

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee

Date: Monday, 23rd November, 2020

Place: Virtual Meeting via MS Teams

Present: Councillor A Moring (Chair)
Councillors K Buck (Vice-Chair), B Ayling, J Beck, A Bright, L Burton,
A Chalk, D Cowan, T Cox, A Dear, M Dent, S George, D Jarvis,
C Walker, N Ward and P Wexham

In Attendance: Councillors I Gilbert, C Mulroney, K Robinson, M Terry and
R Woodley (Cabinet Members)
Councillor K Evans
A Lewis, T Forster, L Reed, J Williams, S Dolling, A Richards,
S Newman, S Wheeler, L Gibbins, K Waters, S Meah-Sims,
E Anslow, R Pennington, A Wate, T Row, E Cook and A Smyth

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 9.10 pm

560 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Wakefield (no substitute).

561 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

(a) Councillors I Gilbert, C Mulroney, K Robinson, M Terry and R Woodley (Cabinet Members) - Interest in the called-in items; attended pursuant to the dispensation agreed at Council on 19th July 2012, under S.33 of the Localism Act 2011; and

(b) Councillor Ward – Minute No. 565 (Destination Southend) – Non-pecuniary interest: Owner of a B & B.

562 Questions from Members of the Public

The Committee noted the responses to two questions that had been submitted by Mr Grubb to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Planning. Copies will be forwarded to him as he was not present at the meeting.

563 Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 12th October 2020

Resolved:-

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 12th October 2020 be received, confirmed as a correct record and signed.

564 Annual Comments, Compliments and Complaints Report

The Committee considered Minute 515 of Cabinet held on 3rd November 2020, which had been called-in and referred direct to Scrutiny, together with the report of the Chief Executive that provided performance information about comments, complaints and compliments received across the Council for 2019/20.

Resolved:

That the following decision of Cabinet be noted:

“1. That the Council’s performance in respect of comments, complaints, and compliments for 2019/20, be noted.

2. That the matter be referred to all three Scrutiny Committees (Appendix B and C to the submitted report referred to the People Scrutiny Committee only).

3. That authority be given to make the changes to the corporate Comments, Complaints and Compliments policy as set out in Section 4.3 and appendix A to the report.”

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Members: Cllr Terry (overarching), Cllr Harp (Appendix B) and Cllr Jones (Appendix C).

565 Destination Southend

The Committee considered Minute 516 of Cabinet held on 3rd November 2020, which had been called-in for Scrutiny, together with the report of the Executive Director (Adults and Communities) that provided an update on the refreshed tourism strategy, ‘Destination Southend’, and outlined progress made to date together with ongoing plans.

The Cabinet Member for Business, Culture & Tourism undertook to provide written response to the following matters:

- The legalities of producing a Council published newsletter/magazine;
- The funding levels for improvements in Shoeburyness as a tourism venue as part of the budget process; and
- The consideration of potential specific areas, particularly Shoeburyness and Leigh as tourism locations by the Business, Culture & Tourism Working Party.

Resolved:-

That the following decision of Cabinet be noted:

“That the refreshed ‘Destination Southend’ Strategy and action plan, with updated content, be noted.”

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillor Kevin Robinson

566 The Beecroft Trust - Council Options

The Committee considered Minute 519 of Cabinet held on 3rd November 2020, together with the report of the Executive Director (Adults and Communities) which provided an update on the current position with regards to the former Beecroft Art Gallery and with the proposed renovations to the building to create artist's studios.

Resolved:-

1. That the following decision of Cabinet be noted:

“That it be noted that the proposal to convert the former Beecroft Art Gallery into artist's studios is no longer feasible.”

2. That, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 39, the matter be referred to full Council for consideration

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Cllr Robinson

567 Hamlet Court Road Draft Conservation Area Designation

The Committee considered Minute 521 of Cabinet held on 3rd November 2020, together with the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director (Growth and Housing) concerning the draft Conservation Area Appraisal produced on behalf of the Council by independent heritage experts, Purcell, assessing the potential of Hamlet Court Road for Conservation Area status and set out the proposed approach to public consultation.

Resolved:-

1. That the matter be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration, as the Committee felt that consultation should refer to the whole length of Hamlet Court Road and adjoining roads such as Ditton Court Road and Preston Road.

2. That, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 39, the matter be referred to full Council for consideration.

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Cllr Mulronev

568 Notice of Motions (Referred by Council, 10th September 2020)

The Cabinet considered Minute 526 of Cabinet held on 3rd November 2020, which had been called-in to Scrutiny, together with the report of the Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) requesting the Cabinet to determine how to respond to each of the Notices of Motion referred by Council on 10th September 2020.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member Business, Culture and Tourism gave assurances that invitations would be sent to all Councillors for the meetings of the Working Parties when the Motions were being discussed

Resolved:

1. That the following decision of Cabinet be noted:

“That the Notices of Motion be referred to the relevant Cabinet Working Parties.”

2. That, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 39, the matter be referred to full Council for consideration. ||

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: As appropriate to each Notice of Motion

569 In-depth Scrutiny Project - Update

The Committee noted an oral update on the progress that had been made in respect of the in-depth Scrutiny study, entitled “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 the barriers to achieving a higher rate of recycling and to consider ways of working with residents to improve domestic waste recycling”.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function

570 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:-

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below, on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

571 Report to the Trustees of the Beecroft Trust

The Committee considered a report by Steve Newman the (Council’s Interim Team Leader, Corporate Property & Asset Management), Rosemary Pennington (Head of Arts and Cultural Wellbeing) and Laurie Gibbins (Solicitor) which was introduced by the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services).

The report, along with the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee (19 November 2020), afforded the Place Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to make recommendations to full Council (in its capacity as sole trustee of the Beecroft Art Trust) on several key issues.

Recommended:-

That the report be noted and that the following recommendations of the General Purposes Committee, from its meeting held on 19th November 2020 (Minute 559 refers), be endorsed:

“1. That it be noted that the scheme to provide affordable artist studios in the Former Gallery was unachievable and unviable.

2. That the Council as Trustee of the Beecroft Art Trust be recommended to sell the Former Gallery and the Council should be offered first refusal to purchase at full market value, subject to charity law requirements.

3. That the Council as Trustee of the Beecroft Art Trust be recommended to retain the Beecroft art collection in the former library building on an ad hoc basis, pending a more permanent solution which should be possible once the proceeds of sale from the Former Gallery have been received.

4. That the Council as Trustee agrees that all reasonable and proper costs expended by the Council on behalf of the Trust, associated with the sale of the Former Gallery and the acquisition of an alternative property, will be met from the proceeds of sale of the Former Gallery, subject to the Charity Commission’s consent.

5. That the Council as Trustee seeks to amend the Commission Scheme dated 18th February 1980 to remove the Former Gallery from the Commission Scheme and ensure the Trust continues to adhere to the Objects of the Trust.”

Note: This is Council function.

Chair: _____