

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Report of Strategic Director for Adults and Communities
To
Shareholder Board
On
13 October 2021

Report prepared by: Scott Dolling, Director of Culture &
Tourism

**Agenda
Item No.**

Southend on Sea Forum Management Ltd

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s)
Cabinet Member: Councillor Anne Jones
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To update the board on Southend on Sea Forum Management Board Ltd

2 Recommendations

2.1 That Members note the financial performance of the company for last full financial year

3 Background

3.1 The Forum was the country's first combined public and academic library where a local authority and higher education providers joined resources.

3.2 The building opened on time and on budget in Elmer Square in 2013 following a £28M capital project managed by Southend On Sea Borough Council's property team.

3.3 In addition to the combined library, the space also houses Focal Point Gallery, a contemporary arts venue funded by SBC and the Arts Council as one of their National Portfolio Organisations.

3.4 Southend-on-Sea Forum Management Ltd (SoSFML) is a zero profit joint venture between the University of Essex, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (SBC) and South Essex College (SEC). It was set up to manage the property of The Forum, allowing mutual benefit through sharing of resources.

3.5 SoSFML functions by charging the partners three times a year in advance for expected costs, it then makes adjustments in the following invoice for any differences between expected costs and actual costs, thus at the end of the year SoSFML will always net to zero profit.

3.6 The financial year of SoSFML runs from August to July.

- 3.7 Two SBC councillors are appointed to the board through the annual appointments committee. For the municipal year 20/21 the representatives were Cllr George and Cllr Thompson.
- 3.8 The Council has the largest stake in the company and costs are attributed proportionately based on space utilisation.
- 3.9 The board meets quarterly to agree strategic activity that involves all partners. Shared operations where representatives from each organisation contribute include an SLA for the library management, a user group and the big screen management group.
- 3.10 There was not a significant change to funding requirements through the pandemic with some reductions in running costs mitigated by additional cleansing regimes and infrastructure (screens etc). The Forum partners agreed to the use of the building during the first reopening from lockdown (July 2020) to facilitate additional toilet provision in the town centre.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 The current arrangements have been in practice for 7 years and work effectively for managing the various stakeholders. An informal partnership was proposed at the outset as an alternative but was not agreed by the University of Essex.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The financial reporting is required by law.

6. Corporate Implications

6.2 Financial Implications

There is an agreed formula to share costs and provision is made in the annual budget cycle, no issues are reported or anticipated.

6.3 Legal Implications

N/A

6.4 People Implications

N/A

6.5 Property Implications

6.6 Consultation

NA

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

NA

6.8 Risk Assessment

NA

6.9 Value for Money

NA

6.10 Community Safety Implications

NA

6.11 Environmental Impact

NA

7. Background Papers

8. Appendices

Financial return year ended 31 July 2020.