Working Party received an update on the achievements to date and planned work of the delivery programmes, including confirmed capacity funding from Homes England, with a summit meeting having taken place with Small Medium Sized Enterprises on the infrastructure and housing programme, an award-winning blue and green infrastructure design for the South Essex Estuary Park, and a specialist team being appointed to develop a feasibility study for the New Generation University.

5. Anchor Programmes

- 5.1 In 2021, ASELA will enhance focus on delivery of five ‘anchor programmes’:
1. Superfast Digital
 2. Thames Freeport
 3. Technical University
 4. South Essex Estuary (SEE) Park
 5. Infrastructure and Housing

The latest position (as at 3 June) on these is outlined below.

- **Superfast Digital** – the principal objective of this programme is to provide gigabit connectivity to every household and premises by 2025. The Local Full Fibre Network project which is funded by DCMS delivers fibre to public sector facilities (including fire, GPs and health care) remains on track and on budget to achieve delivery to over 150 sites by the end of the month. Plans are now being developed to join all the fibre together to create a single public service network. This activity is attracting significant private sector investment and up to £100m has now been committed to South Essex by Openreach, Virgin and CityFibre collectively. The next phase of this programme will be to establish a private sector led board and start to develop the digital solutions that will be at the heart of the Thames Freeport, the Technical University and the South Essex Estuary Park;
- **Thames Freeport** – the Government announced in the Chancellor’s March Budget, that the Thames Freeport was one of eight successful bids. The Freeport

is private sector led (DP World, Forth Ports, and Ford) and covers the geography of the local authorities of Thurrock, LB Havering LB Barking and Dagenham. Thurrock Council are the lead local authority and the accountable body for public sector investment. Since March the Government have agreed the interim governance arrangements and approved initial capacity funding of £300k. Work on an Outline Business Case is now underway and the target is to submit to Government by 31st July. Simultaneously work is in train to establish Tax and Custom sites within the Freeport area. These bring significant financial incentives to the private sector partners and the potential for business rate retention for the designated areas. The initial feasibility study identified substantial economic benefits including over 25,000 new jobs and over £5bn of inward investment. In addition, the priority policy objective is to use the Freeport as a catalyst for regeneration and levelling up deprived communities. These benefits and policy areas will be tested and expanded as part of the business case development over the following weeks;

- **Technical University** – in March Leaders approved the feasibility study for a technical university. The intention is to create degree apprenticeships with local employers, providing opportunities for local people, leading to high skill local jobs. This is a business led venture, with a number of the leading businesses in the area identifying requirements for both young people and reskilling of existing employees. A Partnership Board has now been established, which includes senior representation from DP World, Leonardos, Olympus, Nat West Bank, Ford, and Southend Airport. Higher Education providers are also represented through Anglian Ruskin Univesity, University of Essex and the University of East Anglia. The programme will reach into the school system to encourage students from communities that wouldn't historically have considered higher skills as attainable. The next steps that are now underway include the procurement of a Higher Education provider for the first tranche of degree apprenticeship courses, starting in September 2023, and the development of the full business case by November 2021.
- **South Essex Estuary Park (SEE Park)** – This flagship programme aims to provide an extraordinary parkland setting that encompasses all of South Essex, bringing environmental, social, and economic value to the region. It will cover 1/3 of South Essex at 23,000ha (in line with government's aim of protecting 30% of England's countryside by 2030) and will comprise five large-scale landscapes, selected because of their capacity to perform multiple functions, while offering many benefits. ASELA leaders gave support for pressing ahead with building the case for investment in the SEE Park and for working up more detailed proposals to deliver a pathfinder implementation project across the Central Thames Marshlands. Since then work has been underway to design an implementation approach around creating early successes; building momentum and confidence with local residents and investors alike. Initial activity over the next 12-24 months will be focussed around four workstreams:
 - Launching the SEEPark - with a distinctive branding, establishing a marketing & comms plan with web/social media presence; and creating options for a future operating model;
 - Development of a Landscape framework plan - and design guide to ensure future development work across the 5 constituent landscapes reflects the GBI Strategy and objectives;

- Delivery of the Central Thames Pathfinder - as a 'demonstrator' project with a series of wave1 implementation deliverables within an initial 18-month period;
- Creating a Green Finance Strategy – looking to access Government grant / capacity funding in the short-term and to build a long-term green investment model to attract private sector infrastructure funding.

A case for investment has been developed and it describes the work and resource envelope (c.£7.5m) that will be needed to get the SEE Park up and running and to deliver the Central Thames Marshlands pathfinder. The majority of funding for this will need to be sourced from outside of direct investments from ASELA Local Authorities; through a combination of, related strategic programmes such as Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) and Thames Free Port (TFP), Government capacity funding and private sector green financing models. This is the main area of focus over the coming months;

- **Infrastructure and Housing** – the focus of this programme is the provision of infrastructure and homes that are needed to support the economy and meet existing housing needs. Over the last 12 months a detailed pipeline of housing schemes has been developed with a specific focus on schemes that are stalled because of issues of viability. By working together across all South Essex Local Authorities, the area has been able to create a compelling case for a trail blazing strategic place based partnership with Homes England. Now agreed in principle, by the Homes England Executive Board, it will be just one of two such partnerships in the country. A Memorandum of Understanding is being prepared for Leaders consideration, along with a joint Business Plan. The intention is that these will be agreed by Leaders before the 31st July and formally launched in September 2021. Homes England remain committed to provide capacity funding for this programme for 2021/22 and the outputs of the joint work on the Business Plan will also feed into the Spending Review in the Autumn. In addition to this activity, progress is also being made through joint working with regional housing associations, through a new initiative to create greater opportunities for small and medium sized builders.

5.2 These programmes combine to provide strategic place shaping and delivery on a regional scale that is not possible by any organisation or agency acting alone or in sub partnerships. There is now a clear requirement for governance arrangements to oversee these programmes, to provide transparency over decision making, to demonstrate to investors that South Essex is "investor ready", and provide the accountability arrangements for investment received. South Essex Leaders have agreed that the most appropriate form of governance in this respect would be a Joint Committee.

6. An ASELA Joint Committee

6.1 What is a Joint Committee?

6.1.1 At the ASELA Leaders meeting on 10 December 2020, it was agreed that work would be undertaken to seek approval from ASELA Councils to move towards a joint committee arrangement. **Appendix 1** is a paper agreed by ASLEA Leaders on 21 January 2021, to be considered by all ASELA councils. The paper recommends a joint committee model in order to provide appropriate overview, scrutiny and co-opted membership and allow ASELA to deliver its ambitious growth programme.

- 6.1.2 A joint committee formalises the business of an Association and would be established in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972. Joint committees set the strategic and policy direction as well as commission and co-ordinate the delivery of projects and programmes.
- 6.1.3 Joint committees have been established between local authorities for various purposes, including:
- To provide a forum for local authorities to collaborate on and co-ordinate plans affecting a particular area/region.
 - To direct shared services arrangements, whether for front line functions, such as waste collection and disposal, or back office services, such as finance, HR and IT services, including joint procurement.
 - To manage parks extending across local authority boundaries, crematoria, and museums and other cultural or recreational attractions.
- 6.1.4 Joint committees are a common and favoured feature amongst councils because they provide a transparent and accountable means to achieving combined goals whilst ensuring the individual sovereignty of each body remains. Joint committees do not become involved in the daily business of councils outside of the purposes for which it was established. There would, therefore, be **no transfer of powers currently held by any constituent authority to the joint committee**. It would also mean that no decision could be taken by the joint committee which relates to any matter that is in the preserve of a specific constituent authority, unless that authority indicates its agreement with the proposal.
- 6.1.5 An example of a joint committee is the South Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee which was formed by the collaboration of seven councils in Essex and manages the South Essex Parking Partnership. A further example is The Five Councils Partnership Corporate Services Joint Committee which is a partnership between Mendip District Council, South Oxfordshire DC, Vale of Horse DC, Hart DC and Havant Borough Council. The joint committee enables all five councils to share services relating to Revenues & Benefits, Local Land Charges, Customer Services, IT and Procurement.

6.2 Why is a Joint Committee right for ASELA?

- 6.2.1 The current governance arrangement is based upon a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), agreed by all Councils in January 2018, which recognised that decision making and accountability arrangements for ASELA would need to be regularly reviewed to ensure it remained fit for purpose.
- 6.2.2 In response to progress of the programme of work into the delivery stage, it is now an appropriate time to review the current arrangement. With the imminent requirement to manage large sums of government and private sector investment, there is a pressing need not only to demonstrate increased confidence in financial management but also to validate a combined commitment to the governance and operational delivery of the programme. A more formal, accountable, and transparent governance arrangement would also support:
- enhanced openness and accountability to constituent authorities;

- providing greater local control over direct investment and related financial considerations e.g. section 106 planning agreements between councils and developers;
- a signal to private investors, especially long term investors, that ASELA is capable and committed; and
- a signal to government departments and investors that ASELA is financially sustainable, and a trusted and reliable delivery partner.

- 6.2.3 In addition to oversight of the growth delivery programme a joint committee provides:
- Management and oversight of expenditure and activity associated with funding received from Government and other sources.
 - Agree the level of financial contributions to be sought from each local authority to support the work of ASELA.
 - Ensure effective relationships and collaboration as necessary to achieve ASELA's vision, with central Government and other regional and national bodies including the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

6.3 Practicalities of the ASELA Joint Committee

The proposal for an ASELA Joint Committee would include the following features:

- Eight members and co-opted members are anticipated: Basildon; Brentwood; Castle Point; Essex County Council; Rochford; Southend, Thurrock; and The Federated Board of the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Each Council will appoint a member.
- A Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointed.
- Matters will be decided through voting (co-opted members can speak but not vote) and decisions reached through majority.
- No decision can be taken by the Joint Committee which relates to any matter that is in the preserve of a specific constituent authority unless that authority indicates its agreement with the proposal. Thereby maintaining the principle of subsidiarity.
- One authority will act as an 'accountable body' in relation to the functions and resources of ASELA shall be agreed by the Joint Committee.
- A local authority will be designated to provide secretariat to the joint committee (Southend BC currently fulfils this role).
- It is the advice of Monitoring Officers for scrutiny to take place at each existing partner councils' Overview & Scrutiny process as the most efficient and effective arrangement at the present time. For Southend BC this would involve Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee and the ASELA Working Party. However, arrangements should be kept under review.

7. Other Options

- 7.1 Do nothing – this option is not recommended. Continuing with the existing informal arrangements does not support ASELA's ability to secure large scale investment from Government and the private sector. Nor does it provide transparency of decision making or accountability for delivery.
- 7.2 If a Council determines that it does not want to join the joint committee, it is proposed that it can become a co-opted member. Councils that are co-opted members of the Committee will be able to speak on all matters in front of the Committee but will not have a vote. If a Council is not a member of a joint committee it will have not agreed to

jointly discharge their functions with the other members of the committee and in essence the Joint Committee would not cover that Council area.

- 7.3 The recommendation, therefore, is that each ASELA Council should use its powers and agree to become members of the joint committee. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the council to develop proposals that provide the best possible outcome for Southend's residents while satisfying Government requirements.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 To provide ASELA with the governance arrangements required to enable delivery of the Growth and Recovery Prospectus and ten delivery programmes and for Southend and its residents to be a direct and indirect beneficiary of the work.

9. Corporate Implications

9.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 ambition, outcomes and road map and Transforming Together

The ASELA delivery work programme refers to the economic agenda for the South Essex region, how it can deliver new jobs, new transport infrastructure, new homes, and the future governance arrangements to deliver better outcomes for its existing, and new, residents and businesses. These all contribute in a significant way to various aspects of the Southend 2050 Road Map, particularly the objectives in Opportunity & Prosperity and Connected & Smart. As mentioned in section 4.1.5 there are specific benefits to Southend and its residents of the ASELA programme.

