

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 15th March, 2023
Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor D Garston (Chair)
Councillors B Beggs*, M Borton, D Cowan, H Boyd, T Cox, F Evans,
K Evans, A Jones, A Line, R McMullan, J Moyies*, M Sadza, C Walker and
P Wexham

*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

In Attendance: Councillors P Collins, S George, I Gilbert and C Mulroney (Cabinet
Members), S Brown, J Chesterton, G Halksworth, M Harry and S Tautz

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 8.35 pm

768 Chair's Introduction & Apologies for Absence

(a) Chair's Introduction

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

(b) Appointment of Vice-Chair

With the agreement of the Committee, Councillor F Evans was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.

(c) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Cowdrey (Substitute: Councillor R Woodley), Councillor M Davidson (Substitute: Councillor J Moyies), Councillor D Nelson (Vice-Chair) (Substitute: Councillor B Beggs), Councillor I Shead (no substitute) and Councillor R Woodley (no substitute).

769 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

(a) Councillors P Collins, S George, I Gilbert and C Mulroney (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 (Chair) - Minute 774 (Housing and Pipeline Update) - Member of the Development Control Committee, proposed development opportunities mentioned in the report.

(c) Councillor M Borton - Minute 774 (Housing and Pipeline Update) - Member of the Board of Directors of South Essex Homes.

(d) Councillor K Evans - Minute 774 (Housing and Pipeline Update) - Benefactor of the Salvation Army, who are in partnership with the Council to deliver new homes.

(e) Councillor A Jones - Minute 778 (Minutes of the meeting of the Senior Managers Pay Panel held on 17 January 2023) - Family member employed by the Council, all current paygrades mentioned in the report.

(f) Councillor M Sadza - Minute 774 (Housing and Pipeline Update) - Member of the ACORN renters union.

(g) Councillor P Wexham - Minute 774 (Housing and Pipeline Update) - Member of the Board of Directors of South Essex Homes.

(h) J Chesterton (Executive Director (Finance and Resources)) - Minute 778 (Minutes of the meeting of the Senior Managers Pay Panel held on 17 January 2023) - Senior Manager of the Council.

770 Questions from Members of the Public

The Committee noted the responses of the Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery, Regeneration and Housing and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Matters and Performance Delivery, to questions presented by Mr David Webb.

771 Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 February 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 February 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

772 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and Action Plan

The Committee considered Minute 715 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 February 2023, which had been called-in for scrutiny, together with a report of the Chief Executive presenting the findings and recommendations of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge that had taken place during October 2022.

Resolved:

That the matter be referred back to the Cabinet with a recommendation that wider member involvement be secured in the development of the action plan to address the recommendations arising from the Peer Challenge and that, if required, Group Leaders jointly seek an extension to the deadline for the adoption of the action plan from the Local Government Association.

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor S George

773 Treasury Management Report - Quarter Three 2022/23

The Committee considered Minute 717 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 February 2023, which had been called-in for scrutiny, together with a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the Council's treasury management activity for the third quarter of 2022/23 and the period from April to December 2022.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

"1. That the quarter three treasury management report for 2022/23, be approved.

2. That it be noted that the treasury management activities were carried out in accordance with the CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Sector during the period from April to December 2022.
3. That it be noted that the loan and investment portfolios were actively managed to minimise cost and maximise interest earned, whilst maintaining a low level of risk.
4. That it be noted that £2.395m of interest and income distributions for all investments were earned during this nine-month period at an average rate of 1.92%. This is 0.18% over the average SONIA rate (Sterling Overnight Index Average) and 0.12% over the average bank rate. Also, the value of the externally managed funds decreased by a net of £6.983 due to changes in the unit price, giving a combined overall return of -3.67%.
5. That it be noted that the level of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) (excluding debt relating to services transferred from Essex County Council on 1st April 1998) remained at £347.3 (Housing Revenue Account (HRA); £74.2m, General Fund: £273.1m) during the period from April to December 2022 at an average rate of 3.46%.
6. That it be noted that the level of financing for 'invest to save' capital schemes decreased from £8.39m to 8.30m during the period from April to December 2022."

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor P Collins

774 Housing and Pipeline Update

The Committee considered Minute 721 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 February 2023, which had been called-in for scrutiny, together with a report of the Executive Director (Growth and Housing) presenting an update on the work of the Housing Pipeline to date and details of future housing development opportunities across the City.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery, Regeneration and Housing undertook to provide a written assurance to all members of the Committee that any proposals for the development of the Hamlet Court Road, the Cattery and Civic 2 sites arising from feasibility, cost planning and design work carried out as part of the Housing Pipeline programme, would be subject of a detailed report to be made to the Cabinet.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

- "1. That the progress made on the Housing Pipeline to date, be noted.
2. That the Council undertakes due diligence regarding the potential allocation of capital funds for Afghan and Ukrainian resettlement purposes from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) and that authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) and the Executive Director (Growth and Housing), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery, Regeneration and Housing, to reach agreement about any bid decisions and to pursue actions set out in the submitted report.
3. That the use of both Denton Avenue site and Bradford Bury garage site for the development of Passizhaus pilot projects utilising existing Section 106 funds and Right to Buy funds, be approved.
4. That the next steps for the Housing Pipeline set out below, be approved:

- The development of a revolving investment fund to deliver the pipeline opportunities. The investment fund would work alongside other financing sources to deliver housing pipeline projects.
- Sale of the Thorpedene Campus site via auction to secure full, quick capital receipt and mitigate holding and demolition costs, with the capital receipt ringfenced to help fund future Housing Pipeline development opportunities.
- Sale of the Shorefield Gardens site via auction to secure a full, quick capital receipt with the capital receipt to be ringfenced to help fund future Housing Pipeline development opportunities.
- Use existing funds or funds received from site sales for detailed feasibility works, cost planning and design works for the Hamlet Court Road, the Cattery and Civic 2 sites.”

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

775 SO46 Report

The Committee considered Minute 725 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 February 2023, which had been called in for scrutiny, concerning action 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 SO46 report, be noted.”

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor P Collins

776 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 (SO46 Report - Confidential Matters), 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.

777 SO46 Report - Confidential Matters

The Committee considered confidential matters in relation to Minute 775 above. The Committee moved into Part 2 business in order that the confidential matters concerning the action taken by Executive Director (Finance and Resources) in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 46 could be discussed. The Committee moved back into Part 1 for the decision on these matters and the remaining items of business.

778 Minutes of the meeting of the Senior Managers Pay Panel held 17 January 2023

The Committee considered Minute 726 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 February 2023, which had been called in for scrutiny, concerning the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Senior Managers Pay Panel held 17 January 2023.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That a pay award of £1925 per annum be applied to the Council’s senior management grades for 2022/23.

2. That 1 day’s additional annual leave be given to all senior management grades with effect from 1 April 2023.”

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor S George

779 In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2022/23 - ‘Developing Strong Governance & Strengthening Joint Working between all Councillors and Officers’

The Committee received an update on progress with regard to the in-depth scrutiny project for 2022/23.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function

Chair: _____