

# Annual Report

2020-2021



## Introduction from Leader of the Council and Chief Executive



Cllr Ian Gilbert, Leader of the Council   Alison Griffin, Chief Executive

*The last twelve months have challenged our community like never before. Many lives have been lost and there are still tough times ahead, but we are starting to see light at the end of the tunnel, with the vaccination programme working well in Southend and restrictions starting to ease.*

Despite the difficulties and impact the pandemic has had on every aspect of our lives, our local NHS staff and keyworkers have gone above and beyond to keep our community safe and well. For that we cannot thank them enough.

We also want to recognise the efforts and hard work of our staff, volunteers and partners over the past year, and thank you to everyone who acted responsibly to help protect our local NHS.

We've remained strong despite the global pandemic and additional challenges following Brexit. We've won awards and achieved amazing things and we could not be prouder of our people.

This report highlights the progress we've made during 2020/21 and showcases a number of our priorities for the coming year.

Looking forward, economic recovery, reopening businesses and maintaining the safety of our community are key priorities for the council. We must also invest in protecting our environment and push forward with the council's aim of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

It's more important than ever that we remain collaborative, inclusive, honest and proud. Together we will support one another, remember and celebrate the lives of those that we have lost and look ahead to a brighter future. The continued work of our council is vital to the health and economic wellbeing of residents across the borough, and we are proud to serve our community.



**29** Internal Mental  
Health First Aiders

## Our achievements include:

- adapting our core services and working with the community and partners in response to the pandemic, including setting up vaccination centres and community Lateral Flow Device testing sites; providing frontline social care services; and ensuring schools remained open to key workers' and vulnerable children
- setting up the Southend Emergency Fund, a grassroots coalition of local people, community groups and businesses, raising much-needed cash for local third sector organisations helping people deal with the impact of the pandemic
- forming the Southend Food Alliance with South Essex Community Hub and Southend Foodbank to bring together local organisations providing food for residents
- housing 138 rough sleepers in temporary accommodation during the pandemic
- helping local businesses re-open safely and distributing government support grants to aid their recovery
- being awarded Purple Flag accreditation, highlighting our night-time economy as safe, diverse, entertaining and enjoyable
- the imaginative ways our galleries, museums and libraries have engaged our community during pandemic restrictions, creating online activities, downloadable art activity packs and click & collect book loans
- carrying out town centre improvements, including completing paving works on London Road and Victoria Circus, installing 'green roof' cycle shelters, improving street lighting and developing efficient urban drainage systems

- maintaining our seafront and shoreline, and parks and green spaces to a high standard
- agreeing the Green City Action Plan, delivering a green future for Southend and supporting the council's aim of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2030





## Southend 2050 Ambition

Southend 2050 is the borough's shared ambition for the future. It was developed in 2018 following extensive conversations with people who live, work, visit, do business and study in Southend. These conversations asked people what they thought Southend should be like in 2050 and what steps are needed now and in the coming years to help achieve this.

The pandemic has made the Southend 2050 ambition more challenging, but it remains achievable. It will need all elements of our community to work together to make it a reality. We will also need our neighbouring boroughs and central government to play their part.

The Southend 2050 ambition has 26 outcomes, which fit into five themes. These themes (see right) provided a framework for our initial response to the pandemic and now inform our approach to helping local economic recovery. A five-year roadmap timeline (see page 24) identifies key projects that will make the ambition a reality.



The five Southend 2050 themes

## Place branding

The council, along with the cultural, business and civic community, has been working with Hemingway Design during 2020 to create place branding to market Southend as a desirable and exciting destination to live, work, invest and visit.

Here is the emerging messaging about the people, organisations and places of Southend:

- This is the start of the line - where fresh ideas and new approaches radiate from the edgelands of the Thames estuary. We push boundaries, rock the boat and set wheels in motion for the things that matter - for people, for joy, for creativity and for freedom of expression. Our vision, impact and potential are beyond limits - forget the norm, forget the beaten path, forget expectations. Southend is the alternative seaside experience.
- We celebrate the beauty and joy of individualism. We embrace different; we're passionate and not afraid to express it. Our neighbours might be marching to the beat of a completely different drum, but we're marching together. We're proud of our working class roots and not afraid to be ourselves - straightforward and authentic. In Southend, we don't sit and wait for things to happen - we roll up our sleeves and get it done. Across our borough you'll see a lot of very different places and very different people. What unites us is celebrating that difference and being proud of our place.
- This place, where the Thames meets the North Sea and underground meets mainstream, offers irresistible escapism and a lot of good old-fashioned fun. Generations of families, teens, lovers and adventurers have lived and visited here - because no matter who you are, there's joy to be found at the seaside. Roll up your trousers, dip a toe in the waves and let

your hair down. We've got just as many opportunities for sports and leisure as we do arts and culture - in Southend, there is something exciting for everyone. Whether you live here or are visiting, it's a different kind of getaway.



## What our residents have told us about the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery

We are committed to listening to the views of residents, to help us understand their priorities, find out what they think of our services and check whether they feel they can influence decisions that affect them and their local area.

In December 2020, we launched a Residents' Pulse Survey to understand people's experiences during the pandemic and gather their ideas about how Southend could begin to recover. 152 residents from across the borough responded to the survey.

Key findings from the survey include:

- 2 in 5 (44%) felt more or much more connected to their local area / community since the pandemic began
- 3 in 5 (58%) were confident or fairly confident that they would be able to recover financially from the pandemic
- over 1 in 10 (16%) felt they had not been affected financially, while 2 in 25 (8%) were very concerned that they would not be able to recover financially from the impact of the pandemic
- showing empathy and kindness, making sure any Government restrictions are followed and taking personal responsibility for one's health were key things respondents felt we can all do to support each other to stay well during and after the pandemic
- respondents showed a willingness to embrace change, particularly if it involved positive effects on the environment, supporting local businesses and supporting vulnerable people
- helping children, older people and vulnerable people to thrive was recognised as being necessary to the recovery of the borough.

Findings from the Residents' Pulse Survey 2020 will inform delivery of the Southend 2050 ambition and outcomes. The information will also influence policy and service delivery decisions for 2021/22.



## Our borough's challenges

As we work to achieve our shared ambition and help our local economy recover from the impacts of the pandemic, it is important to acknowledge our borough's challenges and their impact so that we can improve everyone's quality of life. There is considerable variation in quality of life across the borough - we have neighbourhoods comparable to some of the most deprived areas of the country, but we also have neighbourhoods ranked amongst some of the least deprived.

Key statistics about the borough:

- In 2020, 17.1% of Southend's residents were economically inactive.
- Average weekly earnings were £650 for men and £605 for women.
- 40% of Southend's residents live in areas considered to be in the most deprived 30%

in the country, with eight neighbourhoods falling into the 10% most deprived in the country.














- 14 of Southend's neighbourhoods have a higher population of children living in poverty than the England average; Victoria and Kursaal wards are among the 20% most deprived wards in the country.
- Kursaal, our most deprived ward, ranks 129<sup>th</sup> most deprived neighbourhood nationally according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation.
- Life expectancy is 11.1 years lower for men and 9.7 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Southend compared to the least deprived areas.

Results of our 2019 Residents' Perception Survey show that:

- 2% of West Leigh residents indicated they were in bad health, compared to 8% in Kursaal and 6% for Southend as a whole.