9.2 Financial and value for money implications

Resources for specialist advice will be obtained from within existing budgets. Neighbouring councils are also expected to make a financial commitment to this work.

9.3 Legal Implications –

Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 will be enacted in order to establish a Joint Committee. A draft constitution has been set out in Appendix 1 that recognises each Council's sovereign entity.

9.4 Equalities and diversity Implications – None specific at this time

9.5 Other corporate implications – - None at this time

People
Property
Empowerment, Co-design/production and Consultation
Risk
Community Safety
Green City/Environment/Climate Change
Data Protection
ICT
Health
Health & Safety

10. Background Papers –

- ASELA Growth & Recovery Prospectus – July 2020
- ASELA Memorandum of Understanding – January 2018
- ASELA report to Cabinet July 2020
- ASELA report on examples of governance models, January 2021

11. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Report from the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA)
Good Governance and Accountability – Proposals for Establishment of a Formal Joint
Committee

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**Report from the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA)
Good Governance and Accountability – Proposals for Establishment of a Formal
Joint Committee**

Introduction

- 1.0 The purpose of this report is to set out proposals for the future governance arrangements for the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) and to seek agreement of constituent authorities to now form a Statutory Joint Committee.
- 1.1 The ASELA Board is currently operating to provide growth and strategic place leadership across the whole of the South Essex region and comprises the local authorities of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend and Thurrock. Its governance is based on a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was agreed by all Councils in January 2018. The MOU recognises that the decision making and accountability arrangements for ASELA will need regular review to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- 1.2 South Essex has received an initial tranche of funding from Government, and is currently in negotiation with Government and the Private Sector for new investment to support economic growth. This will require a formal governance model to provide accountability to investors and good governance and transparency in the local management and use of any funds received.
- 1.3 In addition, the ASELA Board has served and is likely to continue to need to provide the aligned functions of:
 - a. Strategic direction, monitoring, delivery and co-ordination of current and future Growth strategy, programmes and implementation of any Growth funding
 - b. Governance body that secures strategic collaboration and delivery across the councils and with the federated body of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on place, economic performance and infrastructure matters
 - c. Acts as the place leadership body for South Essex that provides a single voice to Government, also identifies, promotes, lobbies for South Essex's interests and for funding
 - d. Oversight, accountability for and prioritisation of any South Essex investment fund

Recommendations

1. **That constituent local authorities formally agree to become a members of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) Joint Committee in accordance with governing documents set out in Appendix 1, and**
2. **Appoint the Leader of the Council as their representative on the Joint Committee, and a substitute member as set out in the governing documents.**

Background

The ASELA Board and its current programmes

2.0 The ASELA Partners have invested significant capital in the work that has been undertaken on the Growth programmes so far, through the dedication of political, officer and financial resources. The arrangements are tailored to meet the collective requirements of South Essex and the progress that it has made is important. The programmes that have been developed and the outcomes that are being sought in place and economic terms will deliver significant benefits to South Essex residents and businesses.

2.1 Since the submission of the ASELA Growth and Recovery Prospectus there has been substantial progress in delivering the core programmes as set out in the report from ASELA to constituent authorities in December 2020, and especially in certain programmes. This includes:

- Creative Industries – work has been commissioned to produce a sector designed set of investable infrastructure projects that will focus on key creative clusters across South Essex and the specific maker space and skills support needed to enable them to flourish;
- New Generation University – a specialist team have been appointed to develop a feasibility study, which will report to ASELA Leaders in March 21; working to a plan to have the first graduate apprenticeships commence in September 2023;
- Digital Network – roll out of the local full fibre network remains on track and work with the Thames Estuary Growth Board on a single network and data centres/services is due to be launched;
- Infrastructure and Housing – as well as the pipeline of shovel ready schemes, strategic engagement with Housing Associations is underway, and a summit meeting with Small Medium Sized Enterprises took place in January;
- South Essex Estuary Park – an award winner of blue and green infrastructure design, and work is now pressing ahead to build the detailed master planning and infrastructure investment proposals needed to deliver a pathfinder implementation project across the Central Thames Marshlands area;
- Stimulating Economic Recovery – the Economic Recovery Taskforce with Opportunity South Essex has been established for over two months: additional resources have been made available to support the Growth Hubs, which has seen unprecedented demand; and there is a clear action plan in place to support jobs.

There have also been a number of discussions with investors and Homes England have now confirmed £265k capacity funding for 2020/21 to support work on infrastructure and housing. It is clear, that if South Essex is to secure the level of investment that is required to achieve its full potential, the area needs to represent its collective scale; a pipeline of projects that deliver long term returns; unity and joint commitment.

2.2 The ASELA Board is focused solely on economic growth and recovery activity that can only be achieved collectively and on programmes that cross local authority boundaries. It is not concerned with any matter that it is the preserve of a constituent council. Its focus also keeps it separate from other questions about the future delivery of public services in South Essex.

Establishing a formal model of Governance for ASELA

3.0 ASELA recognised in its report to constituent local authorities in July 2020 the importance of ensuring that its governance and operational arrangements are fit for purpose. The Association committed to bring forward proposals for more formal interim governance arrangements for ASELA which this report now does.

3.1 There are several benefits for moving to a new model of decision making and accountability. These include:

- enhanced openness and accountability to constituent authorities; the joint committee will operate in accordance with the same legislative provisions as other local authority committees.
- providing a more formal governance model to provide accountability to Government and Private Sector investors;
- providing greater local control over direct investment and related financial considerations e.g. s106
- good governance and transparency in the local management and use of any funds received; and
- giving unity and joint commitment to ASELA and delivery of the programme developed.

3.1 Continuing with the existing informal governance arrangements does not support securing large scale investment from Government and the Private sector. Nor does it provide transparency of decision making or accountability for delivery. The recommendation therefore, is that each ASELA Council should use its powers and agree to form part of a Joint Committee.

The main features of an ASELA Joint Committee

4.0 Proposed governing documents for the joint committee which each constituent authority is asked to adopt is set out in Appendix 1.

4.1 A summary of the main features is set out below:

- The Joint Committee of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities will be formally established in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Joint Committee will comprise those authorities who formally agree to being a member and become effective from ...TBC.
- Each Council will have a seat at the Committee and appoint a member to the joint committee who shall have voting rights – it is intended that this will be the Leader of the Council. Another elected member will as a substitute member to act in the absence of the member appointed.

- A Chair and Vice-Chair shall be appointed at the first meeting of the Joint Committee. Appointment of a new Chair and Vice-Chair shall take place by the end of June each year, following the annual meetings of all constituent councils. The Chair or, in his or her absence, the Vice-Chair shall chair all meetings of the joint committee when present. No business of the joint committee shall be transacted unless at least half of constituent council Members or substitute members appointed are present.
- Any matters that are to be decided by the joint committee will be decided by a majority of the members present and voting on that question. Such a majority will include substitute members, acting in place of members.
- Each member, or a substitute member acting in that member's place, will have one vote and no member or substitute member is to have a casting vote. If a vote is tied on any matter it shall be deemed not to have been carried.
- No decision can be taken by the Joint Committee which relates to any matter that is in the preserve of a specific constituent authority unless that authority indicates its agreement with the proposal. Thereby maintaining the principle of subsidiarity
- An 'accountable body' in relation to the functions and resources of ASELA shall be agreed by the Joint Committee
- A local authority will be designated to provide secretariat to the joint committee
- Principals of good governance require that there should be some form of scrutiny of the decision-making process within the Joint Committee. It is considered that the most efficient and effective arrangement at the present time, would be for this to be provided for via each of the partner councils' individual Overview & Scrutiny process.
- The governing documents and arrangements set out therein shall be subject to review by the joint committee on an annual basis.

- 4.1 If a Council determines that it does not want to join the joint committee, it is proposed that it may become a co-opted member. Councils that are co-opted members of the joint committee will be able to speak on all matters in front of the committee, but will not have a vote. If a Council is not a member of a joint committee and it will have not agreed to jointly discharge their functions with the other members of the committee, then the joint committee would not cover that Council area.
- 4.2 The joint committee shall have the ability to appoint other appropriate co-opted members who would not have voting rights. It is anticipated that this is likely to include The Federated Board of the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Thames Estuary Growth Board.

**Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA)
Joint Committee Agreement and Constitution**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The core purpose of the Joint Committee is to provide place leadership for South Essex. Recognising that through a collaborative approach, the constituent authorities will be best placed to develop and deliver a vision for South Essex up to 2050, promoting healthy growth for communities.
- 1.2 The Joint Committee will focus on the strategic opportunities, regardless of individual local authority boundaries for the South Essex economic corridor to influence and secure the strategic infrastructure that will help individual areas to flourish and realise their full economic and social potential.
- 1.3 This agreement sets out how the ASELA Joint Committee shall operate in seeking to deliver its overarching purpose, what powers and functions it holds, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that it operates efficiently, effectively and is both transparent and accountable.
- 1.4 The Joint Committee shall come into effect from ...TBC.
- 1.5 The Association shall operate and discharge its functions through a Joint Committee between all local authorities formally established in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and who have agreed to form part of the Joint Committee and made the agreed financial contribution to support the work of the joint committee. It has * members, being
 - a councillor (elected member) appointed by each of the 'Constituent Councils' which includes -
 - o *

(to be updated to reflect the authorities who have agreed to form the joint committee)
- 1.6 The Joint Committee shall have the ability to agree to additional local authorities, who it is considered are able to contribute to the aims of the Joint Committee, to join the committee as a 'constituent council'. Any such authorities will need to have formally agreed, in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 to form part of the Joint Committee and made the agreed financial contribution to support the work of the Joint Committee.
- 1.7 The Joint Committee is subject to overview and scrutiny through constituent authorities' own scrutiny arrangements.

2. Principles

- 2.1 This agreement and the terms of reference provide a basis for the work of ASELA. A review of this document shall be undertaken by the Joint Committee at the end of the 2021/22 municipal year and annually thereafter
- 2.2 There shall be no transfer of powers currently held by any constituent authority to the Joint Committee and this document makes no provision for such.
- 2.3 No decision can be taken by the Joint Committee which relates to any matter that is in the preserve of a specific constituent borough/district authority unless that authority indicates its agreement with the proposal.
- 2.4 An 'accountable body' in relation to the functions and resources of ASELA shall be agreed by the Joint Committee
- 2.5 A local authority will be designated to provide secretariat to the Joint Committee which shall be agreed by the Joint Committee

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNCTIONS

A. JOINT COMMITTEE

1. Overview

1.1 The Joint Committee has been formally established by all constituent councils in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 to discharge the functions of ASELA as set out in this Constitution.

2. Membership

2.1 Appointment.

Membership of the Joint Committee shall consist of the Constituent Council Members who comprise the Joint Committee, whereby each shall appoint –

- (i) one of its elected members as a member of the joint committee, preferably to be the Leader of the Council; and
- (ii) another elected member as a substitute member to act in the absence of the member appointed under (i) above

The joint committee shall have the ability to appoint co-opted members (without voting rights) to the Joint Committee as they see fit.

2.2 Term of Membership

- (a) Members or substitute members cease to be a member or substitute member of the joint committee –
 - (i) if they cease to be a member of the constituent council that appointed them; or
 - (ii) A person may resign as a member or substitute member of the joint committee by written notice served on the proper officer of the council of the constituent council that appointed them; or
- (b) Where a member or substitute member's appointment ceases the constituent council that made the appointment must, as soon as practicable, give written notice of that fact to the Association's Secretariat and appoint another of its elected members in that person's place;
- (c) A constituent council may at any time terminate the appointment of a member or substitute member appointed by it to the Association and appoint another of its elected members in that person's place.

