

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services)

to

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

on

8 July 2021

Agenda  
Item No.

Report prepared by: S. Tautz (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

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**In-Depth Scrutiny Project – ‘How the Council and Councillors Communicate with Local People and Stakeholders.’**

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee  
Cabinet Member: Councillor P Collins  
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)**

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## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To present the draft report of the In-Depth Scrutiny Project undertaken on behalf of the Committee.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 **That the report and recommendations arising from the in-depth scrutiny project, detailed at Section 14 of the report, be agreed.**
- 2.2 **That, in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (Part 4 (e) of the Constitution), the Chair of the Committee present the report and recommendations of the in-depth scrutiny project to a future meeting of the Cabinet.**

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 July 2019 approved a suggestion for an in-depth study to be undertaken to consider how the Council and councillors communicate with local people and stakeholders (Minute 201 refers).
- 3.2 In the context of the Southend 2050 Vision, the proposed outcomes from the project were to:
- (a) Provide advice and recommendations to support the development of a new engagement portal to replace the current consultation portal.
  - (b) Support the development of a new Participation and Engagement Strategy.
  - (c) Develop recommendations on how the Council/Councillors communicates in both a broadcast and two-way sense.

- 3.3 Progress with regard to the review was achieved in the first half of the 2019/20 municipal year, including the development of an action plan and the receipt of relevant presentations. However, the completion of the project was subsequently delayed from late-2019 as a result of a number of issues including reduced officer capacity in key service areas.
- 3.4 From March 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic also further delayed activity with regard to the completion of the review, reflecting the Council's approach to the handling of the pandemic, including the necessary focus on the delivery of key services and priority activities. As a result, it was not possible for the in-depth review to be completed by the end of the municipal year and the Committee agreed that it be carried forward into the current municipal year.
- 3.5 The Project Team comprised the following members: Councillors M Davidson, S Habermel, C Walker, M Dent, I Shead and P Collins, and former councillors B Ayling and H McDonald. Former Councillor Ayling was appointed Chair of the Project Team in November 2020 and Councillor D Garston attended meetings of the Project Team as chair of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.6 Officer support for the project was provided by Stephen Meah-Sims (Head of Corporate Strategy), Adam Keating (Strategic Communications Manager), Nick Constantine (Service Design Manager), Ellen Butler (Head of Customer Services), Kamil Pachalko (Engagement and Participation Manager), Boglarka Nemeth (Community Capacity Advisor) and Fiona Abbott/Steve Tautz (Project Co-ordinators).
- 3.7 An overview of the evidence considered by the Project Team is set out in the report.
- 3.8 The report of the in-depth scrutiny project will be presented by a member of the Project team or, with the agreement of the Chair of the Committee, by the Head of Corporate Strategy.

#### **4. Scrutiny Review – Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 4.1 The recommendations arising from the in-depth scrutiny project are set out in Section 14 of the final report. These have been agreed by the Project Team.
- 4.2 There are no specific recommendations arising from the project that have budget implications that require consideration as part of future years' budget processes prior to implementation.
- 4.3 The Committee is recommended to endorse the recommendations of the in-depth scrutiny project, 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

None

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

None

## **8. Background Papers**

Notes of meetings of the Project Team.

## 9. Appendices

Draft Final Report – ‘How the Council and Councillors Communicate With Local People And Stakeholders.’