

## **SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL**

### **Meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: Thursday, 5th October, 2023**

**Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite**

**Present:** Councillor S Wakefield (Chair)  
Councillors L Burton (Vice-Chair), B Beggs, M Borton, S Buckley,  
O Cartey, C Campbell, D Cowan, T Cowdrey, F Evans, N Folkard,  
S George, I Gilbert, J Harland, R McMullan, C Mulroney and  
J Warren

\*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

**In Attendance:** Councillors H Boyd, K Buck, T Cox, M Davidson, D Garston, J Lamb  
and D Jarvis (Cabinet Members)  
C Shuter and S Cox

**Start/End Time:** 6.50 - 8.35 pm

#### **34 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) Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Dent (Substitute: Councillor D Cowan), Councillor M Sadza (Substitute: Councillor I Gilbert), Councillor C Walker (Substitute: Councillor C Campbell) and Councillor P Wexham (Substitute: Councillor C Mulroney).

#### **35 Declarations of Interest**

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

- (a) Councillor M Borton – non-pecuniary interest, Minute 37 – Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end of July 2023 (Period 4) – as the report made reference to EPUT, daughter is employed at Basildon Mental Health Unit.
- (b) Councillors M Borton, N Folkard, D Garston (Cabinet Member), C Mulroney – non-pecuniary interest, Minute 37 – Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end of July 2023 (Period 4) – as the report made reference to concessionary travel fares and they held a concessionary bus pass.
- (c) Councillor N Folkard – non-pecuniary interest, Minute 37 – Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end of July 2023 (Period 4) – as the report referenced fusion leisure and he was a daily user of the swimming pool at Garon's Park.

## **36 Questions from Members of the Public**

There were no questions from members of the public relating to business included in the agenda for the meeting.

## **37 Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end of July 2023 (Period 4)**

The Committee considered Agenda Item 7 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18 September 2023, 'Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end of July 2023 (Period 4)', Cabinet Minute No.36 refers. The report of the Executive Director (Finance & Resources) had been called-in and referred to the Policy and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Finance and Corporate Performance report set out the current operating environment and the significant increases experienced in both service demand and the ongoing unavoidable inflationary cost pressures, summarised the current forecast position and highlighted the need to make some difficult choices and take decisive action.

A brief discussion took place on tree net gain in the City, following which the Leader explained that in future he would request that any figures be reported in terms of tree canopy change rather than tree net gain.

The Leader confirmed that he would ensure a written response was provided to the Committee in relation to point 8.8, the average length of pre-proceedings for the Public Law Outline (PLO) in order to provide clarification on the above target of 14 by 4.7 due to late expert assessments.

It was highlighted that the Legal Services team had significant problems with permanent recruitment and as a result expenditure on agency staff to cover vacant roles was forecast to cause a pressure of £120,000.

The Leader reported that it would be clarified outside of the meeting how long the transition of Mental Health services was expected to take.

In relation to the quarterly snapshot of families with children in Bed and Breakfast for over 6 weeks, the Leader confirmed a written answer would be provided to the Committee to advise how many were out of area placements.

Resolved:

That the following recommendations of the Cabinet (1-3) be noted:

1. That the unprecedented levels of reported financial pressure and challenges right across the local government sector as set out at Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be noted.
2. That, in respect of the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Performance as set out in Appendix 2 to the submitted report:
  - (i) The forecast outturn for 2023/24 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at 31 July 2023, be noted.
  - (ii) 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) be requested to explore all opportunities within their delegated powers and authority to

- improve the financial position by the year-end as set out in section 5 of the submitted report.
- (iii) The planned budget transfers (virements) of £308,600 from earmarked reserves, as set out in section 5.50 of the submitted report, be approved.
3. That, in respect of the 2023/24 Capital Budget Performance as set out in Appendix 3 of the submitted report:
- (i) The expenditure to date and the forecast outturn as at 31 July 2023 and its financing, be noted.
  - (ii) The Corporate Performance Report as at 31 July 2023 set out in Appendix 4 of the submitted report, be noted.

That the following recommendation to Council be noted:

- 4. That the requested changes to the capital investment programme for 2023/24 and future years, as set out in section 4 of Appendix 3 of the submitted report, be approved.

Note: Recommendations 1-3 are an Executive Function. Recommendation 4 is a Council function.

Cabinet Member: Councillor T Cox

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_