

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

**Digest of the Decisions of Cabinet
held on Monday, 20th November, 2023
Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite**

Present: Councillor T Cox (Chair)
Councillors M Davidson (Vice-Chair), H Boyd, J Courtenay,
D Garston, D Jarvis, J Lamb, J Moyies and D Nelson

In Attendance: Councillors D Cowan and L Hyde
M Marks, C Gamble, M Harvey, A Keating, A Richards, K Sawyer,
C Shuter, R Tinlin and K Waters

Start/End Time: 7.00 - 7.35 pm

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Buck.

2 Declarations of Interest

The following declaration of interest was made:

(a) Councillor D Garston – Minute 62 (Crowstone Conservation Area Appraisal and Article 4 Direction) – A close friend lives in the proposed Conservation Area.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 18 September 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 18 September 2023, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4 Minutes of the Special Meeting held on Tuesday, 31 October 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the special meeting held Tuesday, 31 October 2023, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

5 Southend City Council Corporate Plan 2023-27

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the refreshed Corporate Plan 2023-2027.

On behalf of the Cabinet, the Leader of the Council conveyed his thanks and appreciation to both Councillors and officers for their contribution towards the production of an excellent Plan.

Recommendation:

That the Council be recommended to approve the draft Corporate Plan 2023-27, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report and that any final changes prior to publication be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Reasons for recommendation:

To ensure that the Council has a robust strategic plan which clearly articulates the priorities for the organisation enabling efficient use of resources.

Other options:

There is no requirement to have a Corporate Plan, but it is best practice and provides a helpful narrative to set the direction for the work.

Note: This is a Council Function

Not eligible for call-in as the matter has been subject to pre-Cabinet Scrutiny by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

Cabinet Member: Cllr Cox

6 Resourcing Better Outcomes - Financial Performance Report For September 2023 (Period 6)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance & Resources) summarising the current forecast position at this half-way point of the financial year and reinforcing the need to make some difficult choices and take decisive action.

Resolved:

1. That the continued unprecedented levels of reported financial pressure and challenges right across the local government sector, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be noted.

In respect of the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Performance, as set out in appendix 2 to the report:

2. That the forecast outturn for 2023/24 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at 30 September 2023, be noted.

3. That the plans and intentions to try to reduce the forecast overspend of the Council's revenue budget for 2023/24, be noted and that the Chief Executive and Executive Director (Finance & Resources) continue to explore all opportunities within their delegated powers and authority to improve the financial position by the year-end.

In respect of the 2023/24 Capital Budget Performance as set out in appendix 3 of this report:

4. That the expenditure to date and the forecast outturn as at 30 September 2023 and its financing, be noted.

5. That the requested changes to the capital investment programme for 2023/24 and future years, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.
6. That the Corporate Performance Report as at 30 September 2023, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report, be noted.
7. That the planned budget transfers (virements) of £2,710,000 from earmarked reserves, as set out in the report, be approved.
8. That a Working Group be established on a political proportionate basis to consider budget proposals for 2024/25 and future years, with nominations from Group Leaders to be notified to the Chief Executive.

Recommended:

9. That the removal of the footbridge over the Queensway highway be approved and the relevant budget be included in the Capital Investment Programme, as set out in paragraph 7.17 and Section 4 of Appendix 3 to the report, with the funding for this project coming from borrowing and that it be noted that the construction of the road layout included in the planning permission or any other major changes to the road layout will require a further Cabinet report before progressing.

Reasons for Decisions

To provide detailed financial information on the financial performance of the Council. The report sets out the key variances by budget holders and associated management action being implemented to address the identified issues.

Other Options

The Council could choose to monitor its budgetary performance against an alternative timeframe, but it is considered that the current reporting schedule provides the appropriate balance to allow strategic oversight of the budget by Councillors and to also formally manage the Council's exposure to financial risk.

Note: The decisions in resolutions 1 to 8 above constitute an Executive function and the recommendation in 9 above constitutes a Council function.

This matter is not eligible for call-in.

Cabinet Member: Cllr Cox

7 Treasury Management Report - Mid Year (2023/24)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the mid-year Treasury Management Report covering the treasury management activity for the period from April to September 2023 and compliance with the treasury management strategy for that period.

Resolved:

1. That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Position report for 2023/24, 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 September 2023.

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 £3.130m of interest and income distributions for all investments were earned during this six-month period at an average rate of 4.41%. This is 0.32% lower than the average SONIA rate (Sterling Overnight Index Average) and 0.39% lower than the average bank rate. Also, the value of the externally managed funds decreased by a net of £0.561m due to changes in the unit price, giving a combined overall return of 3.62%.

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 (Housing Revenue Account (HRA): £74.2m, General Fund: £273.1m) during the period from April to September 2023 at an average rate of 3.46%.

6. That it be noted that the level of financing for 'invest to save' schemes decreased from £8.22m to £8.13m during the period from April to September 2023.

Reasons for Decisions

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management recommends that Local Authorities should submit reports regularly. The Treasury Management Policy Statement for 2023/24 set out that reports would be submitted to Cabinet quarterly on the activities of the treasury management operation.

Other Options

There are many options available for the operation of the Treasury Management function, with varying degrees of risk associated with them. The Treasury Management Policy aims to effectively control risk to within a prudent level, whilst providing optimum performance consistent with that level of risk.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Not eligible for call-in as the matter has been the subject of pre-Cabinet scrutiny by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

Cabinet Member: Cllr Cox

8 Crowstone Conservation Area Appraisal and Article 4 Direction

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Environment and Place) presenting an updated Conservation Area Appraisal for the Crowstone Conservation Area for consideration.

