

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Strategic Director (Legal & Democratic
Services)

to

Place Scrutiny Committee and
Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

on

Monday, 8th April, 2019

Wednesday, 10th April, 2019

Report prepared by: Tim Row (Principal Democratic Services
Officer)

**In-Depth Scrutiny Report – ‘Re-Imagining the Town Centre, in the Context of the
Vision for Southend 2050’**

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Place Scrutiny and Policy & Resources Scrutiny
Committees**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Courtenay
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the draft report of the scrutiny project – ‘Re-Imagining the Town Centre, in the Context of the Vision for Southend 2050’

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the report and conclusions from the in depth scrutiny project, detailed at Section 1 be agreed**
- 2.2 **That, in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (part 4 (e) of the Constitution), to agree that the Chairman of the Project Team present the report to a future Cabinet meeting**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 9th July 2018 and the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 12th July 2018, approved the suggestion for a joint in-depth study should be undertaken focussing on various aspects of the Town Centre, in the context of the vision for Southend 2050. (Minutes 112 and 146 refer respectively).
- 3.2 In the context of the Southend 2050 Vision, the main focus on the project was to:
- (i) Reimagine and explore what the future of the town centre might be. This will consider the purpose/function of the town centre, who it serves/could serve and its future in regards to:
- Potential implications of the use of the town centre changing over time on its use, physical layout and environment;

- Its look and feel - how people experience it; and
- Its role in achieving shared outcomes in relation to community, skills, culture, health, housing.

(ii) Consider the role of the Council (specifically) and partners (generally) in leading change as well as responding to it

(iii) Identify the aspects of the town centre of the future that the Council can directly influence and those which partners have greater influence over (for example the future role of retail) so as to deliver the reimagined space and activity, and prioritising subsequent interventions

(iv) Establish a framework to support the town centre's evolution ensuring a vibrant and attractive town centre at all stages of change

(v) Establish perceptions and truths about the town centre and consider its future promotion to visitors, residents and investors

(vi) Consider the resilience of the town centre through different scenarios and potential changes.

3.3 The town centre is a microcosm of the whole Borough and, as such, a broad range of issues could have been considered in relation to this project. In order to avoid divergence and keep the project to timetable a variety of matters were excluded from the outset as these were being dealt with via the specified processes which were already underway. These included:

- Transport and Parking;
- Homelessness
- Community Safety
- Better Queensway
- Air Quality
- Street Cleansing
- Impact of current planning applications

A 'parking lot' was however, established for matters which arose during the course of the study which do not fit within the scope so that a record of them may be kept and looked at separately outside or following the project or part of other corporate work.

3.4 The Project Team comprised the following Members – Councillor Councillors: K Robinson (Chair), B Ayling, K Buck, N Folkard, J Garston, I Gilbert, D McGlone and D Nelson. Councillor C Mulroney also attended meetings of the project team.

3.5 Officer support was primarily provided by Emma Cooney (Director of Regeneration and Business Development) and Tim Row (Principal Democratic Service Officer) although additional support was provided from a range of services across the organisation and will draw on additional expertise as required.

- 3.6 A “Reference Group” was also established to draw on the expertise, experience and ideas of a diverse group of people connected with town centres. The Reference Group was involved as the scope of the project was set, a mid-way conference, and at the end before the report was finalised. The group’s role is to sense check proposals, provide expert/sectoral advice, feedback and challenge.
- 3.7 The 2050 Ambition has five themes so evidence roundtables were held for each of these themes with a mix of external specialists and experts alongside Council officers from different disciplines.
- 3.8 An overview of all the evidence sessions held and attended can be found in Appendix 1 of the final report.
- 3.9 During the course of the study, the Project Team had regard to a variety of publications including the Grimsey Review II, further town centre studies and publications such as the Timpson Review and Centre for Cities: City Centres Past, Present and Future February 2019. The Government also published its plan to support town centres in the autumn of 2018 including the £675m Future High Streets.

4. Scrutiny Review – Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1 The conclusions and recommendations from the review are set out in Section 1 of the final report. These were discussed by the Project Team at its meeting on 19th March 2019.
- 4.2 It should be noted that approval of any recommendations with budget implications will require consideration as part of future years’ budget processes prior to implementation.
- 4.3 The Scrutiny Committees are recommended to endorse the conclusions from the review, for approval by Cabinet.

5. Other Options

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Not applicable

7. Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map
As described in the report
- 7.2 Financial Implications
Any recommendations with major financial implications will need to go through the annual budgetary process before implementation.

- 7.3 Legal Implications
None
- 7.4 People Implications
None
- 7.5 Property Implications
As described in the report
- 7.6 Consultation
As described in the report
- 7.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications
None
- 7.8 Risk Assessment
None
- 7.9 Value for Money
None
- 7.10 Community Safety Implications
None
- 7.11 Environmental Impact
As described in the report
- 8. Background Papers**
- 8.1 Project Team notes and as set out in the final report.
- 9. Appendices**
- 9.1 Draft Final Report - 'Re-Imagining the Town Centre, in the Context of the Vision for Southend 2050'