

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Executive Director
(Legal & Democratic Services)

to

Place, People and Policy & Resources Scrutiny
Committees

On 6th, 7th and 9th July 2020

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Officer)

In-Depth Scrutiny Projects and Summary of Work 2019/20 A Part 1 Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to consider progress with regard to the in-depth scrutiny projects due to have been completed during the 2019/20 municipal year.
- 1.2 The report also provides information about the work carried out by each of the scrutiny committees during the previous year.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Scrutiny Committee note progress with regard to its in-depth scrutiny project due to have been undertaken during the 2019/20 municipal year.
- 2.2 That the completion of the in-depth scrutiny project be carried forward into the 2020/21 municipal year.
- 2.3 That no further topic(s) be selected by the Scrutiny Committee for additional in-depth review during 2020/21.
- 2.4 That the Committee note the summary of the work undertaken by each of the scrutiny committees during 2019/20, attached as Appendix 3.

3. In-Depth Scrutiny Projects – Background

- 3.1 As councillors will be aware, each scrutiny committee undertakes an in-depth scrutiny project each year. The in-depth projects are selected by the committees at the beginning of each municipal year and generally focus on corporate priorities or matters of local concern. Recent in-depth projects have also been aligned with the ambition and outcomes arising from the Southend 2050 programme.
- 3.2 The projects lead to the development of reports and recommendations which advise the Executive and the Council on its policies, budget provision and service delivery. The work of each project is driven through a Programme Working Party (Project Team) appointed by the Council, supported by relevant officers. The appointments for the projects to be undertaken during 2019/20 were agreed by the Council at its meeting on 3rd June 2019 (Appendix 1).

- 3.3 Involvement with in-depth studies enables councillors to ‘get their teeth into’ a particular topic and to influence and shape proposals before they are implemented. Councillors aim to select topics for in-depth review that can identify real service improvements and result in benefits/outcomes. A list of previous in-depth scrutiny projects undertaken since 2012 is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.4 Occasionally, one in-depth study is conducted jointly by two of the scrutiny committees. This approach occurred in 2016/17 when a joint study was undertaken by the Policy and Resources and Place Scrutiny Committees, to investigate whether there was a need for additional enforcement resources for Southend. A joint project was also undertaken during 2018/19, also by the Policy and Resources and Place Scrutiny Committees, looking at re-imagining the town centre in the context of the vision for Southend 2050.

4. In-Depth Scrutiny Projects 2019/20 – Progress

- 4.1 The undertaking of the following in-depth reviews for the 2019/20 municipal year were agreed by the scrutiny committees during July 2019:

People Scrutiny Committee

- (a) ‘The appropriate use of reablement for older people (65 and over) when discharged from hospital, to maximise the number of people at home after period of ninety-one days.’

Place Scrutiny Committee

- (b) ‘To review the level of domestic waste recycling in the Borough, in order to examine what influences residents in terms of their recycling habits and what the barriers are to achieving a higher rate of recycling and to consider ways of working with residents to improve domestic waste recycling.’

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

- (c) ‘How the Council and councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders and facilitate engagement and participation’.

- 4.2 Progress with regard to each of the in-depth reviews was achieved by the relevant Programme Working Parties in the first-half of the municipal year, including the development of action plans, the receipt of relevant presentations, the identification of witnesses and evidence sources and, in some cases, the holding of appropriate site visits. However, the completion of the projects was subsequently delayed from late-2019 as a result of a number of issues including reduced officer capacity, the unforeseen requirement for the Returning Officer to deliver a parliamentary election at short notice in December 2019 and the need to make significant preparations for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and local elections due to be held in May 2020 (although these elections were subsequently cancelled).
- 4.3 Since March 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also further delayed activity with regard to the completion of the reviews, reflecting the Council’s approach to the handling of the pandemic, including the necessary focus on priority activities and the delivery of new or amended services, the

dedication or redeployment of officer capacity that would have supported the reviews towards key service provision and the adoption of ongoing remote working and meeting arrangements for councillors and a significant number of the Council's employees. As a result, it was not possible for the in-depth reviews to be completed by the end of the municipal year.

- 4.4 In the circumstances, it is therefore recommended that the completion of each current review be carried forward into the 2020/21 municipal year. The completion of the in-depth reviews will be progressed as soon as possible during the year and it is hoped that meetings of the respective Programme Working Parties leading each review can be held through the Microsoft Teams platform in the near future, so that progress can be reviewed by the scrutiny committees at future meetings.
- 4.5 In light of the proposed carry-forward of the current in-depth reviews and the Council's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended that no additional topic(s) be selected by the scrutiny committees for in-depth study during 2020/21. In accordance with usual arrangements, reports will be made to the scrutiny committees in July 2021 to seek the identification of topics for in-depth review during the 2021/22 municipal year.

5. Work Undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees 2018/19

- 5.1 A summary of the work undertaken by each of the scrutiny committees during the 2018/19 municipal year is attached at Appendix 3.

6. Corporate Implications

- (a) Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map - Becoming an excellent and high performing organisation.
- (b) Financial Implications – there are costs associated with organising in-depth projects relating to officer time, but this will all be contained within existing resources.
- (c) Legal Implications – none.
- (d) People Implications – none.
- (e) Property Implications – none.
- (f) Consultation – as described in report.
- (g) Equalities and Diversity Implications – none.
- (h) Risk Assessment – none.

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Membership of Programme Working Parties (Project Team

Appendix 2 - List of previous in-depth topics since 2012

Appendix 3 - Summary of work of the scrutiny committees for 2019/ 20