

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Chief Executive

To
Cabinet

On

6th November 2018

Report prepared by: Glyn Halksworth, Head of Housing &
Social Inclusion / Simon Ford, Group Manager Community
Safety

High Street Summit – Action Planning Update

Place Scrutiny Committee
Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Members: Councillors Lamb, Courtenay and Flewitt
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on work being undertaken following the High Street Summit which took place on 24th September 2018, including the emerging action plan and approaches being organised through which to coordinate and drive this work.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Cabinet endorses progress being made and directs further work as required.
- 2.2 Cabinet endorses additional officer resource already aligned to support the implementation and delivery of this project.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 24th September a High Street Summit took place to consider actions that might be pursued in order to improve the current High Street offer. Concerns had been raised relating to rough sleeping and a number of aspects of anti-social behaviour, including aggressive begging and street drinking. The meeting involved representative of Southend BID and Essex Police, along with James Duddridge MP and councillors and officers of Southend Council.
- 3.2 The meeting sought to understand the differing perspectives relating to current pressures within the Southend High Street area and to agree a number of outcomes and associated actions that could be pursued to improve the current situation. A number of short-term actions were agreed including better coordination of existing support work in the town centre; a commitment to explore the feasibility of enforcement powers and to implement those

appropriate to the aims of this work; and a commitment to better coordinate and resource communications work, including support to recruit a dedicated communications lead across the partnership. Support and enforcement services were collectively tasked with effectively tackling the presence of rough sleepers, begging, street-drinking and other anti-social behaviour from the High Street.

- 3.3 The meeting agreed that a dedicated action plan would be developed through which to drive this work forwards at pace. Key responsibility for this was given to Simon Ford and Glyn Halksworth, but with a requirement that this would be supported by a broader Council and Essex Police officer group. Action has already been taken to set up initial task and finish group meetings through which to initiate and coordinate this work. In addition to this an officer within the Housing & Social Inclusion service has been tasked with overseeing this on a half-time basis for the next 3 months, with the potential for further extension. As will be seen from the attached draft action plan work is already underway in other aspects of the project.
- 3.4 The draft action plan is attached as Appendix 1 and seeks to capture all actions agreed at the Summit, as well as clarifying ownership of these, key milestones required and progress. This work is at an initial stage and further understanding needed in respect of resources that may be required to implement and deliver the agreed work.

4. Other Options

None.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 This project is recognised as strategically important for Southend, both from a business and public service perspective. The feedback received by business, the Council and Essex Police about Southend High Street has been negative in recent months and is seen to be reflective of a diminishing attractiveness of the town centre to local residents, workers and visitors. From the perspectives of economic vibrancy, our reputation as tourist and visitor destination, and the collective and individual organisational reputations about our leadership of place, this is a vital project for the town. The recommendations are made in order to secure the best chance of delivering the aims of this partnership project.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

This project supports a number of the Council's corporate priorities relating to community safety, health, and economic development.

6.2 Financial Implications

There are already known additional costs in order to support the joint provision of a communications lead for the work, and further resource may be required for officer time as well as for works such as street cleaning, hoarding shop fronts and signage. Some of this resource may be recoverable by way of charges to shop landlords. A fuller understanding of these resources will emerge in the next few weeks.

6.3 Legal Implications

Advice is being taken in respect to enforcement powers available to support the ambitions of this project, principally via the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Vagrancy Act 1824, and potential bye-laws.

6.4 People Implications

Existing officer resource has been aligned to the project. Additional officer resources both directly employed by Southend Council and commissioned support services will be coming on stream in respect of rough sleeping and community safety in the next 3 months. Further resource may be required and this will be understood in the coming weeks.

6.5 Property Implications

None identified.

6.6 Consultation

No discrete consultation has been undertaken at this stage other than work delivered in support of Southend 2050, and housing / homelessness strategic projects.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

The objective of this project is to ensure that Southend High Street is an inclusive place and that the needs of vulnerable groups are met in such a way as they get the support needed to desist from rough sleeping, street-drinking, drug use, begging and anti-social behaviour. Equally the project seeks to ensure that the High Street is accessible to residents, works and visitors and that the street scene is not a deterrent to this. An Equality Analysis of the project has not been undertaken at this point but equality implications will be considered as the project develops.

6.8 Risk Assessment

No separate risk assessment has been conducted at this stage. Dynamic risk assessments will be undertaken during street-based elements of the project.

6.9 Value for Money

No analysis of this has yet been undertaken.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

As indicated above many elements of this project relate to anti-social behaviour. There are also links to drug-related crime and gang activity within the town centre foot print which have contributed to the negative environment being addressed. This project is intended to positively impact both these areas. Additionally a proactive approach to the removal of discarded / abandoned property such as sleeping bags and rucksacks is consistent with the management approach required to combat security risks.

6.11 Environmental Impact

The project will positively impact the High Street environment, including through the increased cleaning of shop doorways and other areas associated with rough sleeping.

7. Background Papers

7.1 None.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Southend High Street Action Plan V7.