- Kursaal ward had a borough election turnout of 25%, compared to 42.5% in West Leigh (average overall turnout 31.74%).
- Residents living in Kursaal, St Luke's and Victoria wards are significantly less satisfied with their local area (55%) (compared to 74% for the borough), feel significantly less safe and are more likely than other residents to cite crime and anti-social behaviour as something they dislike about their local area.
- A minority of residents (21%) in Southend agree that they can influence decisions that affect their local area. More than twice this number (57%) disagree.

# Southend Borough Profile

<div>Population</div> <div></div> <div>183,125</div> <div>51% female 49% male 87% White British</div>	<div>Healthy life expectancy</div> <div><div>82.5 years</div><div>79.1 years</div></div> <div>lower than England rate</div>	<div>Fertility rate</div> <div></div> <div>1.84</div> <div>children per woman higher than England rate</div>	<div>Median house price</div> <div></div> <div>£293,500</div> <div>higher than England median</div>
<div>Crime</div> <div></div> <div>98.6</div> <div>crimes per 1,000 people lower than England</div>	<div>Employment</div> <div></div> <div>79.1%</div> <div>higher than Great Britain</div>	<div>Under-18 conceptions</div> <div></div> <div>21.4</div> <div>per 1,000 females aged 15-17 higher than England rate</div>	<div>Cost of renting</div> <div></div> <div>£825</div> <div>median monthly rent for a 2-bedroom property higher than England</div>
<div>Earnings</div> <div></div> <div>£640</div> <div>median gross weekly pay for full time workers higher than Great Britain</div>	<div>Benefits</div> <div></div> <div>8.1%</div> <div>of Southenders aged 16+ claim Universal Credit higher than Great Britain</div>	<div>Out of work</div> <div></div> <div>12.9%</div> <div>of households are workless lower than England</div>	<div>Schools</div> <div></div> <div>21.4%</div> <div>of schools are "Outstanding" higher than England</div>





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*By 2050 Southenders are fiercely proud of, and go out of their way, to champion what our city has to offer.*

*There is a tangible sense of pride in the place and local people are actively, and knowledgeably, talking up Southend.*

*The variety and quality of our outstanding cultural and leisure offer has increased for our residents and visitors and we have become the region's first choice coastal tourism destination.*

*We have invested in protecting and nurturing our coastline, which continues to be our much loved and best used asset.*

*Our streets and public spaces are valued and support the mental and physical wellbeing of residents and visitors.*

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**It is difficult to put in to words the impact of the last year on individuals, our community and staff. Despite the challenges of a year like no other, local people have gone out of their way to support each other during the pandemic. From volunteers helping our front-line staff at vaccine centres, to neighbourhood support groups looking out for each other, there is a huge sense of pride in how the community have come together in the most difficult of times.**

Here at the council, we adapted quickly to changing conditions and new ways of working, which have become a defining factor of the pandemic. Digital transformation and innovative changes to our frontline teams' work enable us to continue delivering council services while keeping our people safe.

**1.6 million**  
visits to the  
Pier and our  
sports and  
leisure places

**10,399**  
volunteering  
hours  
delivered

We have  
**5**  
Blue Flag  
Beach Awards

Our number of visitors and town use have changed greatly over the last year, following easing and reintroduction of lockdown rules. Council communications have worked hard to promote the safe use of the town to residents and visitors.

The closure of facilities also provided an opportunity to carry out remedial and regeneration work, or to re-purpose spaces to meet vital service demand. For example, closure of the Pier allowed us to improve the visitor experience at Pier Head, while the Cliffs Pavilion was used as a vaccination centre.

In March 2021, the council was awarded grants from Heritage England for urgent maintenance and repairs to Southchurch Hall Museum, Prittlewell Priory Museum and Leigh Library.

To support businesses, the Visit Southend website promoted local shops offering a click and collect service. The council's 'Shop Local, Shop Southend-on-Sea' campaign was relaunched in December 2020 to coincide with the temporary lifting of restrictions.



Southend's cultural venues continue to flex their offerings and use imaginative ways to engage our community. Galleries, museums and libraries created online activities, downloadable art activity packs and click and collect book loans.

In July 2020, Southend Museums was chosen to take part in an innovative audio project The Caretakers, which placed security staff in a curator's shoes for a museum tour. A collaboration between local arts organisation Metal and artist Eloise Moody, the series gave a unique audio tour of Southend Museums while they were unable to open to public.

Focal Point Gallery was commissioned by Historic England to produce 'S for Southend', a film exploring the future of high streets across England.

Southend's outdoor amenities remain vital for people's wellbeing, and we ordered new street furniture early in anticipation that the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund would increase demand.

We are delighted to end the year with a record total of seven Green Flag awards in the borough, recognising our well-maintained parks and green spaces.

Work carried out by the council this year includes:

- opening a new play area in Shoebury Common North
- planting 641 trees and 7,000 shrubs across the borough
- adding a green wall to a building at Earls Hall Primary School
- completing paving works and installing 'green roof' cycle shelters and bespoke lighting on London Road and Victoria Circus
- public realm improvement works on Warrior Square, Whitegate Road, York Road and Tylers Avenue in the town centre
- putting in place sustainable drainage systems at Southchurch Park East car park and on London Road.

99.9%

of waste  
collections  
made on time

96.5%

of serious road  
and pavement  
defects made  
safe on time

74%

of respondents  
satisfied with the  
local area as a  
place to live  
(Residents' Perception  
Survey 2019)

The borough has seen increased numbers of cold-water swimmers, some of whom featured in The Guardian newspaper in December 2020. Alongside fantastic images of the swimmers, our coastline and beaches it said: "Swimmers say working from home [as a result of the pandemic] has given people more time to enjoy simple pleasures and the sea allows a moment to step away from normal life in uncertain times."



Unfortunately, our open spaces have also seen irresponsible behaviour from some users, with a significant increase in littering and dog fouling. The council tackled this with robust community engagement and communications programmes, including rolling out new Keep Britain Tidy resources, working with our contractor Veolia and with volunteers to keep our spaces clean and inviting.



The council's shoreline strategy continues to be developed; we completed our annual coastal asset condition survey in September 2020; are refreshing the local Flood Risk Management strategy and Surface Water Management Plan; and we continue to work with the Environment Agency to progress the business case for the Shoebury Coastal Defence Scheme.

The council continues to monitor nitrogen dioxide levels at Air Quality Management Area 1, which is centred at the Bell Junction on the A127. Provisional data for 2020 indicates that there was a decrease in nitrogen dioxide levels from 45µgm-3 (micrograms per cubic meter) in 2019 to 36.6µgm-3 in 2020; the national air quality objective is an annual mean of 40µgm-3. The reduction in nitrogen dioxide was because of the decreased amount of traffic during the pandemic. A second Air Quality Management Area was declared in November 2020 in Victoria Avenue.



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*By 2050 people in Southend feel safe in all aspects of their lives and are well enough to live fulfilling lives.*

*People in all parts of the borough feel safe and secure at all times.*

*Southenders are remaining well enough to enjoy fulfilling lives, throughout their lives.*

*We are well on our way to ensuring that everyone has a home that meets their needs.*

*We are all effective at protecting and improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable in our community.*

*We act as a Green City with outstanding examples of energy efficient and carbon neutral buildings, streets, transport and recycling.*

*Residents feel safe and secure in their homes.*

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## **The council has worked closely with its partners to keep people safe and well over the past year.**

We:

- are supporting the NHS with the local rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme at centres set up across the borough, including at the Cliffs Pavilion
- set up three community rapid Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing sites in the borough
- were one of the only authorities to set up a school-only LFD testing site to support schools
- made free Personal Protective Equipment available for all unpaid carers looking after relatives or friends but living in separate properties, following updated Government guidance
- opened a care unit in partnership with Southend Care for older people ready to leave hospital but awaiting a COVID-19 negative test result.