- (d) Where a constituent council exercises its power under subparagraph (c), it must give written notice of the new appointment and the termination of the previous appointment to the Association's Secretariat and the new appointment shall take effect and the previous appointment terminate with immediate effect.

2.3 **Chair** – A Chair and Vice-Chair shall be appointed at the first meeting of the joint committee. Appointment of a new Chair and Vice-Chair shall take place by the end of June each year, following the annual meetings of all constituent councils. The Chair or, in his or her absence, the Vice-Chair shall chair all meetings of the joint committee when present.

2.4 **Quorum.** No business of the joint committee shall be transacted unless at least half of the Constituent Council Members or substitute members appointed are present.

3. **Meetings and Procedure**

3.1 **Voting**

- (a) Subject to those matters at paragraph (d) below, any matters that are to be decided by the joint committee are to be decided by a majority of the members present and voting on that question at a meeting of the joint committee, such majority to include substitute members, acting in place of members.
- (b) Each member, or a substitute member acting in that member's place, is in post is to have one vote and no member or substitute member is to have a casting vote.
- (c) If a vote is tied on any matter it shall be deemed not to have been carried. There shall be no casting vote.
- (d) A decision on a question relating to a matter that is in the preserve of a specific local authority shall require the support and agreement of that specific authority.

3.2 **Procedure**

- (a) The joint committee will conduct business in accordance with the meeting standing orders set out in these terms of reference.
- (b) The proceedings of the joint committee are not invalidated by any vacancy among its members or substitute members or by any defect in the appointment or qualifications of any member or substitute member

4. Sub-Committees and advisory bodies

4.1 The joint committee -

- (a) may establish such other sub-committees, which may include the co-option of any non-voting members, as it sees fit; and
- (b) may establish such advisory panels and ad-hoc working groups as it considers may be expedient to assist it.

5. Delegation

5.1 The exercise of the joint committee's functions may be delegated to:

- (a) a sub-committee; or
- (b) an officer.

A record of such delegations shall be maintained

6. Core Purpose, Aims and Functions

Core Purpose and aims

6.1 The core purpose of the Joint Committee is to provide place leadership for South Essex. Recognising that through a collaborative approach, the constituent authorities will be best placed to develop and deliver a vision for South Essex up to 2050, promoting healthy growth for communities.

6.2 The Joint Committee will focus on the strategic opportunities, regardless of individual local authority boundaries for the South Essex economic corridor to influence and secure the strategic infrastructure that will help individual areas to flourish and realise their full economic and social potential.

6.3 The primary aims of Joint Committee will be to:

- Provide place leadership;
- Open up spaces for housing, business and leisure development by developing a spatial strategy;
- Transform transport connectivity;
- Support the sectors of industrial opportunity;
- Shape local labour & skill markets;
- Create a fully digitally-enabled place;
- Secure a sustainable energy supply;
- Influence and secure funding for necessary strategic infrastructure; and
- Work with and provide a voice for South Essex working with the Thames Estuary Growth Board.

Principles of collaboration

6.4 Collaboration will be focused on three key areas:

- Tackling problems we can't solve individually
- Creating collective scale and impact
- Providing the place leadership to promote and sell the 'South Essex' proposition

Specific Functions

6.5 The functions of the joint committee are as follows:

- a. Provide oversight and direction of programmes of work aligned to the core purpose and aims of the joint committee set out above.
- b. Commissioning and co-ordination of delivery of programmes, projects and development of policy against in accordance with the core purpose and aims of the joint committee and allocate resources accordingly
- c. Submission of bids for funding to Central Government and other bodies as considered appropriate to deliver the vision and objectives, subject to the advice and approval of the Chief Financial (S151) Officer of the accountable body.
- d. Provide oversight and direction associated with the Joint Strategic Plan and approve any strategic planning framework proposals for consideration by individual local authorities
- e. Management and oversight of expenditure and activity associated with funding received from Government and other sources
- f. Agree the level of financial contributions required from each local authority as a member of the joint committee to support its work.
- g. Ensure effective relationships and collaboration as necessary to achieve ASELA's vision, with Central Government and other regional and national bodies including the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and Opportunity South Essex.

MEETINGS STANDING ORDERS

1. Interpretation, Suspension and Chair's Ruling

- 1.1 These Standing Orders apply to meetings of the joint committee, and where appropriate, to meetings of any sub-committees. Any reference to committee in these Standing Orders also refers to sub-committees.
- 1.5 The ruling of the Chair on the interpretation of these Standing Orders in relation to all questions of order and matters arising in debate shall be final.

2. Revisions to Standing Orders

- 2.1 Standing Orders may be changed by the joint committee, which will be subject to a unanimous vote, either at the Annual Meeting or by a motion on notice made at a meeting of the joint committee.

3. Chairing of Meetings

- 3.1 The Chair shall chair all meetings of the joint committee whenever he or she is present.
- 3.2 In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, the meeting shall appoint another member to chair the meeting.
- 3.3 The Chair (or the Vice Chair or any other Member presiding in the absence of the Chair or Vice Chair) shall not have a casting vote on any issue.

4. Meetings

- 4.1 The Annual Meeting of the joint committee shall be held annually in June on a date and at a time following the annual meetings of all 'Constituent Councils'
- 4.2 Ordinary meetings of committee for the transaction of general business shall be held on such dates and at such times as the committee shall determine.
- 4.3 All meetings of the committee shall be open to the public (including the press) except to the extent that they are excluded whether during the whole or part of the proceedings either:
 - (a) In accordance with Section 100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972; or

- (b) By resolution passed to exclude the public on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972. Any such Resolution shall identify the proceedings or the part of the proceedings to which it applies and state the description, in terms of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 of the exempt information giving rise to the exclusion of the public.

5. Notice of Meetings

- 5.1 At least five clear working days before a meeting of a committee:
 - (a) notice of the time and place of the intended meeting shall be published;
 - (b) a summons to attend the meeting, specifying an agenda for the meeting, shall be sent to all Members of the joint committee by electronic mail.
- 5.2 Lack of service on a member of the committee of the summons shall not affect the validity of a meeting of the committee.
- 5.3 Each constituent authority shall ensure a link from their own website to information regarding meetings of ASELA and copies of agendas and minutes.

6. Meeting Agendas

- 6.1 The Chair of the Joint Committee will decide upon the agenda for the meetings. The Chair may put on the agenda of any meeting any matter which the Chair wishes.
- 6.2 Any Member of the committee may require that an item is placed on the agenda of the next available meeting of the committee for consideration.
- 6.3 Any item proposed to be included on the agenda for any meeting of the committee in accordance with sub-paragraph 6.2 above, which is not submitted in writing before 7 working days of the meeting, shall not be included on the agenda for that meeting unless it is agreed by the Chair. In this case the amended agenda for the meeting will state the reason for the late acceptance of any such item.

- 6.4 The agenda for each meeting of the committee shall set out the items of business requested by Members (if any) in the order in which they have been received, unless the Member concerned has given notice prior to the issue of the agenda, for it to be withdrawn. If the Member concerned is not present at the meeting when an item of which they have given notice comes up for discussion, this item shall, unless the committee decides otherwise, be treated as withdrawn.

7. Access to Information

- 7.1 Access to agenda, reports and associated documents in respect of a meeting of the committee are as determined by Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972 (Access to Meetings and Documents of Certain Authorities, Committees and Sub-Committees).

8. Quorum

- 8.1 No business shall be transacted at any meeting of a committee unless at least half of the Members or substitute members appointed by the constituent councils are present.
- 8.2 If at the time for which a meeting is called, and for 15 minutes thereafter, a quorum is not present, then no meeting shall take place.
- 8.3 If during any meeting of the committee the Chair, after counting the number of Members present, declares that there is not a quorum present, the meeting shall stand adjourned to a time fixed by the Chair. If there is no quorum and the Chair does not fix a time for the reconvened meeting, the meeting shall stand adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of the committee.

9. Order of Business

- 9.1 At every meeting of the committee the order of business shall be to select a person to preside if the Chair or Vice-Chair are absent and thereafter shall be in accordance with the order specified in the agenda for the meeting, except that such order may be varied -
- (a) by the Chair at his/her discretion; or
 - (b) on a request agreed by the committee
- 9.2 The Chair may bring before the committee at their discretion any matter that they consider appropriate to bring before the committee as a matter of urgency.

10. Standing Orders of Debate

- 10.1 The Chair shall decide all questions of order and any ruling by the Chair upon such questions and the interpretation of these Standing Orders of Procedure and upon matters rising in debate shall be final and shall not be open to discussion.

11. Voting

- 11.1 Subject to sub-paragraph 11.6, any matters that are to be decided by the committee are to be decided by a majority of the members present and voting on that matter at a meeting of the committee, such majority to include substitute members, acting in place of members.
- 11.2 Each member appointed according to the provisions in paragraph 1, or a substitute member acting in that member's place, and the Chair, or the Vice-Chair acting in his or her place is to have one vote and no member or substitute member is to have a casting vote.
- 11.3 If a vote is tied on any matter it shall be deemed not to have been carried.
- 11.4 Whenever a vote is taken at meetings it shall be by a show of hands. On the requisition of any member, supported by one other Member who signifies their support, and before the vote is taken, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each Member present gave their vote for or against that question or abstained from voting.
- 11.5 A Member, or Substitute Member acting in that Member's place may demand that his/her vote be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.
- 11.6 A decision on a question relating to a matter that is in the preserve of a specific local authority shall require the support and agreement of that specific authority.

12. Conduct

- 12.2 In the event of general disturbance, which in the opinion of the Chair, renders the due and orderly dispatch of business impossible the Chair, in addition to any other power vested in the Chair may, without question put, adjourn the meeting of the committee for such period as the Chair considers expedient.

10. Disturbance by Members of the Public

13.1 If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings at any meeting of the committee the Chair shall warn him or her. If they continue the interruption the Chair shall order his or her removal from the room. In the case of general disturbance in any part of the room open to the public the Chair shall order that part to be cleared.

11. Notification and Declaration of Interests

Members of the committee shall comply with their respective councils Code of Conduct for Members.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

7
13

Report of Chief Executive

To

Cabinet

On

15 June 2021

Report prepared by: Alison Griffin, Chief Executive

Senior Management Arrangements

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet Member: Leader

Part 1 (Public agenda item) with the exception of Appendix C (confidential and not for publication by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of part 1 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972)

1. Purpose of Report

This report sets out proposals for a reconfigured corporate management team structure.

The Covid-19 pandemic and two upcoming retirements within the Corporate Management Team has given us the opportunity to review this team structure and proposes streamlining some of the corporate services overseen by the Executive Directors. This will create efficiencies and savings within the Senior Management structure but will continue to ensure the delivery of our 2050 ambition and continued recovery.

2. Recommendations

1. That the reconfigured corporate management structure to reduce by one Executive Director from September 2021 and the associated annual saving from April 2022 be noted.
2. That the current Executive Director roles for Legal and Democratic Services and Transformation be deleted and one new Executive Director role (Strategy, Change and Governance) be created.
3. That the outcome of the HR procedures for individual officers are noted and agreed as detailed in Appendix C (Confidential)
4. To note the funding of the one-off payment detailed in Appendix C (Confidential).

5. That the services currently underneath the Executive Director roles for Legal and Democratic services, Transformation and Finance and Resources be realigned to the new post of Executive Director (Strategy, Change and Governance) and Executive Director (Finance and Resources), as set out in Appendix B.
6. That external recruitment is arranged for the vacant Executive Director (Strategy, Change and Governance) post and interim arrangements are put in place whilst the recruitment process is undertaken.
7. The revised Senior Leadership team posts be noted.
8. That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to make further adjustments to the corporate management structure following relevant HR processes.

