

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 13th October, 2022

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor D Garston (Chair)
Councillors D Nelson (Vice-Chair), M Borton, H Boyd, D Cowan,
T Cowdrey, T Cox*, M Davidson, F Evans, A Jones, A Line, R McMullan,
M Sadza, C Walker and P Wexham

*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

In Attendance: Councillors S George, P Collins, I Gilbert, C Mulroney, M Terry and S
Wakefield (Cabinet Members), Councillor K Evans
J Chesterton, S Meah-Sims, A Richards, O Richards and S Tautz

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 9.10 pm

358 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Lamb (Substitute: Councillor T Cox), Councillor I Shead (no substitute) and Councillor M Stafford (no substitute).

359 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

- (a) Councillors S George, P Collins, I Gilbert, C Mulroney, M Terry and S Wakefield (Cabinet Members) - Interest in the referred items, attended pursuant to the dispensation agreed at Council on 19 July 2012, under S.33 of the Localism Act 2011.
- (b) Councillor H Boyd - Minute 364 (Draft Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2022) - Local private sector landlord of property within Southend-on-Sea.
- (c) Councillor F Evans - Minute 364 (Draft Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2022) - Local private sector landlord of property within Southend-on-Sea.
- (d) Councillor A Jones - Minute 362 (Resourcing Better Outcomes – Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2022/23 – Period 4) - Family member employed on a temporary contract by the Council.
- (e) Councillor R McMullan - Minute 364 (Draft Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2022) - Local private sector landlord of property within Southend-on-Sea.
- (f) Councillor M Sadza - Minute 364 (Draft Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2022) - Member of the ACORN community union.
- (g) Councillor S Wakefield (Cabinet Member) - Minute 364 (Draft Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2022) - Local private sector landlord of property within Southend-on-Sea.

360 Questions from Members of the Public

The Committee noted a provisional response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Matters and Performance Delivery to a question presented by David Webb, as it had not been possible for the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) to prioritise resources in order to prepare a response to the question in time for the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Matters and Performance Delivery indicated that a full response to the question would be sent to Mr Webb and soon as possible and that the response would also be circulated to all members of the Committee.

361 Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 September 2022

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

362 Resourcing Better Outcomes – Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2022/23 – Period 4

The Committee considered Minute 314 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 September 2022, which had been referred directly to each of the scrutiny committees, together with a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) reviewing the Council's financial performance.

The relevant Cabinet Members undertook to provide written responses to questions raised by members of the Committee, with regard to:

- The make-up of the interim/agency/fixed term/temporary consultancy expenditure by the Council currently estimated to be over £10m in 2021/22.
- The cost of the recruitment of permanent officers to establishment positions, compared with the cost of the engagement of interim/agency staff to temporarily fill such positions.
- The Council's arrangements for the refurbishment and re-use of redundant ICT equipment, to support the delivery of ICT savings.
- The effect on service provision of the nationally agreed increase in annual leave entitlement for local government officers.

Resolved:

That the following recommendations of the Cabinet be noted:

"That, in respect of the 2022/23 Revenue Budget Performance as set out in appendix 1 to the submitted report:

1. That the forecast outturn for 2022/23 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at 31 July 2022, be noted.
2. That the management action taken and to be taken to reduce the forecast overspend of the Council's revenue budget for 2022/23, be noted.
3. That the transfer of £500,000 from HRA reserves to support the increase in repairs and maintenance costs, be approved.
4. That the planned budget transfers (virements) of £2,327,766 from earmarked reserves, as set out in the report, be approved.

That, in respect of the 2022/23 Capital Budget Performance as set out in appendix 2 of this report:

5. That the expenditure to date and the forecast outturn as at 31 July 2022 and its financing, be noted.

6. That the requested changes to the capital investment programme for 2022/23 and future years, as set out in section 4 of appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

7. That the Corporate Performance Report as at 31 July 2022 set out in appendix 3 to the report, be noted.”

Note: This is a Council Function

Cabinet Members: Councillors S George and P Collins

363 City Council Corporate Branding Refresh

The Committee considered Minute 316 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 September 2022, which had been referred directly to the Committee for scrutiny, together with a report of the Executive Director (Strategy, Change and Governance) presenting the final options for the refresh of the Council’s corporate brand.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Matters and Performance Delivery undertook to provide a written response to questions raised by members of the Committee, with regard to:

- The scope of user access testing requirements for the implementation of the Council’s new corporate brand across its digital platforms, for which a cost of £1,600 was reported at the meeting.
- The need for the further budget provision of £2,500 allocated for legal advice to be provided on copyright, intellectual property and trademarking in respect of the new corporate brand.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That the results and comments from the public engagement exercise be noted and that the favoured concept (‘Shell’ concept) be developed and implemented as the Council’s new corporate logo and branding.