**1.94**  
incidents of  
domestic  
abuse per  
1,000 people

**86% / 40%**  
of residents feel  
safe during day /  
after dark  
(Residents' Perception  
Survey 2019)

We continue to work with partners to give children and young people access to high quality care:

- a pathway for neurodevelopmental diagnostic and treatment services was developed in consultation with community paediatric services and parent groups.
- a council health service enabling school children to anonymously text a school nurse received a national award for providing 'an innovative solution to accessing mental health support, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic'.
- ChatHealth came top in the 'Nursing in Mental Health' category at the Nursing Times Awards in November 2020.



## Community Safety

The council's Community Safety Patrol team increased during the pandemic and provided a highly visible presence in targeted areas. In addition to our security base at Jubilee Beach a new frontline security base in Old Leigh was made operational in March 2021.

### Beach Welfare Officers Pilot

May to August 2020

**220** volunteer Beach Welfare Officers completed **702** hours of shifts, assisting with delivering first aid, aiding lost persons and patrolling the seafront and shoreline to ensure people had a safe visit.

In January 2021 Southend was awarded Purple Flag accreditation, highlighting that the night-time economy in Southend is safe, diverse, entertaining and enjoyable. Work on the night-time economy Safe Haven Hub pilot in the town centre is ongoing. The pilot went live in December 2020 but had to be scaled back due to lockdown restrictions.

We reviewed our Southend Violence and Vulnerability plan, which has a targeted focus on prevention.

## Housing

The council, with help from partners, housed 138 rough sleepers in temporary accommodation - and only 12 of the original intake remain. The majority have moved on into more permanent tenancies, with ongoing support in place. According to the annual rough sleeper count carried out in November 2020, the number of people sleeping on the streets of Southend has dropped to eight.

**53.2%**

of those at risk of homelessness are helped to secure alternative accommodation for at least 6 months

**251**

children housed in temporary accommodation per quarter (average during 2020/21)

“

**One former rough sleeper has spoken out about how finding a stable home can make all the difference. The person, who wishes to remain anonymous, said:**

“I lost my rented accommodation and became a rough sleeper in a tent on the Cliffs area in Southend.

“In January 2021, I was picked up by a rough sleeper navigator who placed me in a local B&B. This allowed me to settle in and work towards coming off the street and eradicate the rough sleeper stigma.

“Through the work and support from the navigator, council officers and support from One Love, I am now settling into my own accommodation. I received assistance from the council in purchasing white goods I needed to help settle down. This has given me hope and opportunity to start rebuilding my life and I am now assisting others as a volunteer with One Love.”

”

We successfully bid for over £317,000 from Public Health England to fund specialist roles to address drug and alcohol use among the homeless and former rough sleepers.

A new befriending scheme to help former rough sleepers successfully adapt to life in their new homes was launched by Southend Churches Community Support and the council in March 2021.

We bought a further 13 new properties in 2020/21 as part of our ongoing acquisitions programme. Funding from the Government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme allowed us to purchase three homes and cover the provision of B&B accommodation and placement of European Union (EU) nationals in accommodation while we helped people apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.

We progressed accommodation support routes to tackle homelessness, including the rapid assessment hub, which provides five

single COVID-secure self-contained units of emergency accommodation. 266 households at risk of homelessness were supported by the council with temporary accommodation.

### **Affordable housing**

There was good progression on affordable housing across the borough:

- In September 2020 Porters Place Southend-on-Sea LLP, a joint venture between the council and Swan Housing Association, submitted a planning application for the Better Queensway regeneration project.
- In October 2020, a legal agreement to secure 100 additional homes for social rent at Porters Place LLP was completed.
- Affordable housing was delivered by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Land Review project and Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) pilot projects. Phases 3 and 4 of the HRA Land Review progressed to the final design stage. Both

**87.2%**

of adults with learning disabilities live in their own home or with their family

**46.3%**

of our household waste is reused recycled or composted

Saxon Gardens MMC pilots received planning permission and a contractor appointed for the Archer Avenue MMC pilot.

- Work progressed with Southend United Football Club and Citizen Housing on the development of housing at Roots Hall and Fossett's Farm.

The council's Green City Action Plan was adopted in October 2020 and the council, along with nine other local authorities, was awarded £3 million funding through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery project. The consortium aims to deliver 450 significant low carbon measures to 300 eligible households. The council again teamed up with the Local Energy Advice Partnership to help residents save money and keep warm during winter.



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*By 2050 we have a thriving, active and involved community that feel invested in our city.*

*Even more Southenders agree that people from different backgrounds are valued and get on well together.*

*Residents feel the benefits of social connection, in building and strengthening their local networks through common interests and volunteering.*

*Residents are routinely involved in the design and delivery of services.*

*A range of initiatives help increase the capacity for communities to come together to enhance their neighbourhood and environment.*

*More people have physically active lifestyles, including through the use of open spaces.*

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**Our communities, civil society, the council and partners came together to deal with the local impact of the pandemic. We have reached all sections of the community with the NHS Test, Trace, Contain and Enable service, the COVID vaccine rollout and the EU Settlement Scheme.**

We have looked out for each other, collaborated and shown real community spirit. Fantastic examples include:

- the Southend Emergency Fund pooling resources from the council, the National Lottery, businesses and residents to make small grants available to local community groups and charitable organisations supporting individuals in need
- the Southend Coronavirus Action Helpline
- HUB 151 in Shoeburyness becoming a hub for Personal Protective Equipment production to keep people safe from COVID-19
- hundreds of residents and businesses coming together to provide hundreds of free meals for children during the autumn half term holiday
- the Southend Food Alliance supplementing the provision of free school meals with a £15 pre-paid card food scheme
- the Salvation Army and council workers delivering Christmas food parcels to families in need
- Southend Adult Community College preparing and delivering more than 4,500 meals for the homeless
- the One Love Project, a pilot scheme involving volunteers working with the council and Friars Baptist Church, offering weekly healthy take-away meals to people in need
- 500 volunteers being recruited and deployed by South Essex Community Hub as part of our COVID-19 response
- the Good Neighbours project encouraging local residents to be Good Neighbours and look after each other during the pandemic.

“

**Rachel Mason, local resident and Good Neighbour, said:**

“It has been a very difficult and strange time, but people have come together and have really supported each other. The street is now a lot closer, and it’s lovely getting to know neighbours, I think the whole street agrees we have become friends because of bunting!”

”

Building on the willingness of the community to be involved, in September 2020, the council, Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS) and partner organisations developed a cohort of 120 community connectors to signpost people to support and information on the pandemic. In February 2021, 14 online ‘Covid conversations’ took place, aimed at updating the community about COVID-19. The sessions, run jointly by the

council and SAVS, provided the latest updates on the pandemic and the local response in Southend and were attended by over 500 people.

The council continues to provide information for EU residents applying to the EU Settlement Scheme, as well as promote the assistance Citizens Advice Southend and the East European Resources Centre are providing locally to help people get settled status to stay in the UK.

There has been lots of community led action to celebrate and support the people of Southend. In September 2020, a community art project transformed hoardings in Southend into artistic messages about exploitation to show the town’s zero tolerance approach to modern slavery. SAMS (Southend Against Modern Slavery) partnership, Project 49 and artist Nik Vaughn worked together on the piece.