3. Background and new arrangements

The corporate management structure was reorganised following a cabinet report in July 2019.

The landscape has shifted significantly since then and gives us the opportunity to review how we work and deliver our services going forward and the ability to adapt to ensure we continue to support our 2050 ambition and the recovery required for the organisation following the covid pandemic.

The Council's senior officer structures need to be flexible so that resource and skill flows to where the work and system demands. As a result the structure of corporate management will need to adapt in an iterative way if strong leadership is to be demonstrated, positive change driven, innovation and commercialisation is encouraged, outcomes delivered with partners and risks managed appropriately. Designing the structure so it can adapt in an iterative way is also advantageous in that it makes it more resilient when officers move on.

Appendix A shows the current functions for the Executive Directors (Enabling Services) and Appendix B is the new structure resulting from the deletion of one Executive Director post. It should also be noted that Resilience (Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Planning) will move to the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Growth and Housing, and Registration Services to the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods and Environment.

The Senior Leadership Group also needs to be strengthened in some key areas. Therefore the current role of Assistant Director, Legal Services, will be regraded to Director of Legal Services and the Head of Corporate Finance will be regraded to Director of Financial Services (retaining the Deputy Section 151 Officer role).

The function of Monitoring Officer will move to the Head of Governance Services.

There has been a temporary Director role within Adult Services and this post will now be filled on a permanent basis and titled Director of Adult Services, Operations. This is needed to strengthen the capacity in Adult Social Care as a consequence of Covid-19 and supporting the adults' improvement journey.

In addition, there will be the creation of a new Director role under the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods and Environment entitled the Director of Highways Operations. This role will enable a dedicated resource to focus on the here and now with various Highways and Parking service needs. The current permanent role of Director of Planning will be deleted to fund the new Director of Highways Operations role. Separately an interim two year role for Director of Strategic Planning will be required. This will be necessary to support the delivery of the Local Plan, major strategic regeneration projects and to support the strategic programmes established through ASELA including the delivery of housing and infrastructure.

The Appointments and Disciplinary Committee will be considering the appointment of Andrew Lewis (Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Growth and Housing) as Acting Interim Chief Executive at their meeting on 29 June 2021 where they will also be agreeing the shortlist for the permanent Chief Executive post.

It is important to note that the above changes will not affect the grading structure of the senior management group which will remain as agreed by Council and confirmed in the annual pay policy statement in February 2021.

4. Other Options

No changes are made to the current corporate management arrangements. The risk in this option is that the two Executive Director roles identified continue as currently aligned and do not allow for flexibility to effectively deliver our ambition and meet the changing demands and opportunities that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. The opportunity to make efficiencies and savings will be lost.

The Senior Leadership team would also not be strengthened to support the realigned Executive Director functions and would not enable the flexibility and capacity needed to deliver our ambition.

No changes to the current structure will prevent the potential annual financial savings being achieved from April 2022.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

The recommendations enable the proposals and rationale for the proposals set out in the report to be implemented. The recommendations will ensure, provided the Council is successful in recruitment, to deliver Councillors' priorities and manage corporate services more effectively and efficiently.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Ambition and Road Map

6.2 Financial Implications

1. The permanent reduction of one Executive Director post in the Corporate Management Team will deliver an annual full year saving of circa £150,000 including oncosts and this will feature as a saving as part of the Council's budget setting process for 2022/23.
2. There will be an additional annual payment of £7,500 to be paid to the Head of Governance Services to cover the Monitoring Officer duties and this cost will be offset against the above saving of the Executive Director post.
3. The recruitment to the various permanent and interim posts will be through our corporate recruitment provider and the associated costs arising from the various recruitment and the cost of the interim roles will be funded initially through the 2021/22 in year savings from the Executive Director posts that are being deleted. If there are any additional costs then these will be met by the Business Transformation Reserve.
4. The financial position in respect of the two current Executive Director roles being deleted is set out in Appendix C.
5. The costs of changing some roles to a Director level will be met by the resultant deletion of the former titled posts and the small additional cost for each post moving to a Director level will be met from within the existing budget of the relevant service area. For the new post of Director of Highways Operations this will be funded by transferring the equivalent budget from the deleted permanent post of Director of Planning.
6. The cost of the two year Director of Strategic Planning role will be met through the current Strategic Plan budget and other associated capital schemes.

6.3 Legal Implications

Employment law requires consultation with the officers affected by these proposals. The Officer Employment procedure Rules in Part 4h of the Constitution (which incorporate the provisions of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) Regulations 2001 and 2015) require the appointment of Chief Officers to be dealt with by the Appointments & Disciplinary Committee.

6.4 People Implications

As detailed there will be a change in role for two Executive Director roles and Assistant Director, Legal and Head of Corporate Finance and these will be considered through the HR processes in consultation with the individuals in line with Council policies. Recruitment of the new Executive Director and Director posts will commence. HR processes will take place for the internal Director roles.

6.5 Property Implications

None

6.6 Consultation

Initial conversations have taken place with those staff directly affected by these proposals and the senior leadership group of the Council has been briefed.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

The Council's HR policies that will be used to drive the implementation of these proposals have been subject to a full Equalities analysis.

6.8 Risk Assessment

The new structure of the Corporate Management Team still provides for the relevant statutory roles and the necessary separation of duties to avoid conflicts of interest. The structure is also of sufficient size and resilience to manage and lead the organisation through Covid-19 recovery and to deliver on the Southend 2050 ambition and associated outcomes.

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Current Executive Director Structure (Enabling Services)
Appendix B – New Executive Director Structure (Enabling Services)
Appendix C – Confidential (Part 2)

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**Current Executive Director Structure
(Enabling Services)**

**Executive Director
Finance and Resources
(Section 151 Officer)**

Financial Services (Deputy S151 Officer)
(Including Financial accounting,
Management accounting and
Revenues and Benefits)

Property and Commercial

Internal Audit & Counter Fraud

Procurement

**Executive Director
Legal & Democratic Services
(Monitoring Officer)**

Legal Services
(including Land charges)

Democratic Services
(including Mayoralty)

Resilience
(Emergency Planning & BCP)

**Executive Director
Transformation**

Corporate Strategy
(including Communications)

Customer Services
(including registration)

ICT

HR & Payroll

**New Executive Director Structure
(Enabling Services)**

**Executive Director
Finance and Resources
(Section 151 Officer)**

Financial Services (Deputy S151 Officer)
(Including Financial accounting &
Management accounting)

Property and Commercial

Internal Audit & Counter Fraud

Procurement

Revenues and Benefits

Customer Services
(Including Business Support)

**Executive Director
Strategy, Change and Governance**

Legal Services
(including Land Charges)

Governance Services (Monitoring Officer)
(Including Mayoralty and Information Office)

ICT

Corporate Strategy (including communications)

HR & Payroll

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services)

to

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

on

8 July 2021

Agenda
Item No.

9

Report prepared by: S. Tautz (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

In-Depth Scrutiny Project – ‘How the Council and Councillors Communicate with Local People and Stakeholders.’

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Councillor P Collins
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the draft report of the In-Depth Scrutiny Project undertaken on behalf of the Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the report and recommendations arising from the in-depth scrutiny project, detailed at Section 14 of the report, be agreed.**
- 2.2 **That, in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (Part 4 (e) of the Constitution), the Chair of the Committee present the report and recommendations of the in-depth scrutiny project to a future meeting of the Cabinet.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 July 2019 approved a suggestion for an in-depth study to be undertaken to consider how the Council and councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders (Minute 201 refers).
- 3.2 In the context of the Southend 2050 Vision, the proposed outcomes from the project were to:
- (a) Provide advice and recommendations to support the development of a new engagement portal to replace the current consultation portal.
 - (b) Support the development of a new Participation and Engagement Strategy.
 - (c) Develop recommendations on how the Council/Councillors communicates in both a broadcast and two-way sense.

- 3.3 Progress with regard to the review was achieved in the first half of the 2019/20 municipal year, including the development of an action plan and the receipt of relevant presentations. However, the completion of the project was subsequently delayed from late-2019 as a result of a number of issues including reduced officer capacity in key service areas.
- 3.4 From March 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic also further delayed activity with regard to the completion of the review, reflecting the Council's approach to the handling of the pandemic, including the necessary focus on the delivery of key services and priority activities. As a result, it was not possible for the in-depth review to be completed by the end of the municipal year and the Committee agreed that it be carried forward into the current municipal year.
- 3.5 The Project Team comprised the following members: Councillors M Davidson, S Habermel, C Walker, M Dent, I Shead and P Collins, and former councillors B Ayling and H McDonald. Former Councillor Ayling was appointed Chair of the Project Team in November 2020 and Councillor D Garston attended meetings of the Project Team as chair of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.6 Officer support for the project was provided by Stephen Meah-Sims (Head of Corporate Strategy), Adam Keating (Strategic Communications Manager), Nick Constantine (Service Design Manager), Ellen Butler (Head of Customer Services), Kamil Pachalko (Engagement and Participation Manager), Boglarka Nemeth (Community Capacity Advisor) and Fiona Abbott/Steve Tautz (Project Co-ordinators).
- 3.7 An overview of the evidence considered by the Project Team is set out in the report.
- 3.8 The report of the in-depth scrutiny project will be presented by a member of the Project team or, with the agreement of the Chair of the Committee, by the Head of Corporate Strategy.

4. Scrutiny Review – Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendations arising from the in-depth scrutiny project are set out in Section 14 of the final report. These have been agreed by the Project Team.
- 4.2 There are no specific recommendations arising from the project that have budget implications that require consideration as part of future years' budget processes prior to implementation.
- 4.3 The Committee is recommended to endorse the recommendations of the in-depth scrutiny project, for approval by Cabinet.

5. Other Options

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 Not applicable

7. Corporate Implications

7.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

As described in the report

7.2 Financial Implications

Any recommendations with major financial implications will need to go through the annual budgetary process before implementation.

7.3 Legal Implications

None

7.4 People Implications

None

7.5 Property Implications

None

7.6 Consultation

As described in the report

7.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

None

7.8 Risk Assessment

None

7.9 Value for Money

None

7.10 Community Safety Implications

None

7.11 Environmental Impact

None

8. Background Papers

Notes of meetings of the Project Team.

9. Appendices

Draft Final Report – ‘How the Council and Councillors Communicate With Local People And Stakeholders.’

**Policy & Resources Scrutiny
Committee**

In-Depth Scrutiny Review

DRAFT

DRAFT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Effective communication and engagement arrangements are of vital importance to everything that the Council does.
- 1.2 In the current climate, it is important that our residents, local businesses, partners and other stakeholders are clear on the challenges that the Council faces and its plans to tackle them and, as councillors and officers we all have responsibility for the effectiveness of our communications. Effective communication is not just the role of any one team. Every member of staff and councillor has an important role to play. Each phone call, email or face to face interaction has the ability to shape the perception of the Council, communicate what it is trying to achieve and build relationships with our residents and stakeholders.
- 1.3 Successful communication helps to ensure local people understand the local services available to them, and provides a mechanism to engage, consult and ask for feedback on those services. Communications can also inform residents about local and national issues, shapes the way that people hear about the achievements of the Council, provides a vital role in warning and informing in emergency situations, and much more. Those who feel that they are well-informed about the Council tend to be more positive about the authority on a wide range of issues and are less likely to feel that the Council is remote and impersonal or out of touch with local people and are more likely to feel that the authority offers local people good value for money and provides a good quality of service overall. Good external communication can also have a positive impact on overall satisfaction levels.
- 1.4 Effective internal communication and engagement aims to ensure that the Council's staff are informed, involved, engaged and motivated to achieve its priorities and objectives. Employees are more likely to stay and succeed if they have a clear understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve and how they contribute to this.
- 1.5 We would like to thank all councillors and officers for their contribution to the in-depth scrutiny review.

