

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Date: Monday, 16th December, 2024

Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor I Gilbert (Chair)
Councillors Sam Allen, M Borton, C Campbell, J Courtenay, T Cox,
M Faulkner-Hatt, N Folkard, D Garston, R Longstaff, R McMullan,
J Moyies, C Nevin and C Webster

(*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 30.)

In Attendance: Councillors D Cowan (Leader of the Council), Councillor P Collins, K
Robinson and L Hyde (Cabinet Members)
A Richards, C Thomas, L Delahunty, R Lumley and S Cox
P Bates (online)

Start/End Time: 7.00 - 10.10 pm

36 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 I Ferguson (substitute: Councillor C Nevin), Councillor K Murphy (no substitute), Councillor S Wakefield (no substitute) and Councillor N Ward (substitute: no substitute).

37 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

- a) Councillor I Gilbert, Minute 42 (Local Government Finance Policy Statement Headlines) – employed by a Member of Parliament (MP).
- b) Councillor T Cox, Minute 44 (Fossetts Farm) – season ticket holder of Southend United Football Club.

38 Questions from Members of the Public

The Committee noted the response of the Cabinet Member for Community Safety to a question presented by Mr Webb. The response was presented by the Leader of the Council in the absence of the Cabinet Member.

39 Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 30th September 2024

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 30th September 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

40 Councillor ICT Policy

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director (Strategy & Change), by way of pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, that sought approval for a Councillor ICT Policy.

Resolved:

That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillor D Cowan (Leader of the Council).

41 Civic Pride Action Plan

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director (Environment & Place), by way of pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, that set out the civic pride action plan.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Leader of the Council, suggestions from Scrutiny for consideration going forward included:

- To use plain English in future reports (in reference to outtakes).
- Request to extend City Jam beyond Southend High Street and into areas such as Westcliff and Leigh.
- To engage as many youth groups as possible, including the Youth Council, Children in Care Council and Young Carers Groups, in activities with the City's younger residents to develop effective citizenship.
- In relation to the objective 'caring with a good quality of life for all' to include rough sleepers as part of this work.
- To engage with faith communities to foster inclusivity.
- The possibility of incorporating St David's day as part of the celebrations.

Councillor C Campbell proposed a recommendation to ensure that rough sleepers were included under the objective 'caring with a good quality of life for all.' This was seconded by Councillor T Cox and unanimously agreed by the Committee.

Resolved:

1. That rough sleepers be included under the objective of 'caring with a good quality of life for all' in the Civic Pride Action Plan.
2. That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillor D Cowan (Leader of the Council).

42 Local Government Finance Policy Statement Headlines and local Fees & Charges budget intentions for 2025/26

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director (Finance & Resources), by way of pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, that summarised the national headlines of the policy statement which was published on 28 November 2024 by the Minister of State for Local government and English Devolution in advance of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments. The Cabinet Member endeavoured to provide a written response in relation to:

- How much income was expected to be generated from charging small local businesses from running paid for fitness activities in parks, for example, fitness bootcamps.

Resolved:

That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillor D Cowan (Leader of the Council) and Councillor P Collins (Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments).

43 Parking Fees & Charges Proposals 2025/26

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director (Environment & Place), by way of pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, that sought agreement to amend parking fees and charges, intended to be effective from 1st April 2025.

Councillor T Cox expressed concern with recommendation 2.4 in the printed report which sought to delegate authority to officers to consider the outcome of any Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation and determine whether a TRO should be introduced or referred to the Traffic Regulation & Working Party (TRWP). It was highlighted that all TRO's which received objections should be referred to the TRWP as the appropriate decision-making body and felt that the recommendation was unclear.

In response to these concerns, the Leader of the Council observed that the wording would be strengthened to ensure this was more explicit before being referred to Cabinet.

The Committee voted unanimously in favour to recommend to Cabinet that the wording in recommendation 2.4 be amended to ensure that there was not a blanket delegation to officers and that objections were instead referred to the TRWP.

The Committee discussed the report in some detail and asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Leader of the Council, highlights included:

- Clarification on the new parking tariffs, including the new cap on charges and an extension of tariffs in University Square and Shorefield Road car parks.
- The use of the Southend Pass and assurance that although multiple vehicles could be added to the same Southend Pass account, multiple vehicles could not benefit from 3 hours free parking at the same time.
- The need to update the Council website to publicise accessible parking available at Shoebury East Beach, in view of the fact the park was soon to be upgraded to make it a destination accessible park.
- The intention to create a “commuter offer” on the Southend Pass to ensure parking was more affordable.

During the debate Councillor J Courtenay moved a new recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor T Cox, that read as follows:

“This committee believes that these proposals are short-sighted, insofar as the limited support being given to the Central Seafront area is coming from an increase in charges elsewhere.

Higher and longer charges in the City Centre, will impact on our already struggling High Street, and in those car parks to the East of the seafront, that already experience much lower usage, an inflation busting rise will only exacerbate that lower usage.

As such we recommend that Cabinet considers not implementing 6pm to 9pm parking charges in Shorefield Road, hold the charges in the new Zone 2 at the current Zone 1b rates, and that seafront car parks moving to Zone 3A or 3B are held at the current Zone 2 rates.”

The Chair undertook a vote on the new proposed recommendation, the result of which was:

For: 6

Abstentions: 1

Against: 7

The Chair declared the motion was lost and the substantive recommendations to Cabinet were noted.

Resolved:

1. That the wording of recommendation 2.4 in the printed report be amended to ensure that all objections were referred to the Traffic Regulation & Working Party as the appropriate decision-making body, and that this function not be delegated to officers.
2. That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is and Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor D Cowan (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure & Corporate Strategy and Leader of the Council).

44 **Fossetts Farm**

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director (Environment & Place), by way of pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, that presented the latest position reached between the Council and Thames Plaza Plc and Citizen Housing LLP in relation to the proposed development of land at Fossetts Farm.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Executive Director for Environment & Place, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Major Projects and Regulatory Services and the Leader of the Council.

Councillor T Cox asked whether the previous due diligence undertaken (and thus ruled out the earlier iteration of April 2024) could be released to Group Leaders. In response, the Executive Director acknowledged that this request was outstanding and explained that he would investigate as to whether the executive summary document could be released in an appropriate format and would update outside of the meeting.

At 9.51pm the meeting briefly moved into exempt session to enable Councillors to ask questions on the confidential papers. The meeting then resumed in public session.

Members of the Committee welcomed the proposal of the low-rise development with 3- and 4-bedroom family homes.

The Committee thanked officers for all their hard work and expertise to get the scheme to fruition.

Resolved:

That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is and Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor D Cowan (Leader of the Council) and Councillor K Robinson (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Major Projects and Regulatory Services).

Chair: _____