2. That authority be delegated to officers to carry out the development and implementation work required, along with the creation of full branding guidelines.”

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillor S George

364 Draft Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2022

The Committee considered Minute 317 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 September 2022, which had been referred directly to the Committee for scrutiny, together with a report of the Interim Executive Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment) presenting the draft Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy for public consultation.

In response to questions from members of the Committee, the Cabinet Member for Public Protection confirmed that he would be willing to consider the revision of Section 4.2 (Situations Where a Service May Not be Provided) of the draft enforcement policy to address concerns raised by councillors and to provide additional clarity within the enforcement policy in relation to its application to Small Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That the draft Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2022, set out at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved for a 6-week public consultation.

2. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment), in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Economic Recovery, Regeneration and Housing and Public Protection to make amendments to the Policy, following the consultation should it be required.

3. That the finalised Enforcement Policy (post consultation) be presented to Cabinet on 12 January 2023.”

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillors I Gilbert and M Terry

365 Procurement Options for The Stray Dog Service

The Committee considered Minute 320 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 September 2022, which had been referred directly to the Committee for scrutiny, together with a report of the Interim Executive Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment) setting out options for the procurement of the Council’s stray dog service.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That the contents of the submitted report be noted.

2. That the feasibility of South Essex Property (SEPS) providing the Acceptance Point element of the service proposed under option 5 as detailed in the report (paragraph 4.5 refers), be explored and that subject to the outcome of satisfactory negotiations, authorised the Executive Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment) to make a direct award of this service to SEPS. The kennelling service to be then put out to tender.

3. That in the event a direct award is not made to SEPS, then the service (Acceptance Point/Kennelling) be put out to tender on the basis of options 3 and 4 as detailed in the report (paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 refers).”

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillor M Terry

366 Treasury Management Report – Quarter One 2022/23

The Committee considered Minute 324 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 September 2022, which had been referred directly to the Committee for scrutiny, together with a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the Treasury Management Report for covering treasury management activity for the period from April to June 2022 and compliance with the treasury management strategy for the period.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That the Treasury Management Report for Quarter One 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 June 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 £0.592m of interest and income distributions for all investments were earned during this three-month period at an average rate of 1.36%. This is 0.47% over the SONIA rate (Sterling Overnight Index Average) and 0.41% over the average bank rate. Also the value of the externally managed funds increased by a net of £0.916m due to changes in the unit price, giving a combined overall return of 3.46%.

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 £347.3m (HRA: £74.2m, GF: £273.1m) during the period from April to June 2022.

6. That it be noted that during the quarter the level of financing for ‘invest to save’ schemes decreased from £8.39m to £8.38m.”

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

367 Minutes of the Meeting of Economic Recovery, Regeneration & Housing Working Party held on Monday 5th September 2022

The Committee considered Minute 325 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 September 2022, which had been referred directly to the Committee for scrutiny, together with the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Economic Recovery, Regeneration and Housing Working Party held on 5 September 2022.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That the Notice of Motion seeking the declaration of a cost-of-living emergency in Southend-on-Sea be noted.

2. That a cost-of-living emergency be declared in Southend-on-Sea.

3. That the recommendations set out within the Notice of Motion be reviewed in line with the Council’s budget principles already agreed, the most significant being the financial implications of response to the cost-of-living emergency.

4. That the proposed approach to the response to the cost-of-living emergency, alongside the tackling poverty workstream and wider strategic work to prevent duplication and improve consistency, be approved.

5. That the Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery, Regeneration and Housing be designated as the member champion for the response to the cost-of-living emergency.

6. That the Economic Recovery, Regeneration and Housing Working Party act as the multi-agency partnership task and finish group to deliver the response to the cost-of-living emergency, and that representation on the Working Party also include Group Leaders,

Cabinet Members and relevant partners and stakeholders, in order to pool resources and maximise the impact of this work.

7. That a co-produced action plan be developed as part of the response to the cost-of-living emergency, with clear lines of reporting and accountability to focus activity and prioritise tasks.

8. That the response to the cost-of-living emergency seeks to improve access to support services, making them easier to access for all who need them, with particular focus on inclusivity.

9. That the response to the cost-of-living emergency considers the impact of the crisis on mental health and ensures that work activity takes account of this element of wellbeing.”

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

368 SO46 Report

The Committee considered Minute 326 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 September 2022, which had been referred directly to the relevant scrutiny committee, together with a report setting out 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 submitted report be noted.”

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: As appropriate to the item

369 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.

It was reported that an initial meeting of the Project Team for the in-depth scrutiny project had recently been held, to identify the scope of the project and to develop an achievable project plan and work programme for the remainder of the year. The Committee was advised that Councillor T Cowdrey had been appointed as Chair of the Project Team.

Resolved:

That the project plan and work programme for the in-depth scrutiny project be agreed.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function

Chair: _____