In-Depth Scrutiny Review Project Team
Councillors M Davidson, S Habermel, C Walker, M Dent, I Shead and P Collins

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Communication is essential to the delivery of the Council's services. It helps keep people informed and supports service take-up, transformation programmes and reputation management, and the delivery of the Council's ambition and priorities. The stakeholders that the Council communicates with, include:
 - Residents and service users
 - Our employees
 - Our elected councillors
 - Partner bodies/organisations
 - Our business community and potential investors
 - Local groups and forums
 - People who help inform and influence the opinion of others
- 2.2 Good communication arrangements enable the Council to:
 - Better understand the needs of the community
 - Raise resident satisfaction, trust and confidence
 - Raise the profile of Southend-on-Sea
 - Attract businesses and employment to the Borough

- Make best use of technology to innovate and engage with hard-to-reach groups such as young people
- Proactively challenge

2.3 The Council's communicates through a wide range of methods, including:

- Face-to-face*
- Email
- Telephone
- Letter
- Website and social media
- Local, regional and national media
- Service information
- Community engagement
- Consultation
- Councillors, though their role as ward representatives
- Staff briefings provided by Corporate Management Team
- Other mechanisms

* Under current Covid-19 pandemic conditions, the ability to interact face-to-face has been significantly reduced.

2.4 Different forms of communication appeal to people of different ages, social groups, and demographics, so it is important that the Council ensures that all options for increasing and improving communication are considered in order to communicate effectively with everyone.

2.5 The Council and councillors value the role of the local media which scrutinises local decision making and services. It is an important communication channel that the council takes a positive and proactive approach too, as it is helpful to the effectiveness of the Council's communications activities and ensuring that residents and stakeholders are aware of the work, services and decisions of the council.

2.6 The Strategic Communications Team is responsible for making official statements to the press or media relating to the functions and business of the Council, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member or chief officer as appropriate, and for dealing with day-to-day press or media enquiries. Southend-on-Sea has an active local media, and will also frequently talk directly to councillors from across the political spectrum to ascertain their views on local matters and council policy for example.

2.7 This in-depth scrutiny project has sought to assess the overall effectiveness of current arrangements, particularly around how the authority and its councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders and facilitate engagement and participation, given the importance of resident engagement as a key priority for the Council.

3. FRAMEWORK OF THE REVIEW

3.1 At its meeting on 11 July 2019, the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee agreed (Minute 201 refers) that an in-depth scrutiny review be undertaken to consider how the Council and councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders, as part of its work programme for 2019/20.

3.2 There were a number of reasons for the identification of the in-depth scrutiny project. These included concern about performance and capacity around call-handling and the communication of relevant information to residents following the cessation of the publication of the former 'Outlook' magazine for residents.

3.3 The Committee agreed that the framework for the review should be:

“How the Council and councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders.”

3.4 The review was subsequently extended to also consider how the Council and councillors facilitated engagement and participation. The scope of the review was to consider:

- How the Council and councillors communicate and engage with local people, stakeholders and each other, and where improvements or changes could be made, to ensure that wherever possible the Council is projecting a professional and consistent tone and message
- The emphasis on co-production, participation and engagement and moving towards becoming a participatory Council that truly listens and acts on the concerns of its residents
- How services are designed to maximise listening and learning
- Engagement and participation
- Effective communication
- Customer Services

3.5 The review was set within the context of the Council's 2050 ambition and priorities and the following proposed outcomes for the project were agreed:

- Advice and recommendations to support the development of a new engagement portal to replace the current consultation portal
- Development of a new Participation and Engagement Strategy
- Recommendations on how the Council/Councillors communicates in both a broadcast and two-way sense

3.6 Progress with regard to the review was achieved in the first half of the 2019-20 municipal year, including the development of an action plan, and the receipt of relevant presentations. However, the completion of the project was subsequently delayed from late-2019, as a result of a number of issues connected to capacity in key service areas.

3.7 From March 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic delayed activity with regard to the completion of the review, reflecting the Council's approach to the handling of the pandemic, including the necessary focus on the delivery of key communication and engagement activity in regard to the local response to the pandemic. In addition, the dedication or redeployment of officer capacity that would have supported the review and the adoption of ongoing remote working and meeting arrangements for councillors and the Council's employees further delayed progress with the project and, as a result, it was not possible for the in-depth review to be completed by the end of the municipal year.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The review was undertaken on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee by a Project Team comprising Councillors M Davidson, S Habermel, C Walker, M Dent, I Shead and P Collins, and former councillors B Ayling and H McDonald. Former Councillor Ayling was appointed Chair of the Project Team in November 2020 and Councillor D Garston regularly attended meetings of the Project Team as chair of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

4.2 The Project Team was supported in its review by a team of relevant officers including S Meah-Sims (Head of Corporate Strategy), A Keating (Strategic Communications Manager), N Constantine (Service Design Manager), E Butler (Head of Customer Services), K Pachalko (Engagement and Participation Manager), B Nemeth (Community Capacity Advisor) and F Abbott/S Tautz (Principal Democratic Services Officers/Project Co-ordinators).

- 4.3 The Project Team met on four occasions between July 2019 and February 2021.
- 4.4 The project was undertaken using an evidence-based approach to the consideration of a range of options, through a mixture of desk top research and informative presentations that supported our understanding of the provision of current communication and engagement activities. As a result of the restrictions imposed by the national and local response, no witness sessions or site visits were held in respect of the project, although third party examples were presented to the group by officers.

5. COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- 5.1 During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Council has communicated and engaged with local communities at an unprecedented level and pace across a wide range of issues. Effective prioritisation has been used throughout the period of the pandemic to plan all communications activity on a campaign-led approach, with the aim of safeguarding and protecting the health and wellbeing of residents, businesses and staff. Where other agencies and partners have led communications activity in support of the handling of the pandemic, the Council has sought to support their work through the sharing of key messages and content.
- 5.2 The Council's corporate communications team has ensured ongoing engagement and communication with citizens and stakeholders throughout the pandemic, on behalf of the Local Outbreak Control Oversight and Engagement Board established to provide oversight, assurance and scrutiny of plans to prevent, contain and manage local outbreaks of COVID-19. A dedicated Coronavirus advice and support page was added to the Council's website in March 2020 and has been maintained throughout the pandemic.
- 5.3 The Project Team was advised that a wide range of communication had been issued during the pandemic, including messages that reinforced the 'Stay at Home' and social distancing approach to COVID-19 taken by the Government, the communication of local service changes and the 'Don't Visit Southend' initiative, alongside regular public health related communication in liaison with the Director of Public Health. Members were reminded that a regular 'councillor briefing' approach had been launched alongside the new Member Support Hub, together with an ongoing programme of business support communications and targeted social media campaigns. Methods of communications have been across the board, ranging from media work and multi-channels campaigns, through to direct communications and engagement in the form of virtual briefings with specific community groups and stakeholders, leaflets delivered directly to residents and the recruitment of 'community connectors' to act as champions and a point of contact in the community.
- 5.4 Although options for the live streaming of more Council meetings to encourage participation in local democracy was already being considered, the response to the pandemic has seen a significant increase in the number of meetings that are webcast through the internet and the Council's website.

6. ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION - 'YOUR SAY SOUTHEND'

- 6.1 It can be easy for the Council to issue communication messages without engaging with stakeholders or listening to what they have to say and involving them in service planning. By offering opportunities for conversation and feedback, the Council can gain better insight into what matters to residents, businesses and partners and develop its services accordingly.
- 6.2 One of the proposed outcomes from the in-depth scrutiny project was to support the development of a new engagement portal to replace the current consultation portal and the

development of a new Participation and Engagement Strategy. At the commencement of our project, we received a number of case studies relating to the implementation of engagement portals by other local authorities, including the 'Bang the Table' platform that has been implemented locally by the Council as ['Your Say Southend'](#).

6.3 During the period of the scrutiny project, the 'Your Say Southend' engagement and consultation platform was launched in November 2020 to provide local residents with an opportunity to participate in discussions and consultations that are ongoing in the Borough. The platform offers residents a way to provide feedback, share ideas and influence decisions that matter to them and to facilitate engagement with individuals that might otherwise be hard to reach and will be used to complement, but not replace, traditional face-to-face methods of engagement and consultation activity. The platform is designed to support the outcomes of engagement and consultation based on the following objectives:

- Informing decisions, providing opportunities for the community to contribute to decision-making processes
- Building capacity, educating the community on a specific theme or issue to increase knowledge or change behaviours
- Strengthening relationships, building new relationships and/or improving relationships with the community.

6.4 A presentation on the 'Your Say Southend' platform was provided for all councillors in November 2020. The platform can be used to facilitate any form of local engagement, not just formal types of consultation exercise, through the use of tools to gather ideas, create forums and mapping. The platform has been used to gather stories of neighbour to neighbour and volunteer support during the COVID-19 pandemic and these stories have been reflected back to the public through the Council's social media channels, to nurture confidence and pride among the residents. It is important that local residents tell the Council about the issues, the positives and negatives on the subjects that it consults on, to help formulate inclusive improvements, projects and policies for the Borough.

6.5 The 'Your Say Southend' platform requires minimum data (username, password, email address) to be provided by residents in order for them to register for the submission of consultation responses etc, which allows the tracking of demographic data to ensure that responses to consultations etc. are representative of the local population and that conversations are kept respectful. Support is available to assist members of the public in this regard and the 'guestbook' functionality of the website enables residents to submit comments without having to formally register.

6.6 The 'Your Say Southend' engagement and consultation platform also helps the Council to:

- Establish and share good practice
- Use resources effectively
- Maximise the use of consultation findings
- Co-ordinate effort
- Avoid duplication

6.7 The ['Good Neighbours'](#) project has also shown how the Council can encourage and facilitate citizen participation by sharing best practice ideas without unnecessary bureaucracy or the formalising of helping activity. A ['Community Connectors'](#) programme has also been developed in conjunction with Southend Association of Voluntary Services and other partner organisations, to help communicate or signpost local people to facts and support about the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we have also recognised the importance of local councillors as community leaders.

- 6.8 Project owners are also encouraged to use other interactive tools as to gather ideas and stories and a number of small-scale engagement groups have been developed in liaison with the Public Health Team.
- 6.9 We consider that the continued development of the 'Your Say Southend' engagement and consultation platform should be supported.

7. MEMBER SUPPORT HUB & COUNCILLOR QUERIES

- 7.1 The primary role of our elected councillors is to represent their ward and its residents to provide a bridge between the community and the Council. As well as being an advocate for local residents and signposting them to the right people at the Council, councillors need to keep them informed about the issues that affect them, respond to queries and investigate concerns. The Member Support Hub was established as a step towards strengthening this area.
- 7.2 The Hub was introduced in 2020 following a review of the existing provision of member support services within the Democratic Services and Corporate Strategy Teams, in advance of a review of business support services and functions across the authority that is to be undertaken during 2021.
- 7.3 The services and responsibilities of the Member Support Hub currently include:
- Contributing towards the co-ordination of general councillor queries and casework
 - The provision of diary management for the Leader and Cabinet Members and the handling of Leader's mail
 - The handling of enquiries and queries from Members of Parliament
 - Member briefings
 - Contributing towards Member's communication
 - The co-ordination of Member training and development
 - Co-ordination of business for the Executive Briefing with CMT
- 7.4 The intention for the Hub was to start it with a focus on a small range of areas, but ultimately offering support to all councillors. This has been gradually progressing with communications and co-ordination around Member training and development, and the general coordination for Councillor Queries
- 7.5 As part of the Councillor Queries work, we have learned that multiple routes to raise queries have created some confusion and frustration amongst councillors and officers alike, who want the system to clear, simple, respectful and speedy for everyone concerned. The current experiences are connected to 'legacy' systems and processes associated with previous structures and teams.
- 7.6 Work is ongoing to improve the 'Councillor Queries' process, taking onboard the current feedback from all councillors and officers. There is a need to ensure that the experience that councillors have through this process, right now, has signs of improvement, whilst a longer term, sustainable solution if found, that works with the resources available.
- 7.7 We consider that the ongoing work to further develop the 'Councillor Queries' facility should be supported.

