

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of the Executive Director Growth and Housing

To

Cabinet

On

14th September 2021

Report prepared by: Emma Cooney Director of Regeneration and Growth and Scott Dolling Director of Culture and Tourism

Agenda
Item No.

Bid for City Status

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Councillor Ian Gilbert
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek agreement to the preparation and submission of a bid for City Status, for the Borough of Southend-on-Sea, as part of the Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 **Cabinet agree to the preparation and submission of a City Status bid for the Borough of Southend-on-Sea, as part of the Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition**

3. Background

- 3.1 Her Majesty The Queen will be the first British monarch to have reached 70 years on the throne. The Platinum Jubilee celebrations will reflect on Her Majesty's reign, and her impact on the UK and the world since 1952. As part of these celebrations, there will be a civic honours competition. This includes competitions for City Status. Any local authority in any part of the United Kingdom, a Crown Dependency or an Overseas Territory, which considers that its area deserves to be granted the rare honour of City Status on this very special occasion is welcome to enter the competition.
- 3.2 While previous applications for City Status have not been successful, Southend has much to recommend itself as a city and our 2050 ambition sets out an aspiration to be a city – keeping in sight what makes Southend special while leading the way in how to grow a sustainable, inclusive city.

- 3.3 The bidding guidance seeks a concise overview of the place's distinct identity; civic pride; cultural infrastructure, interesting heritage, history and traditions; vibrant and welcoming community; record of innovation; sound governance and administration; associations with Royalty; and other particularly distinctive features, age, residents or communities who have made widely recognised significant contributions to society and cultural infrastructure. Alongside this it seeks to understand the place through a profile of the resident population of the area, economic activity, public green spaces, sport and leisure facilities and shopping areas, and local authority support for the voluntary sector.
- 3.4 The proposal to apply for City Status is supported by both Sir David Amess MP and James Duddridge MP and Sir David has recently convened a committee, consisting of stakeholders from voluntary, business, creative and education sectors across Southend, ready to support preparation of the application. Further and wide ranging engagement would be a key aspect of the preparation of a City Status bid.
- 3.5 The deadline for submission is 8th December 2021 at 4pm with results to be announced in 2022. The guidance does not state how many places City Status may be awarded to as part of the competition.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 Cabinet could decide not to pursue preparation and submission of a bid for City Status. This would prevent Southend-on-Sea Borough Council from applying as applications must be made by the relevant Local Authority.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that an application for City Status is made in recognition not only of Southend's rich heritage and what Southend has to offer now as a 'city by the sea', but also its shared future ambition and the city it aspires to become. Securing City Status brings with it prestige, standing and an opportunity to lever investment.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

- 6.1.1 The 2050 ambition clearly articulates a desire for Southend to be a city. It refers to being *"prosperous and connected, but with a quality of life to match. Southend-on Sea has led the way in how to grow a sustainable, inclusive city that has made the most of the life enhancing benefits of new technologies."* This aspiration runs through all the 2050 themes with ambitions to be a digital city; a green city; a successful and prosperous city; a city that a thriving, active and involved community feel invested in; and a city that Southenders are fiercely proud of.

6.2 Financial Implications

6.2.1 The Government does not want local authorities to incur any undue expense entering the competition. It is the quality of the contents of the application, taken as a whole, that will be assessed, rather than the standards of presentation. While every effort will be made to minimise financial costs of the bid development through making use of existing events and pieces of work as well as the stakeholders committed to supporting the work, it is likely that there will be some costs incurred. Therefore, it is proposed that a sum of £20k is set aside to support the bid and funded from the Council's corporate contingency.

6.3 Legal Implications

6.3.1 The decision on the award of City Status is entirely at the discretion of Her Majesty The Queen, and there are no formulaic criteria. Therefore, there are no strict legal criteria to meet, just the preparation of a robust bid that fulfils the criteria as detailed in the weblink as referred in the Background papers, below.

6.4 People Implications

6.4.1 Officer time and capacity is required to support the development of the bid. As far as possible this will coincide with existing work already underway but may require the reprioritisation of work in order to meet the 8th December deadline.

6.5 Property Implications

6.5.1 There are no property implications of preparing and submitting a City Status bid.

6.6 Consultation

6.6.1 A wide ranging engagement, co-production and awareness raising campaign is envisaged as part of the bid development. This will seek to engage residents, businesses, voluntary sector, education and political representatives as well as drawing on recent consultations such as those undertaken by Concrete Culture.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications of developing and submitting a bid for City Status. A bid would seek to identify and celebrate the diversity of Southend's population and its aspiration for an inclusive, thriving city in the future.

6.8 Risk Assessment

6.8.1 The primary risks relating to this bid for City Status are:

- Not meeting the deadline – this is being mitigated through the convening of a committee to share the work involved and early commencement of this work.
- Not getting support – there may be people who wouldn't support Southend becoming a city. This will need to be considered through the consultation and engagement process.
- Not securing City Status – this is a competitive process and a number of other locations have confirmed that they will also be submitting a bid for City Status. Even if the bid were not to be successful, the process of

developing a submission for Southend will provide rich data and further engender civic pride.

6.9 Value for Money

6.9.1 City Status does not carry a direct financial reward. However, it is recognised as a tool for leveraging investment.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

6.10.1 There are no community safety implications of preparing and submitting a City Status bid. Figures relating to community safety may be included in the bid submission.

6.11 Environmental Impact

6.11.1 There are no environmental implications of preparing and submitting a City Status bid. Information about the Declaration of a Climate Change Emergency and corresponding Green City Action Plan may be included in the bid setting out the kind of city Southend aspires to be.

7. Background Papers

7.1 Entry guidelines and background papers for the Platinum Jubilee Honours Competition can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/platinum-jubilee-civic-honours-competition>

8. Appendices

None.