Resolved:

1. That the adoption of the updated Conservation Area Appraisal for Crowstone Conservation Area, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved.

2. That public consultation take place on the Article 4 Direction proposed for the Crowstone Conservation Area and that a subsequent decision on confirmation of the Article 4 Direction be delegated to the Executive Director (Environment and Place), in consultation with the Executive Councillors for Arts, Culture, Heritage & Leisure and Housing and Planning.

Reasons for decision:

The Crowstone Conservation Area has been appraised as part of this work, to provide up to date evidence on the area and any issues affecting it. Public consultation was undertaken on a draft appraisal as part of preparing the current document. The appraisal provides an up to date management plan to help guide appropriate and sympathetic change within the area and highlight opportunities to enhance the character and appearance.

Other options:

Not to adopt the Crowstone Conservation Area Appraisal and take forward the Article 4 Direction. This would be contrary to the recommendations within the Appraisal, produced by independent heritage experts Purcell.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Not eligible for call-in as the matter has been subject to pre-Cabinet Scrutiny.

Cabinet Members: Cllr Jarvis and Cllr Garston.

9 Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses Conservation Area Designation

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Environment and Place) presenting a potential new Conservation Area for designation at Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses for consideration.

Resolved:

1. That the Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses be designated as a Conservation Area.

2. That the adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal for Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses and the addition of the properties within it to the Local List, be approved.

3. That public consultation take place on the Article 4 Direction proposed for the Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses and that a subsequent decision on confirmation of the Article 4 Direction be delegated to the Executive Director (Environment and Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillors for Arts, Culture, Heritage & Leisure and Housing and Planning.

Reasons for decision:

The proposed Chelmsford Avenue Almshouses Conservation Area has been appraised to provide up to date evidence on the area and make recommendations regarding designation. There have been two stages of public consultation during this process. The appraisal provides up to date management plans to help guide appropriate and sympathetic change within the area and highlight opportunities to enhance its character and appearance.

Other options:

Not to adopt the Conservation Area appraisal and take forward the Article 4 direction. This would be contrary to the recommendations of the Conservation Area Appraisal, produced by independent heritage experts Purcell.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Not eligible for call-in as the matter has been subject to pre-Cabinet Scrutiny.

Cabinet Members: Cllr Jarvis and Cllr Garston.

10 Healthy Lifestyles Improvement

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Children and Public Health seeking approval for the re-procurement of the Healthy Lifestyles services for a new contract in September 2024.

Resolved:

That the Healthy Lifestyles services go out to tender via the standard competitive procurement process to put in place a new service by 1st September 2024 at a contract value of £650,020 per annum for a maximum period of 5 years.

Reasons for decision:

If this decision was not approved, the contract would expire without replacement, likely leading to existing provider staff redundancies, and there would be a significant gap in necessary provision. The Council may not meet statutory duties and obligations regarding Public Health.

Other options:

Do nothing. This option was not recommended, as the Council would likely not meet statutory duties and obligations regarding Public Health, the contract would expire without replacement, likely leading to existing provider staff redundancies, and there would be a significant gap in necessary provision.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Not eligible for call-in as the matter has been subject to pre-Cabinet Scrutiny by the People Scrutiny Committee.

Cabinet Member: Cllr Moyies

11 Notices of Motion referred by Council held on Thursday 7th September and Thursday 19th October 2023

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Environment and Place) concerning the Notice of Motions referred to it by Council at its meetings on 7th September and 19th October 2023. These related to:

- Securing a future for Southend United Football Club
- Rail Ticket Office closures
- Enhancing practices on Animal Welfare
- Belfairs Park
- Sheltered Accommodation Heating and Energy Efficiency Improvements
- Urban Trees
- Southend Council Financial Situation

Resolved:

Notice of Motion – Securing a future for Southend United Football Club

1. That, as this matter has now been superseded given that a buyer is progressing with the purchase of the club, the Notice of Motion be noted and no further action be taken at this time.

Notice of Motion – Rail Ticket Office Closures

2. That, as the Government has asked train operators to withdraw their proposals the Notice of Motion be noted and no further action be taken at this time.

Notice of Motion – Enhancing Council Practices on Animal Welfare

3. That the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Working Party for consideration.

Notice of Motion – Belfairs Park

4. That the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Working Party for consideration.

Notice of Motion - Sheltered Accommodation Heating and Energy Efficiency Improvements

5. That the Notice of Motion be referred to the Housing and Planning Working Party for consideration.

Notice of Motion – Urban Trees

6. That the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Working Party for consideration.

Notice of Motion – Southend Council Financial Situation

7. That the Leaders of all the Groups write to the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Secretary of State of Local Government concerning the financial position facing local Councils.

Reasons for decisions:

To respond to the Notices of Motion.

Other options:

None.

Note: This is an Executive Function

This matter is not eligible for call-in.

Cabinet Members: Cllr Cox, Cllr Buck, Cllr Davidson, Cllr John Lamb and Cllr Garston

12 Recommendation of Traffic Regulation Working Party from its meeting held on 26th October 2023

The Cabinet considered the recommendation from the Traffic Regulation Working Party held on 26th October 2023 concerning the criteria for determining applications for Controlled Parking Zones/Schemes.

Resolved:

That the recommendation to review the criteria for determining applications for Controlled Parking Zones/Schemes to enable each scheme to be determined on its own merits rather than on safety priority order, be approved.

Note: This is an Executive Function

This matter is not eligible for call-in.

Cabinet Member: Cllr Buck