8. SELF-SERVICE - 'MY SOUTHEND'

- 8.1 Self-service facilities offer residents a convenient way of managing their Council services, reporting issues and contacting the authority with service requests or comments, without

having to wait in a phone queue or navigate websites. The Council has introduced the 'My Southend' platform as its interactive self-service portal for residents.

8.2 We have been advised that feedback in respect of the 'My Southend' platform indicates that the facility is generally working well. A specification for the letting of a new contract for the platform is currently being developed and will incorporate experience and learning from the use of the system to date. We understand that there will be member involvement in this process going forward.

8.3 The Project Team considers that it would be helpful if there were greater levels of 'status' indicators applied to issues reported through 'My Southend', to give increased transparency to the progress of issues raised by residents and service users. We understand that this approach will be dependent upon the integration of the platform with service-based management systems but that this will be considered as part of the development of the specification for the letting of a new contract for the platform.

9. CUSTOMER SERVICES

9.1 One of the reasons for the identification of the in-depth scrutiny project was concern about performance and capacity around call-handling. We have received and reviewed relevant call-handling performance data as part of the in-depth scrutiny project, for the key areas of:

- General Enquiries.
- Council Tax.
- Benefits.
- Switchboard.

9.2 The most recent performance information that we reviewed as part of the project was for the three-month period from November 2020 to January 2021.

9.3 Depending on the nature of an enquiry, the Council has set response targets for staff to achieve. These focus on how quickly calls are answered and how many customers end their call before it is connected (abandoned calls). A current measure of success is how many calls are answered, which shows how consistently Customer Services perform. For November and December 2020, the percentage of answered calls in each of the service areas identified in Paragraph 9.2 above was better than the current target of 80%. Unfortunately, for January 2021 the percentage of answered calls in the General Enquiries, Council Tax and Benefits service areas was below target, as a result of significant capacity issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

9.4 A second measure of customer experience is assessed by the percentage of 'abandoned' calls (where the caller hung up while in the waiting queue) made to the Council. For November and December 2020, the percentage of abandoned calls in each of the service areas identified in Paragraph 9.2 was better than the target of 10%. Unfortunately, for January 2021 the percentage of abandoned calls in the General Enquiries service area was below target, also as a result of the capacity issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

9.5 The highest call volumes during the period from November 2021 to January 2021 were for General Enquires. On average, customers waited less than five minutes for calls to the Benefits service area to be answered during January 2021, and less than four minutes for calls to the General Enquiries and Council Tax service areas and the average wait time for Switchboard calls to be answered during this period was less than one minute. We have been advised that steps have been taken to increase current officer capacity in the service areas where performance was below target in January 2021.

- 9.6 We believe that arrangements for the management of call queues and the length of wait time should be investigated, alongside the identification of 'repeat' calls where a previous call has been abandoned by the customer, as the telephony system does not currently provide such data.
- 9.7 The Project Team has considered whether further steps should be taken to improve call handling performance and reduce abandoned calls through the review of current performance targets. However, we understand that high levels of customer satisfaction are currently regarded as a better measure of success in this area and that the speed of answer of calls made to the Council, is regarded an outdated measure of performance.
- 9.8 Current call handling performance has generally been above target during the period of the project and is considered to be acceptable, as no complaints have been received in this regard. The further improvement of current call handling performance would require the identification of dedicated resources and we believe that it would therefore be preferable to continue the Council's channel-shift focus on moving contact away from the telephone towards online activity wherever possible, in response to changing customer demands and expectations, and to free up resources to give staff time to deal with more complex enquiries.
- 9.9 As part of our project, some members have identified the importance of the internal telephone directory as a means of identifying contact information for officers of the Council. Improvements to the internal telephone directory were most recently implemented in advance of an upgrade of the telephony system, alongside the introduction of a facility for officers to 'self-update' their respective directory data. The directory is also updated when officers join, leave or move within the authority. ICT also conduct a quarterly comparison with data held in Microsoft Outlook to either update or provide the detail for telephone directory updates where discrepancies are identified. Although any internal directory entry that appears to be incorrect or does not have the information that members require, can also be reported to worklife@southend.gov.uk so that the entry can be updated as required, we consider that steps should also be taken to ensure that the contact telephone numbers and email addresses of all employees, especially new employees, are entered into the internal directory as soon as employment commences.
- 9.10 The Project Team has been advised that contact details for officers are also available through the Microsoft Teams platform that the Council has utilised widely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that Teams can be easily used to contact officers and that support in the use of the platform is available for members.
- 9.11 The Project Team was advised that call-handling technology proved problematic during the initial COVID-19 lockdown period, particularly around remote working, where domestic broadband capability had proved to be slower than at the Civic Centre. We have noted that, whilst such issues have generally now been resolved, real-time call handling data is currently only available for officers working from the Civic Centre and that an analysis of call traffic is to be undertaken.
- 9.12 The COVID-19 pandemic placed significant challenges on the Registration Service, as some services could not be provided remotely. Although some customer service staff are now working from the Civic Centre once again, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the number of birth registration appointments had to be limited, although in situations where birth registration was urgent or was nearing the legal timescale for completion, arrangements were in place for this to be undertaken.
- 9.13 The Project Team suggested that it was not always easy to find information on the Council's website or intranet using the respective search facilities, particularly in respect of details relating to meetings of committees etc., although it is already possible to search for information using generic search criteria related to services. As a result of this feedback, a

number of improvements to the search function on the website have now been implemented by ensuring that a search for 'meetings' for example takes a user straight to the Modern.Gov democracy system, which manages publicly available information related to democratic functions (councillors, committees and meetings etc.).

- 9.14 The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that they are a way in which residents can let the authority know their concerns. Anyone who lives, works or studies in the Borough (including under 18's) can sign or organise a petition. We have considered whether there is any reluctance on the part of the public to use the Council's on-line petition system, as anecdotal evidence appears to suggest that people are sometimes reluctant to 'register' on the Council's website to start a new petition or to provide a 'signature' in support of an existing petition. We have been reminded however that it is important that safeguards are in place to protect against any abuse of petitions through the uncontrolled acceptance of 'signatures'.

10. SOCIAL NETWORKS

- 10.1 The way we communicate as a society has continued to change as the media landscape shifts from traditional media to social and digital media, and the Council needs to ensure that its communications adapt to reach stakeholders. This includes supporting residents to do things digitally, as well as continuing to reach those who aren't online
- 10.2 Social media is a quick and easy way to get in touch or stay up to date and most local authorities have comprehensive cover across social media channels. The use of social media in local government has increased rapidly over recent years as organisations have seen the benefits of engaging with residents and customers through social media channels.
- 10.3 The Council uses Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and other social media networks to reach out to local communities. Several of the Council's service areas such as culture and tourism also have their own social media (Facebook and Twitter) accounts. The Council's main corporate social media channels are monitored by the Corporate Communications Team. The corporate Twitter and Facebook accounts comprise of:
- Council news and events.
 - Updates and promotions of the Council's services, decisions and policies.
- 10.4 These feeds will also often share information from relevant partner organisations or other council accounts run by other teams.
- 10.5 Social media networks can be very useful in communicating information about councillors' activities well as providing links to sources of information or signposting to other organisations. We consider that it is important that members of the Council should be able to use social media as a tool to share information with people and groups in their communities and to engage residents in productive two-way conversation.
- 10.6 Social media can be a useful way of finding out what people are talking about locally, and their concerns and interests. It can also be useful for finding out about breaking news and news from the Council and is a good way of making residents more aware of the work that their councillors do. Councillors are an advocate for local residents and signposting them to the right people and services at the Council and its partners, councillors also need to keep them informed about decisions and issues that affect them.

11. RESIDENT INFORMATION

- 11.1 Another of the reasons for the identification of the in-depth scrutiny project included concern about the ongoing communication of relevant information to residents following the previous

cessation of the publication of the 'Outlook' magazine for residents that was produced on a quarterly basis and distributed to all households in the borough, as well as being available at libraries etc.

- 11.2 As a result of budget pressures, the publication and distribution of 'Outlook' was ceased from 2016/17 in favour of other forms of targeted communication including on-line and other forms of social media already available to the Council, to keep residents informed about services.
- 11.3 We understand that it is not intended that the publication of 'Outlook' magazine be reinstated but have been advised that some relevant Council information that was previously contained in the publication, would be included as a separate information booklet insert with the Council Tax bills for 2021/22. The booklet features an introduction from the Chief Executive and includes information about the following:
- Councillor information (link to the Council's website).
 - Service information (contact details for specific service areas).
 - Recycling and waste services.
 - 'My Southend' (for reporting local issues).
 - Southend Adult Community College.
 - Southend Pass.
- 11.4 The booklet for 2021/22 necessarily also includes a significant amount of information about the COVID-19 advice and support that is available from the Council and its partners, including:
- Southend Coronavirus Action (for help whilst self-isolating).
 - How to treat coronavirus symptoms at home.
 - COVID-19 testing.
 - Mental health support (contact details for specific service providers).
 - Financial hardship (information on specific support services).
- 11.5 We have been very impressed with the form and content of the information booklet produced for inclusion with the Council Tax bills for 2021/22 and consider that this approach to the provision of a range of relevant information from the authority and its partners should be continued for 2022/23 and future years. We recognise however that there are limitations on the amount of information that can be included in the booklet, in order to keep this within the budget for the distribution of the Council Tax bills and that the timeframe for the compilation of the booklet needs to meet the demands of the annual Council Tax billing process.
- 11.6 We have considered whether the information booklet included with the Council Tax bills this year could also incorporate a brief a single statement from each of the political and non-political groups that comprise the Council. However, we understand that the Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity, which provides guidance on the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity, does not generally permit the use of public funds for the promotion of political parties.
- 11.7 An e-communication system was launched in 2019 to enable local residents and anyone else to sign-up to receive news updates from the Council by email. This system currently has nearly 16,000 subscribers who are signed up for a range of bulletins ranging from general news to weekly planning applications. The council's Communications Team is working with various service areas to maximise the use of this system, with a number of teams such as early years and South Essex Homes using it to communicate with their key stakeholders.

12. COUNCILLOR-OFFICER COMMUNICATIONS

- 12.1 Effective communication between councillors and officers is essential if the partnership necessary for the effective running of the Council is to be successful. Councillors and officers are indispensable to one another and respect and communication between both is essential for good local government. Together, they bring the critical skills, experience and knowledge required to manage an effective council. Mutual respect, trust and good communication are key to establishing good councillor and officer relations, and councillors and officers must be able to communicate clearly and openly, avoiding ambiguity and the risk of misunderstanding.
- 12.2 A new Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations was adopted by the Council in December 2020, to improve the effective working relations between councillors and officers. An action plan to help embed the new Protocol and enhance positive working relations was also agreed as part of the new Protocol.
- 12.3 The Project Team considers that it is important that councillors should always feel able to identify any areas in which they could help to improve the Council's communications activities, or how officers can support councillors to communicate and engage with residents effectively and suggest that improved councillor-officer communication arrangements should be linked to the delivery of the action plan for the new Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations. We also consider that the appropriate use of Facebook and other social media platforms by councillors as a means of engaging successfully with their communities, should be part of this work.