Black History Month was celebrated with a programme of inspirational events and resources throughout October. Southend Youth Council, in partnership with SAVS, held an event called ‘Celebration of Black Lives’ on online platform One Southend and powerful presentations were heard at a Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities listening event.

The South East Essex Chinese Association worked with local restaurants to cook over 1,000 meals for local hospitals and sourced thousands of PPE items for local service. We were appalled to learn they received racist messages on social media and acted quickly with the police and local community to address and take down the posts online. Racism has no home in Southend.



59%

of respondents agree that people of different backgrounds get on well together  
(Residents' Perception Survey 2019)

74%

of respondents have good friendships both in and outside of their local area  
(Residents' Perception Survey 2019)

The council has held regular, informal feedback sessions with stakeholders and the public. These have given a platform for the voices of young people, people with a disability, people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, people from faith communities and people who are homeless to be heard. Unable to hold events due to restrictions, we used online channels to raise awareness of the importance of equality and inclusivity during Hate Awareness Week, International Women's Day, International Men's day and UN Anti-Racism Day of Action.

Meeting demand for a central place where local assets and services can be found online, the council continued investment in the development of the Livewell Southend directory. The directory has over 1,000 groups and services listed and has become a key tool for the local social prescribing programme.

The Your Say Southend online engagement portal was launched in June 2020. The new platform will enable residents to share ideas, chat in forums and check progress on outcomes.

In November 2020, Southend Youth Council members took part in virtual Make your Mark voting, organised by the British Youth Council. The Make your Mark campaign is the biggest consultation of young people in the UK every year. Southend recorded the highest turnout in the East of England, with 2,390 votes recorded and a 14.7% turnout.

### Health and Wellbeing

The council established a £1.5 million community investment board to help create a stronger and more resilient local voluntary and community sector. The fund moves control of funding from the council to local people. The community investment fund will replace all existing grants for community

activity. In March 2021, the council and SAVS put out the call for local community champions to help distribute the funding.

#### Community engagement projects facilitated by the council include:

- Fit and Fed holiday programme for vulnerable young people
- community gardening
- The Art Ministry's digital arts programme for sheltered housing residents
- a digital inclusion project for older residents living in the council's social housing stock
- online wellbeing platform One Southend

Surveys of publicly available natural green space were completed in 2020. We identified the residential areas with poorest access to natural green space in order to target open space improvement work.



Throughout the pandemic, the council has worked closely with organisations such as Public Health England and Everyone Health to provide people with physical activity and mental wellbeing services. In February 2021, we teamed up with Sport for Confidence to provide free physical activity sessions for unpaid carers.

Our leisure centres are a key asset for local health and wellbeing, so after the pandemic brought a devastating drop in income to Fusion Lifestyle, the operator of Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre, we agreed to support them from August 2020 until the end of the financial year. The centres welcomed the local community back in March 2021. To support the reopening of the sites, the council successfully applied for £406,000 of funding through the National Leisure Recovery Fund.





***By 2050 Southend is a successful city and we share our prosperity amongst all of our people.***

*The Local Plan is setting an exciting planning framework for the borough.*

*We have a fast-evolving, re-imagined and thriving town centre, with an inviting mix of shops, homes, culture and leisure opportunities.*

*Our children are school and life ready and young people are ready for further education, training or employment.*

*Key regeneration schemes, such as Queensway, seafront developments and the Airport Business Park are underway and bringing prosperity and job opportunities to the borough.*

*Southend is a place that is renowned for its creative industries, where new businesses thrive and where established employers and others invest for the long term.*

*Southend provides fulfilling careers for our residents, and enough job roles to match the needs of the population.*

*Southend businesses feel support to respond to economic shock; adapt to evolving global markets; and, have the tools to preserve their businesses by responding effectively and positively to change.*

**95,800**

economically  
active people  
in the borough

**2,324**

planning  
applications  
received during  
2020/21

**99%**

of planning  
applications  
determined within  
timescale

**69**

apprenticeship  
vacancies  
available  
(March 2020)

**The council continues to support many local businesses and employers by helping them re-open safely and providing government support grants to aid their recovery.**



Sarah Potts, Director of Active Life for a Healthier You, based in Southend, received a discretionary grant. Sarah said: "With the awarding of the discretionary grant, we are now able to keep our office and focus on our return to delivering our sessions across Southend, providing local people with safe and effective ways to improve their health and wellbeing, both physically and emotionally."



We also provided support grants to the arts and creative sector in Southend which has been particularly affected by closure restrictions. Those affected include not just

venues but businesses, freelancers and the supply chain.

In July 2020, TOMA (The Other MA) and The Old Waterworks were awarded £15,000 by Creative Estuary to launch '*Precarious straits ~ survival on Southend's new coast, Southend-under-Sea*'.

The council continues to promote apprenticeship opportunities, including running four apprenticeship events. We secured funding for two Kickstart schemes offering work placement at the council and with local businesses. They provide unemployed people aged 16 to 24 with paid work experience, while offering businesses additional resource in a time of uncertainty.

Southend Adult Community College maintained its programme through remote learning for more than 2,000 adult learners during lockdowns and remained open to vulnerable students. Additional support came as food parcels and learning packs for those where digital access was a barrier to learning.

**80%**

of units in the High Street are occupied (BID area only) (January 2021)

**64,000**

employee jobs in the borough (March 2020)

**32%**

of council spend is in our local supply chain

Research indicated the pandemic would pose a particular disadvantage to 18-25s in Southend, so we worked with the Local Government Association to undertake a remote peer project and secured funding to build on recommendations.

Department for Work and Pensions funding supported employment into the care sector and response to redundancy interventions. Further funding was secured from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to provide loans to bring vacant premises back into use across south Essex. Funding from SELEP was also secured to support interventions in the town centre.

Much work has been done on the High Street, including the procurement of a footfall monitoring solution to support projects and encourage new businesses to the town.

In December 2020, we bought the Victoria Shopping Centre for £10 million, demonstrating our commitment to the future

of the town centre and giving the council a significant property ownership stake in the High Street.

There has been progress on key regeneration schemes:

- Better Queensway secured planning consent for the highway in detail and the overall project in outline
- the Seaway development was granted conditional planning permission in October 2020
- the first commercial build at Airport Business Park Southend was handed over to plane seating firm Ipeco
- planning permission was secured for an innovation hub and 12 industrial units at Airport Business Park, Southend.

Work on the Local Plan aims to make it an exciting planning framework for the borough. Technical studies were finalised to inform the Local Plan and Joint Strategic Plan, while a communications and engagement sub-group will plan and scope consultation and engagement activities.

Children's centres remained open throughout the pandemic, with many families accessing services face-to-face and online.

Over the year we have undertaken several engagement and review processes of children's centres in Southend:

- working with A Better Start Southend, Southend Association of Voluntary Services and Thriving Communities to review different delivery models
- co-producing recommendations with parent champions and service users
- developing a hybrid model of children's centre provision for children and families.



**97.8%**  
of 3–4-year-old  
children benefit  
from universal funded  
early education in  
OFSTED-rated Good  
or Outstanding  
settings

**20,531**  
people in  
Southend receive  
Universal Credit  
(Feb 2021)

**57.3%**  
eligible children  
benefit from  
free childcare  
funding

The council worked closely with schools and local communities to support learning opportunities across a year of disruption. We made it a priority that disadvantaged pupils were able to attend school and receive appropriate support. Vulnerable pupils were supported directly within settings, with additional support from the council and the Department for Education (DfE).