13. PROFESSIONAL AND CONSISTENT TONE AND MESSAGE

- 13.1 We believe that the Council should communicate in a simple, straightforward and consistent way, to project a positive, engaging and professional image to local residents and partners through a consistent style, although we recognise that the tone of communications will often need to be adapted for relevant situations.
- 13.2 We appreciate for example that legal communications or committee etc. reports must often take a formal tone and structure but consider that use of the 'wrong' tone or jargon, can have a negative effect on how well communication is received, as the recipient may react negatively. We feel that there have been some examples of correspondence issued by the Council that could be construed as being threatening in tone and consider that, where it is necessary to issue 'negative' correspondence (i.e., relating to the refusal of something), this should be gracious and understanding in tone, rather than imposing. Additionally, we believe that correspondence should express sympathy and be caring and friendly where relevant, without being patronising to the recipient. We want to make sure that the tone of communications and correspondence is positive, whilst avoiding being officious or over-authoritative. A consistent tone is also important to ensure that internal and external stakeholders have the right perception of the Council.
- 13.3 However, we do recognise that some types 'standard' correspondence (particularly some of that used by the Council Tax Section) currently in use across service areas needs to set out a factual position which unfortunately residents and councillors do not always like to hear. We have been reminded that the Council has a duty to collect Council Tax and must comply with the law in terms of collection and recovery action and how this is communicated to residents.
- 13.4 We consider that greater use should be made by the Council of the Plain English Campaign's 'Crystal Mark' accreditation for the clarity of documents, which we believe is the only internationally recognised accreditation for organisations that want to provide the clearest possible information. Although the Council is listed on the website of the Plain English

Campaign as an organisation that currently has a Crystal Mark on one or more of its documents, no information appears to be available to indicate the number of the Council's documents that currently have Crystal Mark accreditation. We consider that it would therefore be appropriate for a full review to be made of 'standard' letter and email type correspondence currently in use across service areas.

- 13.5 The Project Team considers that the Council does not always bring together all the information that it holds about residents or service users to deliver seamless services, and that residents are too often requested to re-supply information that has already been provided to another service area. We consider that, particularly in the case of the local elderly population, that this can often be confusing for people.
- 13.6 Although we fully recognise and support the principles of current data protection legislation to protect the processing of the personal data of our residents and service users, we believe that thorough investigation should be made of opportunities for increased data sharing across the authority, to change and improve how we work with people to better reflect the 'bigger picture' and the emotional intelligence that might be possessed by the Council to help meet customer needs and expectations. We fully understand that this work would not be able to be undertaken on a purely service-specific basis and that a corporate commitment would be required in view of the significant number of different systems and process in use across the Council.
- 13.7 We believe that increased data sharing wherever possible, would also go some way towards addressing our concerns with regard to the use of a professional and consistent tone as part of the Council's communications and have been advised that appropriate benchmarking by the Corporate Strategy Group with other similar local authorities, could be an appropriate first stage in this process.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 We consider that the review was undertaken within the context of the Council's 2050 ambition and priorities and that, whilst allowing for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the proposed outcomes for the project have been achieved, albeit in a different context to that originally established in July 2019 when the scope of the project was determined.
- 14.2 We recommend the following:

COVID-19 Pandemic

- (a) That the efforts of the Council in engaging with local communities across a wide range of issues during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, be recognised.

Engagement & Consultation – 'Your Say Southend'

- (b) That the continued development of the 'Your Say Southend' engagement and consultation platform that provides local residents with an opportunity to participate in discussions and consultation exercises, be supported.

Member Support Hub & Councillor Queries

- (c) That the establishment of the Member Support Hub to provide dedicated support for councillors to communicate and engage with residents effectively be welcomed, and that the continued development of the facilities offered by the Hub be supported.
- (d) That work to further develop the 'Councillor Queries' facility, that provides a direct contact route for councillors to raise queries with regard to their community casework

activities, be supported. This includes a recommendation to put Councillor Queries forward as a future In-Depth Scrutiny Project, to be developed rapidly as a co-designed councillor/officer improvement project.

Customer Services

- (e) That appropriate steps be taken to ensure that the contact telephone numbers and email addresses of all officers of the Council, especially new employees, are added to the internal telephone directory as soon as possible.
- (f) That councillors be encouraged to provide details of any specific search enquiries that have proved problematic in terms of identifying information on the Council's website or intranet.

Social Networks

- (g) That an approach be developed for the use of social media by councillors as a tool to share information with people and groups in their communities and to engage residents in productive two-way conversation.
- (h) That councillors identify any areas in which they could help to improve the Council's communications activities, or how officers can support councillors to communicate and engage with residents effectively, particularly through the appropriate use of Facebook groups and other social media platforms by councillors as a means of engaging successfully with their communities.

Resident Information

- (i) That the information booklet produced for inclusion with the Council Tax bills for 2021/22 be welcomed and that this approach to the provision of relevant Council and partner information be continued for 2022/23 and future years.
- (j) That the Corporate Communications Team continue to work with service areas to expand the number of e-newsletters to help those service areas communicate effectively with their target audiences.

Councillor-Officer Communications

- (k) That the enhancement of councillor-officer communications be included as part of the action plan for the new Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations that was adopted in December 2020.

Professional and Consistent Tone and Message

- (l) That investigation be made of opportunities for increased data sharing across the authority to support the provision of seamless services, including appropriate benchmarking with other similar local authorities.
- (m) That a review be undertaken of relevant 'standard' correspondence currently in use across the Council's service areas to ensure the consistent use of a clear and concise style and tone that demonstrates respect for residents and other stakeholders.
- (n) That consideration be given to the identification of opportunities to increase the number of the Council's documents that currently have Crystal Mark accreditation, to ensure that the authority communicates clearly in all relevant situations.

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Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

10

Report of Executive Director
(Legal & Democratic Services)

to

Place, People and Policy & Resources Scrutiny
Committees

On 5th, 6th and 8th July 2021

Report prepared by: S. Tautz (Principal Democratic Services
Officer)

In-Depth Scrutiny Projects and Summary of Work 2020/21 A Part 1 Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For the Committee to consider progress with regard to the in-depth scrutiny projects undertaken during the 2020/21 municipal year and to consider a possible joint approach to in-depth scrutiny activity for 2021/22.
- 1.2 The report also provides information about the work carried out by each of the scrutiny committees during the previous year.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That progress with regard to the in-depth scrutiny projects undertaken during the 2020/21 municipal year, be noted.
- 2.2 That, subject to the concurrence of the other scrutiny committees, a single in-depth scrutiny project around the 'Councillor Queries' process be undertaken on behalf of the three scrutiny committees during the 2021/22 municipal year.
- 2.3 That no other topic(s) be selected by the Committee for additional in-depth review during 2021/22.
- 2.4 That the Committee note the summary of the scrutiny work undertaken during 2020/21.

3. In-Depth Scrutiny Projects – Background

- 3.1 As councillors will be aware, each of the scrutiny committees has traditionally undertaken an in-depth scrutiny project each year. The in-depth projects are selected at the beginning of each municipal year and generally focus on the Council's corporate priorities or matters of local concern. Recent in-depth scrutiny projects have also been aligned with the ambition and outcomes arising from the Southend 2050 programme. A list of the in-depth scrutiny projects previously undertaken by the scrutiny committees is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.2 The in-depth scrutiny projects lead to the development of reports and recommendations which advise the Executive and the Council on its policies, budget provision and service delivery. The delivery of each project is driven through a member Programme Working Party (Project Team), supported by

relevant officers. Participation in the in-depth projects enable councillors to be actively involved in a particular topic and to influence and shape proposals around service improvement that will result in benefits/outcomes.

- 3.3 The undertaking of the annual in-depth scrutiny projects is not a statutory requirement and is derived from the power set out in Section 9(c) (Policy Review and Development) of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules at Part 4(e) of the Council's Constitution, which provides that the scrutiny committees may hold enquiries and investigate options for future direction in policy development.

4. In-Depth Scrutiny Projects 2020/21 – Progress

- 4.1 The following in-depth scrutiny projects have been completed during the last year:

People Scrutiny Committee

'The appropriate use of reablement for older people (65 and over) when discharged from hospital, to maximise the number of people at home after period of ninety-one days.'

Place Scrutiny Committee

'To review the level of domestic waste recycling in the Borough, in order to examine what influences residents in terms of their recycling habits and what the barriers are to achieving a higher rate of recycling and to consider ways of working with residents to improve domestic waste recycling.'

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

'How the Council and councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders and facilitate engagement and participation'.

- 4.2 The report and recommendations arising from the completion of the in-depth scrutiny project for the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee is included elsewhere in the agenda for this meeting. The report and recommendations arising from the completion of the in-depth scrutiny project for the Place Scrutiny Committee for 202/21, will be reported to the meeting of that Committee to be held on 5 July 2021. The report of the in-depth scrutiny project for the People Scrutiny Committee was considered by that Committee at its meeting on 24 November 2020 and the recommendations arising from the project were agreed by the Cabinet on 14 January 2021.
- 4.3 The Committee is requested to note progress with regard to its in-depth scrutiny project undertaken during the 2020/21 municipal year.

5. In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2021/22

- 5.1 At this meeting, the Committee would normally agree the nature of the in-depth scrutiny project that it wishes to undertake during the municipal year. As already indicated, the undertaking of the annual in-depth scrutiny projects is not a statutory requirement and is based on local practice over a number of years.

- 5.2 Since March 2020, the impact of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has required the Council to focus its effort and resources on the delivery of priority activities and services, which has included the ongoing dedication and/or redeployment of resources and capacity that would normally support in-depth scrutiny projects, towards the delivery of key services for local residents. Partly as a result of the response to the pandemic, the in-depth scrutiny projects for 2020/21 took longer than usual to complete.
- 5.3 The undertaking of the in-depth scrutiny projects in the traditional way can be resource intensive. Each Programme Working Party (Project Team) must be fully supported throughout the scoping, delivery and progress reporting of the project and appropriate specialist capacity is often required to facilitate aspects of projects. In addition, it has regularly been necessary to arrange and undertake appropriate site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, and commission research etc. to inform the delivery of projects.
- 5.4 As a consequence of the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to also focus on local recovery priorities going forward, the traditional approach to the undertaking of broad in-depth scrutiny projects might not be the best use of resources and capacity in the short-term. It is important that this type of scrutiny activity recognises the level of resources and capacity available, and it may not necessarily be appropriate during the continuing response to the pandemic for scrutiny projects to consider service changes or improvements in isolation.
- 5.5 The Committee might therefore wish to consider whether the use of in-depth scrutiny projects should be paused in favour of a dedicated focus on the review of relevant business issues that help councillors to carry out their role and support the Council through recovery from the challenges presented by the pandemic, whilst also allowing local economic recovery to continue to be driven by the delivery of key schemes. A single in-depth joint scrutiny project could be undertaken for 2021/22, involving each of the scrutiny committees, focussed on matters of importance to councillors.
- 5.6 Joint in-depth scrutiny projects have previously been conducted by the scrutiny committees on a number of occasions. In 2016/17, a joint project was undertaken by the Policy and Resources and Place Scrutiny Committees, to investigate whether there was a need for additional enforcement resources for Southend. A joint project was also undertaken during 2018/19, also by the Policy and Resources and Place Scrutiny Committees, looking at the re-imagining the town centre in the context of the vision for Southend 2050.
- 5.7 An issue that has been identified as an important priority by a number of members and which could constitute a possible focus for joint scrutiny activity this year, is the 'Councillor Queries' arrangement for the handling of enquiries and questions that councillors raise with officers of the Council. The Councillor Queries process has generated a mixed experience for councillors since its introduction, and some members have raised concerns about the way it works and enables them to deliver their democratic mandate to their electorate. This could therefore form the basis for a focussed form of scrutiny project that could be led by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on behalf of each of the scrutiny committees. This approach could also build on the work undertaken as

part of the in-depth scrutiny project for the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee over the last year.