We:

- provided digital devices to vulnerable families so they could take part in remote learning opportunities, supported by community groups who repurposed old or redundant equipment for vulnerable families
- supported local schools and families by spending £190,000 on school meal vouchers and offering free school meals during February half-term via the government's COVID Winter Grant Scheme

- bought 15 AV1 mini-robots in October 2020 for education settings to borrow to help pupils keep up with schoolwork



- received £680,000 funding in February 2021 as part of the DfE's Holiday Activities and Food programme, to provide fun activities and a healthy meal for eligible children during school holidays.

The council took the decision to delay applications for the borough's grammar schools following direction from the DfE.

This was to allow pupils to return to school in September and re-engage with their learning. The council continued to encourage Southend families to consider applying for a place if appropriate.

In November 2020 we worked with school leaders to arrange a series of COVID-19-secure testing arrangements. The extra window for grammar school applications helped to boost the number of candidates. There were 5,109 candidates sitting the test.

All inspections of schools by Ofsted were suspended due to the pandemic, meaning there is no change to the percentage of schools currently rated 'good' or 'outstanding', which is 87.8 per cent.

94 per cent of primary and secondary school children in Southend returned to the classroom when schools reopened in March 2021 following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.



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*By 2050 people can easily get in, out and around our borough and we have a world class digital infrastructure.*

*Working with the public transport providers to enhance and encourage the use of the existing provision moving towards a long-term aspiration to open new routes, enabling a wider accessibility to public transport options.*

*People have a wide choice of transport options.*

*We are leading the way in making public and private travel smart, clean and green.*

*Southend is a leading digital city with world class infrastructure that reflects equity of digital provision for the young, vulnerable and disadvantaged.*

---

**67%**

of respondents found it easy to get around the borough without a car (NHT Survey 2020)

**1,217**

people received digital training at South Essex Community Hub

**15**

publicly available electric vehicle charging devices (8.2 per 100,000 people) (Jan 2021)

**We put in place measures to ensure people could get around the borough safely during the pandemic, such as temporarily widening Western Esplanade on the seafront in May 2020 for pedestrians and cyclists and putting in safety measures at the York Road Travel Centre to keep it operational. We also promoted sustainable travel and encouraged adults and children to have physically active lifestyles.**

Active travel initiative ForwardMotion encouraged individuals and organisations to swap car journeys for alternative transport options. We also commissioned cycle network mapping work and completed cycle parking and signage surveys. The survey of road grades (the suitability for cyclists of varying abilities to use roads) was delayed because of the pandemic.

Two Southend primary schools supported an innovative scheme promoting walking and cycling and improving air quality near schools. The 'School Street' pilot launched in December 2020 and restricts access to vehicles on the road outside Greenways and Leigh North Street schools during term-time school drop-off and pick-up times. This initiative is funded through the Department for Transport Emergency Active Travel Funding.



**The council carried out works to maintain and upgrade our highway network:**

- the Bell Junction footbridge was removed in September 2020
- construction of a dedicated slip road onto Rochford Road and new pedestrian island on Hobleythick Lane completed at the start of 2021; the slip road will allow a greater number of vehicles travelling towards London Southend Airport through the junction
- cliff stabilisation works completed at Belton Way East in Leigh-on-Sea in February 2021, after £3.2 million in Government funding allowed us to carry out ground investigation and stabilisation works at Belton Way

Plans for a Southend Pass one year pilot were agreed by the council, which will allow local residents and visitors to park for three hours in any zone for just 28p a day, or £8.50 a month, from 1 April 2021.



**Smart City**

The council continues to support Southend's journey to becoming a Smart City. Work carried out includes:

- carrying out research and development on the Smart City technology foundation and the Internet of Things

**72,171**  
registered  
MySouthend  
users


**91%**  
of MySouthend  
service request  
forms completed  
independently

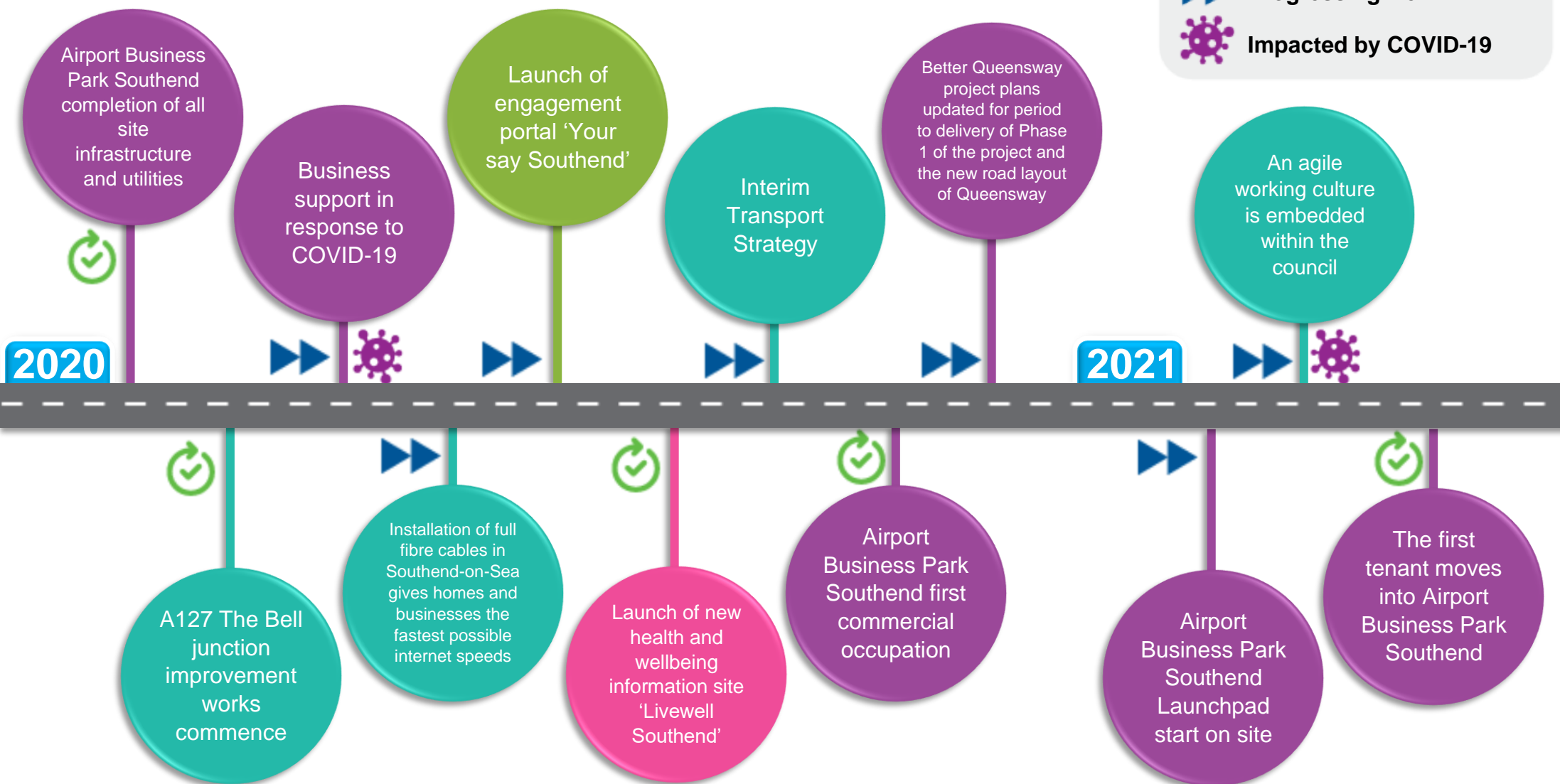
- creating the Smart Southend website to provide a single point of access for data, intelligence and analysis about the borough and support Southend to become a more data driven and data intelligent town
- working with partners to provide learning materials to increase digital literacy
- participating in broader Essex broadband and mobile projects to improve connectivity across the region.

We provided council employees with more remote working tools during the pandemic:

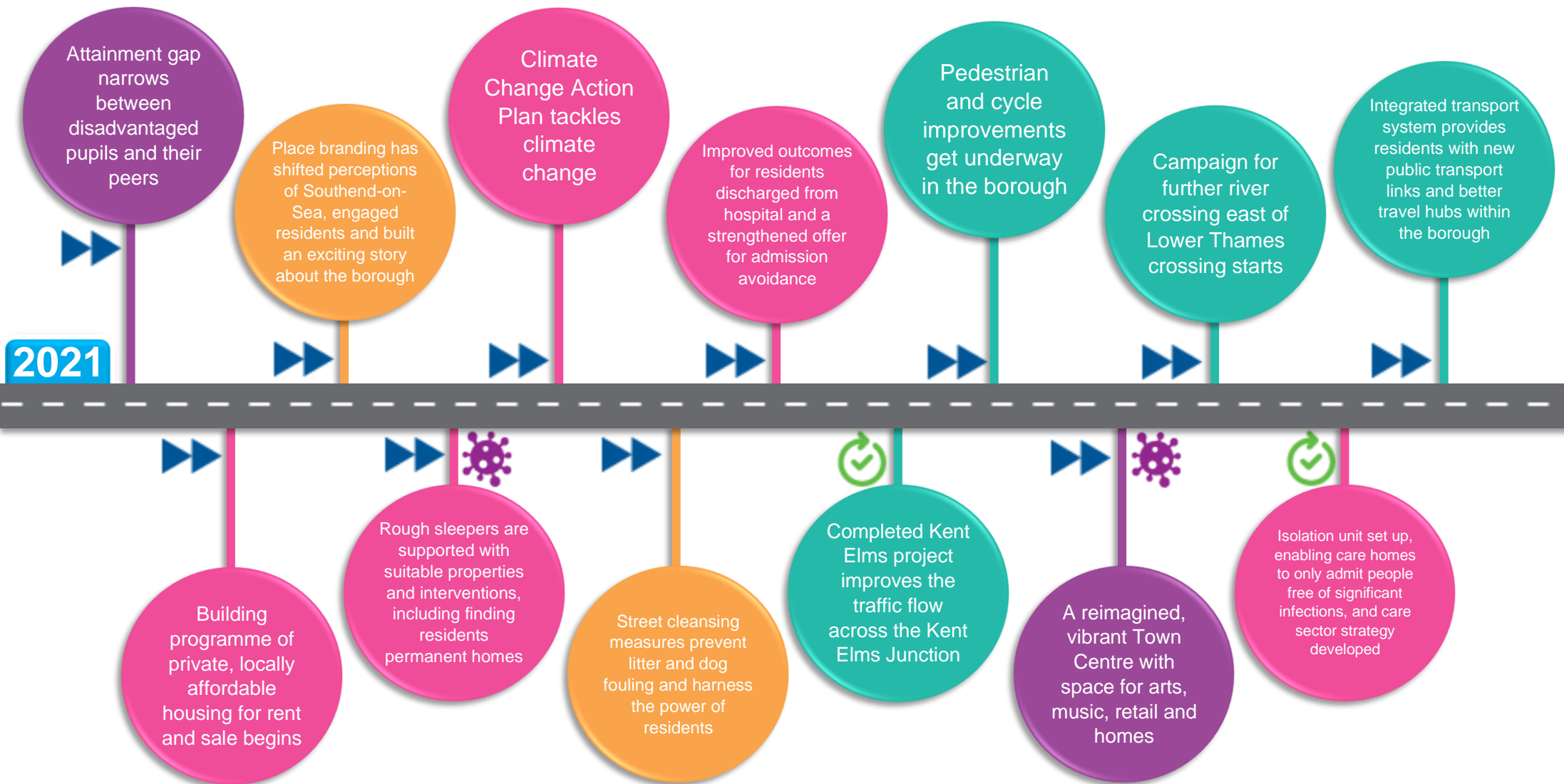
- issuing softphones to our customer contact centre employees
- rolling out new laptops to replace Windows 7 devices
- mapping out the collaborative technology tools needed to share information and training our employees to use them.