- 5.8 It is anticipated that such scrutiny activity, possibly with a shorter reporting timeframe than has normally been adopted for the formal in-depth scrutiny projects, would be relevant to all members of the Council, particularly as this could also inform the work that is already ongoing to improve the Councillor Queries process through the action plan for the new Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations adopted in 2020. All councillors would have an opportunity to contribute to the scrutiny project.
- 5.9 The undertaking of a joint scrutiny project as described above would enable scrutiny activity to be coordinated and directed towards an area of key importance to members, without the need to dedicate resources and capacity to separate projects. This would therefore have advantages in terms of a reduced and beneficial impact on other work to support local COVID-19 recovery and the delivery of key schemes, than would be case if separate projects were to be undertaken.
- 5.10 This possible joint in-depth scrutiny activity for 2021/22 has been informally discussed with the chairs of each of the scrutiny committees. If the nature of such joint project is agreed by the scrutiny committees, further consideration will be given to the scope of the project and the development of an appropriate action plan for agreement at the next cycle of meetings. The scoping of the proposed joint scrutiny project will also need to consider how this activity could be undertaken and delivered by the Programme Working Parties, for which member appointments were made by the Council at its meeting on 20 May 2021 (Appendix 2).
- 5.11 It is therefore recommended that a single in-depth scrutiny project around the Councillor Queries process be undertaken on behalf of all three scrutiny committees during 2021/22 and that, in light of the proposed scrutiny project and the Council's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, no additional topic(s) be selected by the Committee for in-depth review during the year.

6. Work Undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees 2020/21

- 6.1 A summary of the work undertaken by each of the scrutiny committees during the 2020/21 municipal year is attached at Appendix 3.
- 6.2 The Committee is requested to note the summary of the work it has undertaken during 2020/21.

7. Corporate Implications

Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

Becoming an excellent and high performing organisation.

Financial Implications

There are costs associated with organising in-depth projects relating to officer time, but this will all be contained within existing resources.

Legal Implications

None

People Implications

None.

Property Implications

None

Consultation

As described in report.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

None

Risk Assessment

None

8. Background Papers

None

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Previous In-Depth Scrutiny Projects

Appendix 2 - Membership of Programme Working Parties for 2021/22

Appendix 3 - Summary of work of the Scrutiny Committees for 2020/21

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In-Depth Scrutiny Projects

Since 2000, the Council has undertaken a range of annual in-depth scrutiny projects. The following projects have been carried out since 2013/14.

People Scrutiny Committee

- The appropriate use of reablement for older people (65 and over) when discharged from hospital, to maximize the number of people at home after period of 91 days (2019/20-2020/21).
- In context of vision for Southend 2050, what is the vision for young people which improves their lives and what are the pathways to achieve this ambition (2018/19).
- Connecting communities to avoid isolation (2017/18).
- Alternative provision – off site education provision for children and young people (2016/17).
- Transition arrangements from children to adult life (2015/16).
- How the Council assists and excites individuals and community groups to achieve healthier lifestyles (2014/15).
- Southend primary schools' falling grammar school entry figures (2013/14).

Place Scrutiny Committee

- To review the level of domestic waste recycling in the Borough, in order to examine what influences residents in terms of their recycling habits and the barriers to achieving a higher rate of recycling and to consider ways of working with residents to improve domestic waste recycling (2019/20-2020/21).
- Maximizing the use of technology (2017/18).
- 20mph speed limits in residential streets (2015/16).
- Understanding erosion taking place on the foreshore (2014/15).
- Promoting a positive image for the town (2013/14).

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

- How the Council and councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders (2019/20-2020/21).

- Additional enforcement resources for Southend (2017/18).
- Control of personal debt and the advantages of employment (2015/16).
- The Council's community leadership role in promoting safer communities (2014/15).
- Impact of welfare changes (2013/14).

Joint Scrutiny Projects

- Re-imagining the town centre in the context of the vision for Southend 2050 (Place Scrutiny Committee/Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee) (2018/19).
- To investigate the case for additional enforcement resources for Southend (Place Scrutiny Committee/Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee) (2016/17).

**POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY PROGRAMME WORKING PARTY
(PROJECT TEAM)**

(NB: Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee members only)

Party	Members	Total 8	Substitutes
CON	Jack Warren Steve Habermel Steve Buckley David McGlone	4	All
LAB	Matt Dent Stephen George	2	All (Except Cabinet Members)
IND	Ian Shead	1	All (Except Cabinet Members)
LD	Ashley Thompson	1	All (Except Cabinet Members)

PLACE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME WORKING PARTY
 (PROJECT TEAM)
 (NB: Place Scrutiny Committee members only)

Party	Members	Total 8	Substitutes
CON	Fay Evans Nigel Folkard Chris Walker Steve Buckley	4	All
LAB	Kay Mitchell Kevin Robinson	2	All (Except Cabinet Members)
IND	Steve Wakefield	1	All (Except Cabinet Members)
LD	Peter Wexham	1	All (Except Cabinet Members)

**PEOPLE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME WORKING PARTY
(PROJECT TEAM)**

(NB: People Scrutiny Committee members only)

Party	Members	Total 8	Substitutes
CON	Alan Dear Denis Garne Brian Beggs John Lamb	4	All (Except Cabinet Members)
LAB	Aston Line Tricia Cowdrey	2	All (Except Cabinet Members)
IND	TBA	1	All (Except Cabinet Members)
LD	Beth Hooper	1	All (Except Cabinet Members)

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POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Work Programme 2020/21 - Evaluation

During the 2020/21 municipal year, the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held **9** meetings and met on the following dates: 11 June 2021 (Special Meeting), 9 July 2020, 22 July 2020 (Special Meeting), 3 September 2020, 15 October 2020, 26 November 2020, 4 February 2021 and 17 March 2021. All meetings of the Committee were held remotely via the Microsoft Teams platform, in accordance with Part 2 of the Coronavirus Regulations 2020 and the Supplementary Procedure Rules adopted by the Council.

During the year, the Committee undertook the following scrutiny work:

Call-In/References from Cabinet

The Committee considered **17** reports that were called-in from the Cabinet or referred directly by the Cabinet for scrutiny. No items were called-in from the Forward Plan. During the year the draft General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget for 2021/22 to 2025/26 was referred directly to each of the scrutiny committees for review, as was the annual Comments, Complaints and Compliments report for 2019/20. The Council's COVID-19 response, associated recovery plans and the impact of the pandemic on its Medium-Term Financial Strategy for the period to 2024/25, were also referred directly to each of the scrutiny committees.

An update on the work of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Council in 2018, to work collectively with other local authorities to progress the economic agenda for the region, was referred directly to the Committee by the Cabinet (Minute 182 refers).

The Committee **referred 4 items** to the Council for consideration.

The Committee **referred no items** back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

Pre-Cabinet Items

The Committee considered **no** pre-Cabinet items during the year.

Scheduled Items (each meeting as appropriate)

A total of **6** questions from members of the public were responded to by the relevant Cabinet Member.

In-Depth Scrutiny Project

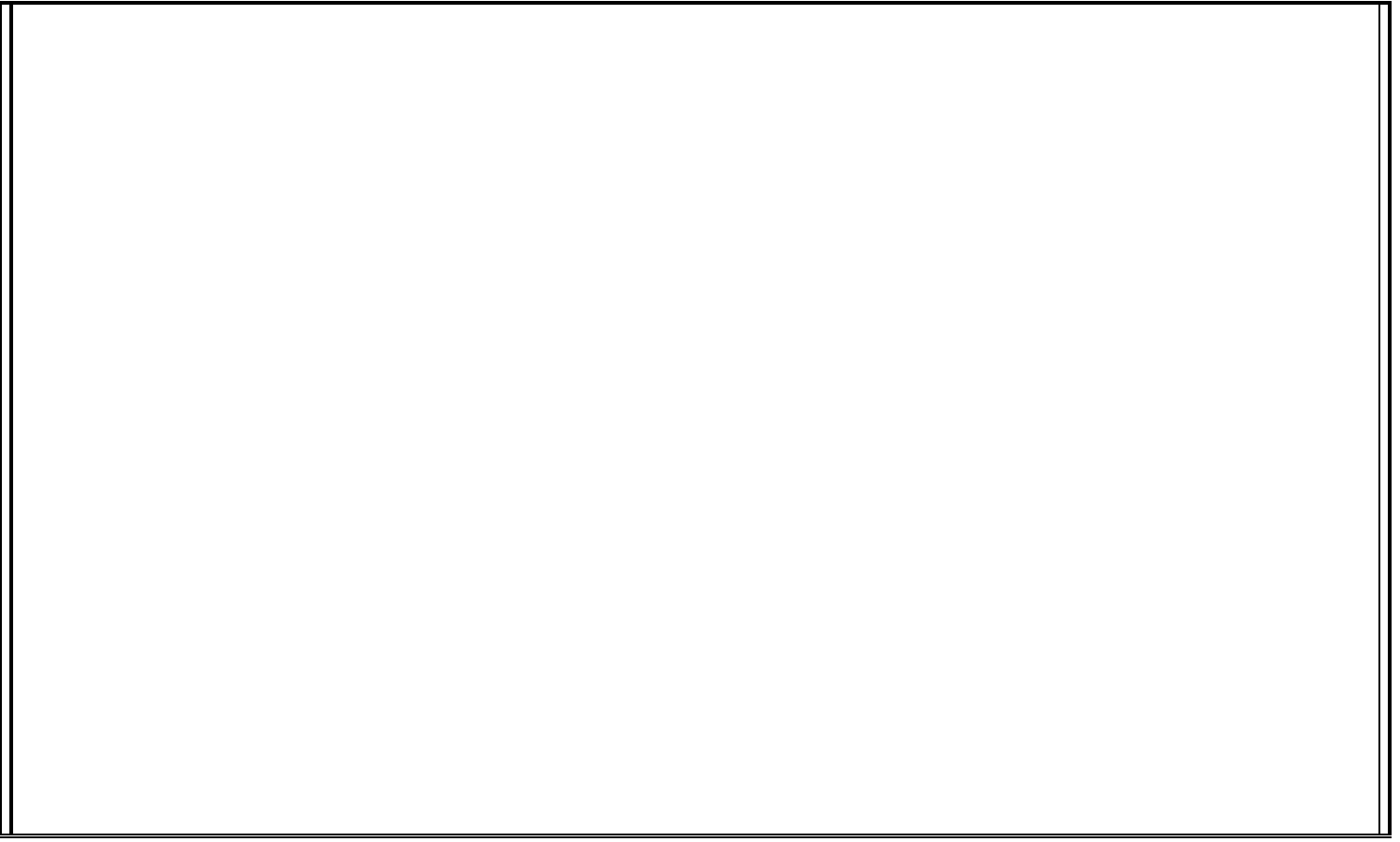
'How the Council and councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders and facilitate engagement and participation'.

The project was agreed at the meeting of the Committee on 11 July 2019 (Minute 201 refers) and a project plan was agreed at the meeting on 10 October 2019 (Minute 411 refers). The completion of the in-depth scrutiny project was carried forward into the 2020/21 municipal year as a result of reduced officer capacity and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. No further topics were selected by the Scrutiny Committee for additional in-depth review during 2020/21.

The report and recommendations arising from the completion of the in-depth scrutiny project will be considered at the first cycle of meetings for 2021/22 and subsequently by the Cabinet.

Presentations/Other Matters Considered

None



By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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