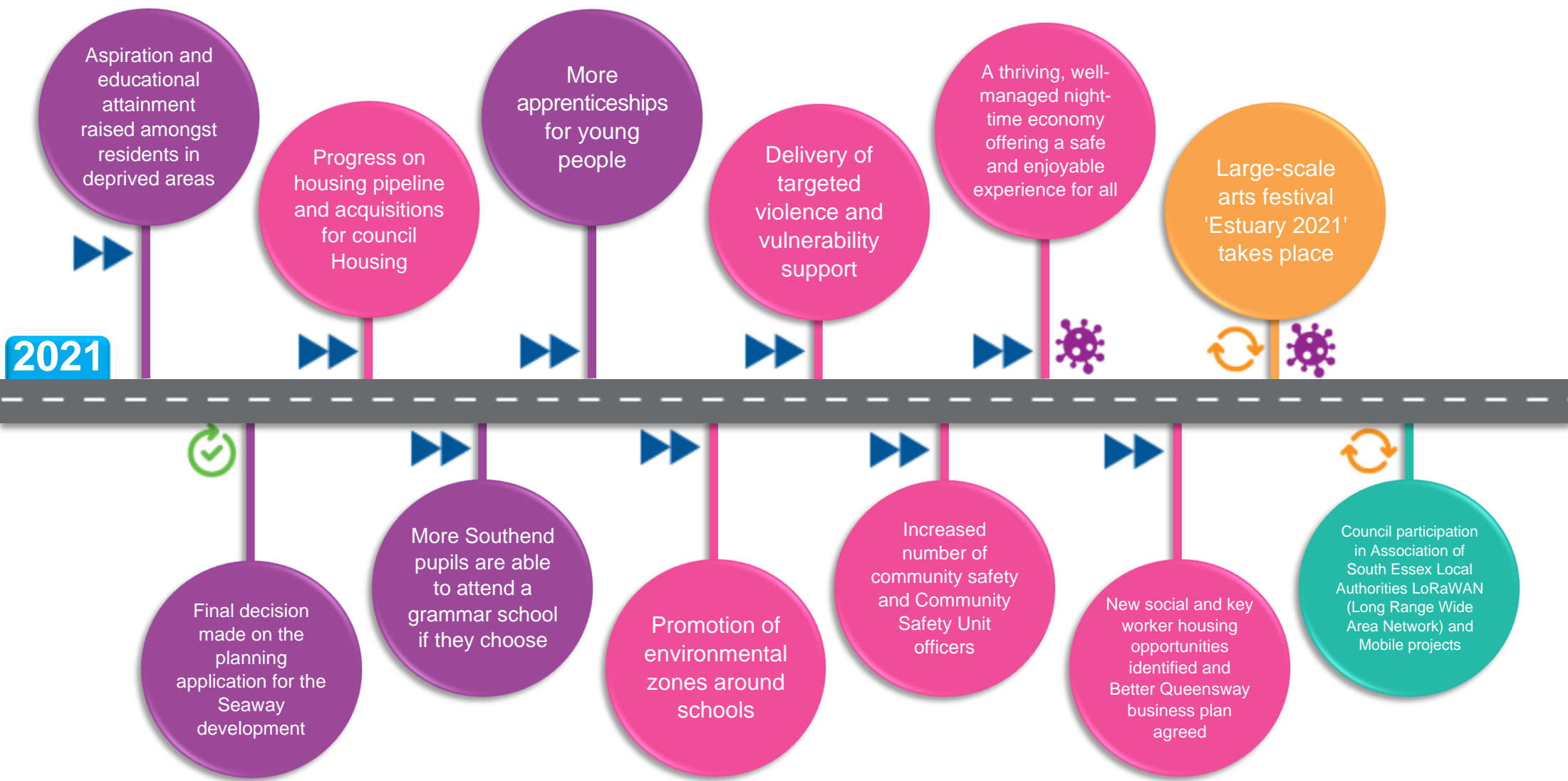
## Southend 2050 Roadmap

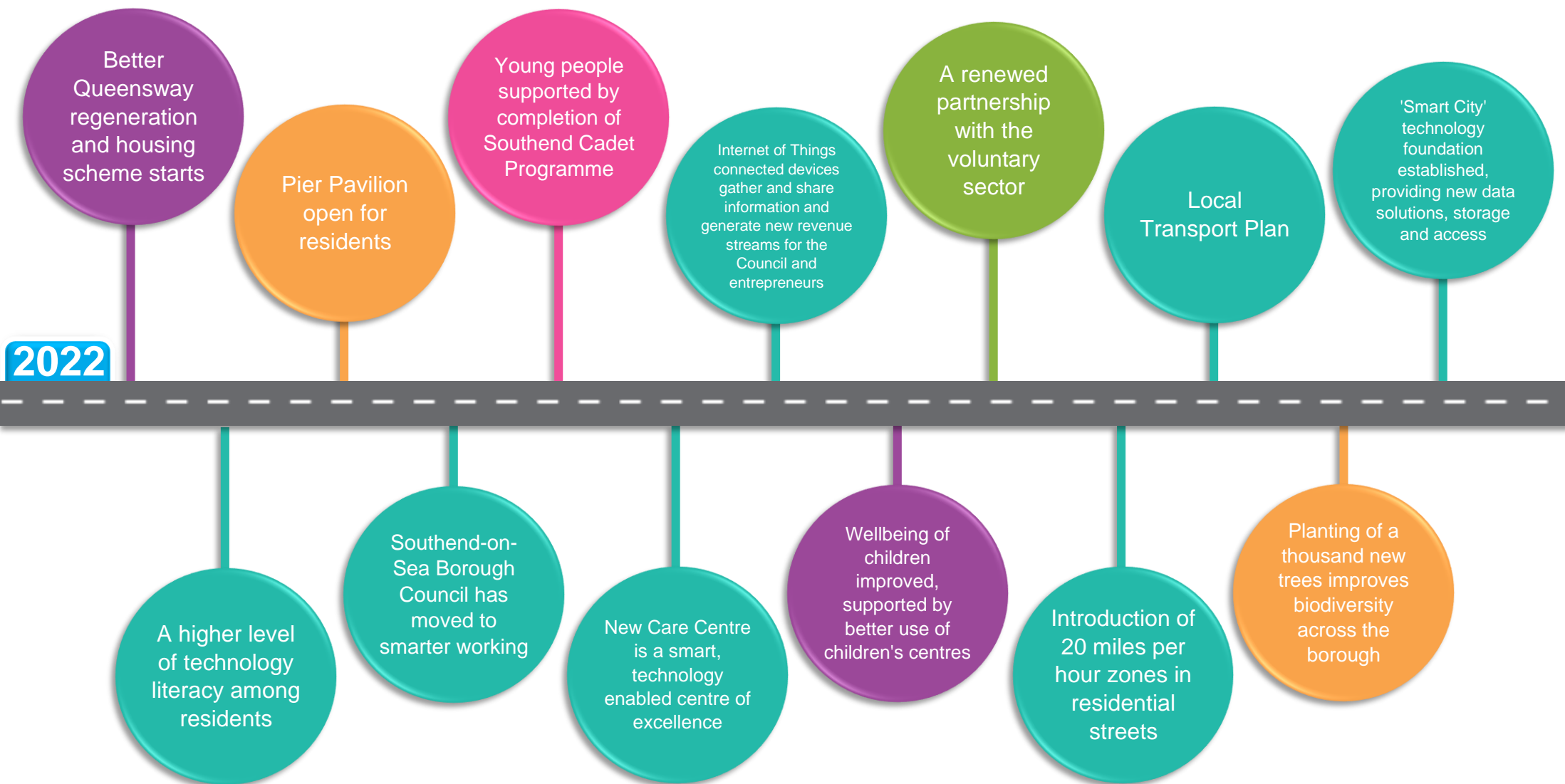
-  Completed
-  On track
-  Progressing well
-  Impacted by COVID-19

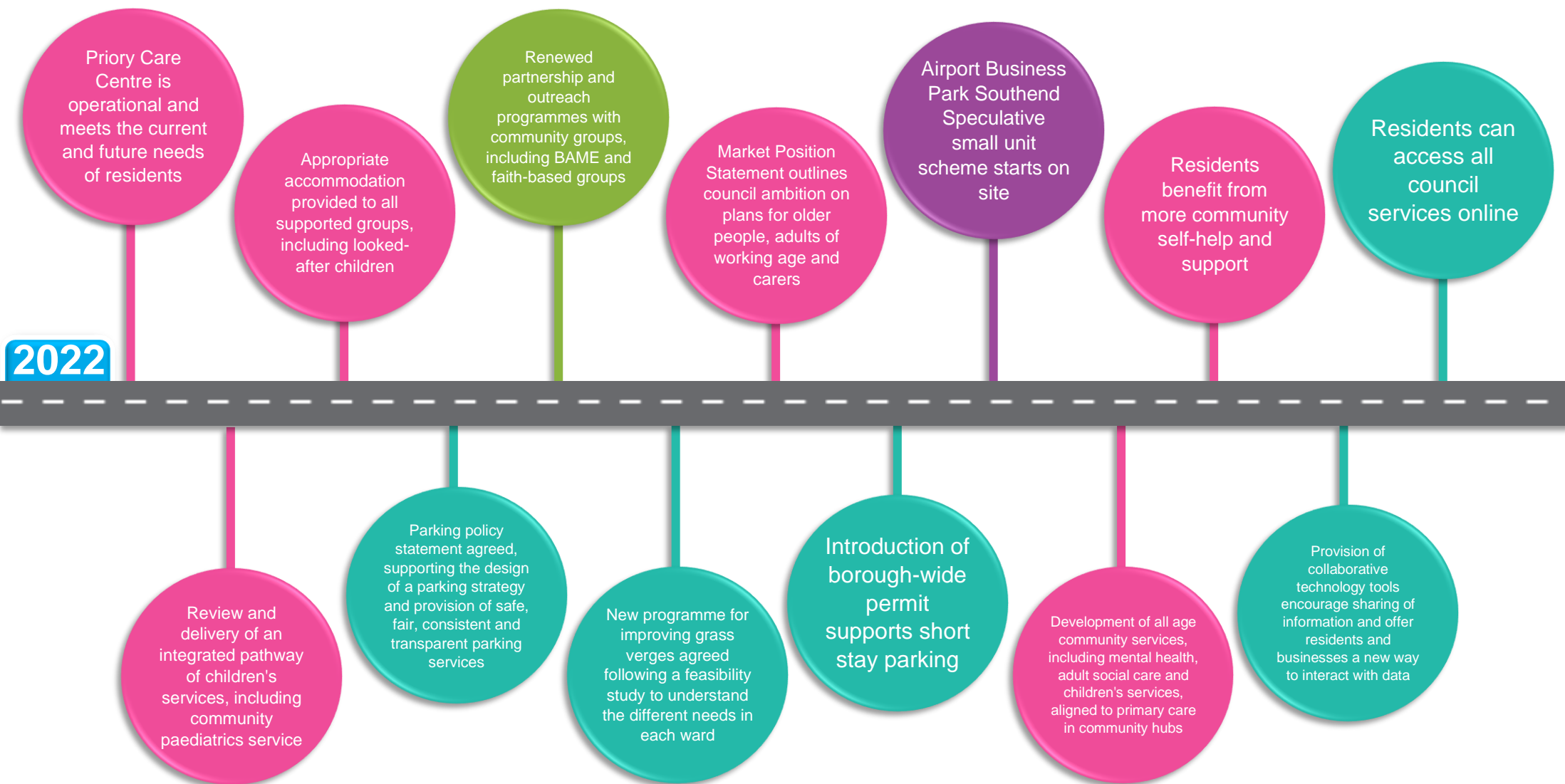














## Resources

**Like most local authorities across the county, we received less funding from central government whilst also experiencing major increases in demand for our services.**

We face ongoing, significant challenges in providing essential services to meet residents' needs within the level of resources we have available. This is made harder by a combination of increasing and more complex local demand, inflation and uncertainty over future government funding arrangements. This was taken to a whole new level of complexity and challenge in 2020 with the need to cope with the impact of COVID-19 locally.

Throughout this challenge our key driver has been the determination to make sure we invest in priorities that will make a tangible, positive difference locally. Our total net revenue expenditure for 2020/21 was £130.4 million. Significant additional investment was made available to

support our most vulnerable residents. Our approach throughout the pandemic has been to carefully prioritise our limited resources to areas of greatest need.

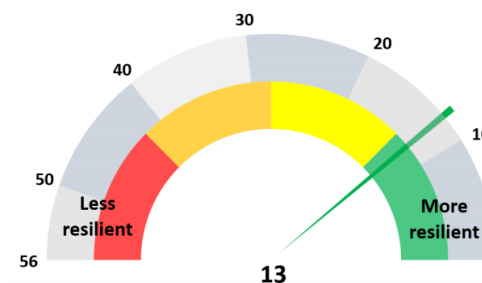
We developed a new Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2021/22 to 2025/26) to effectively manage the short- and medium-term challenges. The strategy has:

- clear ambitions developed with residents, businesses, and partners
- a firm commitment to deliver efficient, value for money services
- resources targeted towards the delivery of priority outcomes
- been carefully developed so we remain a financially stable, well run, and resilient organisation.

This clarity of focus provided a clear direction for the organisation and enabled the council to respond effectively to the huge health, economic and operational impact caused locally by COVID-19.

Our approach and evidence of our relative financial strength is illustrated independently by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's

(CIPFA's) recently published Financial Resilience Index for 2021. Southend's performance in CIPFA's Financial Resilience Index for 2021 is shown in the following graphic.



Southend is 13th out of 56 unitary authorities when ranked across the 16 indicators of financial stress within the Financial Resilience Index.

We are committed to ensuring the council remains financially stable and resilient for the future. Our new 'Getting to Know Your Business' programme, launched in 2020, is a key initiative for delivering this. The first phase of the programme helped to establish a baseline for all council services regarding costs, income generation potential, value for money and relative performance.

The council has an ambitious capital investment programme designed to create the right conditions to attract additional private sector investment into the local area and to directly benefit Southend's residents, businesses and future visitors. The level of planned investment is around £178.6 million over the next five years. In 2020/21 the council invested £71.9 million into capital schemes to continue to improve Southend as a place, including:

- purchase of the Victoria Shopping Centre
- development of Airport Business Park Southend
- investment in the Better Queensway project
- redevelopment of Delaware and Priory residential care homes
- school improvements and the provision of new school places
- housing acquisitions
- improvements to the town's highways
- Southend Pier schemes.

Despite the current challenges, the council is determined to build on the solid financial foundation we have worked so hard to create locally.

This will enable us to navigate the challenges and impact of a decade of austerity, the pandemic, and the unprecedented level of local demand for priority services.

By continuing to demonstrate strong leadership and proactive engagement with residents and communities, we want to take as much local control over our financial future as possible.

We believe that we are in a strong position to deliver our Southend 2050 ambition, local economic recovery and the best possible value for money services to our residents, businesses and visitors.



## Looking forward

**As we look towards Southend's future prosperity and recovery from the pandemic, it is important for us to recognise the impact and challenges COVID-19 has brought to the borough and wider world alike.**

We draw strength and learn from the resilient response of our communities and businesses and the innovative ways we have come together; whilst keeping in our hearts the loved ones who were sadly lost. Our ambition and tenacity remain unchanged and we will recover from these challenges.

The priorities and outcomes of Southend 2050 remain unchanged; but the impact of the pandemic means how we get there will be different to our original vision. Wherever possible, activity will be co-designed and co-delivered with residents and partners, requiring more innovative and effective stakeholder engagement.

We need to be able to adapt to quickly changing conditions, which has become a defining factor of the pandemic. The outcomes and roadmap timeline will reflect the council's priorities around COVID-19 recovery. Our focus for 2021/22 will also include:

- Green City and climate change commitments
- travel and transport considerations
- provision of more affordable housing
- an extra £3.6m investment in children's and adult social care.

Introduction of the Government's new UK Community Renewal Fund will provide up to £3 million of funding for Southend during 2021/22 to support recovery from the pandemic. This new fund aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches. Southend has been identified by the Government as a priority place. Local organisations in Southend can apply for a share of the £3 million funding which has been made available.

The council remains committed to using an Asset Based Community Development approach. This will

inform how we work with residents and stakeholders, and will revise our approach to leadership, management of assets, funding streams, commissioning, and workforce development. This approach will involve more joint working and sharing of resources, as well as the development of our locality approach. It will promote a more fluid and creative way for people to share their ideas on priorities and solutions, while also valuing and strengthening the more formal consultation processes. Post-pandemic it will be even more important to re-imagine the relationships and contacts with communities.

To further enhance our approach to community engagement and empowerment, the council is committed to investing into a new community builders' scheme. Community builders will be embedded into the heart of the community and will have conversations with residents about what matters to them. They will support early, preventative action by residents to help deliver on our Southend 2050 outcomes.



## **Future Ways of Working**

We will develop a Future Ways of Working framework for our workforce in 2021/22 to guide the prioritisation and delivery of Southend 2050 outcomes.

This will help us to:

- recover from the pandemic and to embrace new approaches and opportunities for collaboration with our partners
- sustain and increase the pace of change
- develop a new way of operating that delivers improved outcomes for our residents and communities at the best value, including social value

- become a modern council and an organisation that is a great place to work.

2020 brought some of the most extraordinary challenges any of us has ever seen, and we are proud of the resilience and creativity of our people, residents and businesses. We have come together and are stronger as a result. We are looking forward to new opportunities and a brighter Southend.