

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday, 8th February, 2022

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor L Salter (Chair)
Councillors H Boyd (Vice-Chair), B Beggs, M Berry, J Courtenay, T Cowdrey, T Cox*, K Evans, D Garne, B Hooper, A Line, K Mitchell, J Moyies*, I Shead, M Stafford and P Wexham*

*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

In Attendance: Councillors L Burton, A Jones, C Nevin (Cabinet Members), T Watts (Southend Carers Forum), O Richards (Healthwatch Southend) (Co-opted Members), S Kebbell (Southend Youth Council (Observer)), T D'orsi, H Farmer (NHS Southend Clinical Commissioning Group), P Johnson, S Delve (Southend SEND Independent Forum), J Chesterton, T Forster, P Grout, E Helm, A Kubeyinje, B Leigh, M Marks, S Tautz and J Williams

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 9.50 pm

669 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Dear (Substitute: Councillor T Cox), Councillor J Lamb (Substitute: Councillor J Moyies) and Councillor A Thompson (Substitute: Councillor P Wexham).

670 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

(a) Councillors L Burton, A Jones and C Nevin (Cabinet Members) - Interest in the called-in items; attended pursuant to the dispensation agreed at Council on 19 July 2012, under S.33 of the Localism Act 2011.

(b) Councillors L Burton, A Jones and C Nevin (Cabinet Members) - Interest in the referred items; attended pursuant to the dispensation agreed at Council on 19 July 2012, under S.33 of the Localism Act 2011.

(c) Councillor L Salter - Agenda Item 7 (Community Children's Services – South-East Essex) - Husband is a consultant surgeon at Southend Hospital; Daughter is a consultant at Basildon Hospital; Son-in-law is a general practitioner in the Borough - non-pecuniary interest.

(d) Councillor B Beggs - Agenda Item 6 (SEND Peer Review) - Family member has special educational needs and disabilities - non-pecuniary interest.

(e) Councillor T Cox - Agenda Item 6 (SEND Peer Review) - Family member has special educational needs and disabilities and is in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan - non-pecuniary interest.

(f) Councillor T Cowdrey - Agenda Item 4 (Draft Prioritising Resources to Deliver Better Outcomes 2022/23- 2026/27) - Primary carer for service user and involved in negotiating service complaints - non-pecuniary interests.

(g) Councillor B Hooper - Agenda Item 6 (SEND Peer Review) - Director of Blade Education, a not-for-profit company that works with local SEND children - non-pecuniary interest.

(h) Councillor L Burton - Agenda Item 6 (SEND Peer Review) - Employed as a teacher at a school outside the Borough - non-pecuniary interest.

(i) Councillor C Nevin - Agenda Item 7 (Community Children's Services – South-East Essex)- Employed at external National Health Service Trust; Family members employed at Mid and South-Essex Trust hospitals - non-pecuniary interests.

671 Questions from Members of the Public

The Committee noted the responses of the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, to questions submitted by Mr David Webb, which would be sent to Mr Webb as he was not present at the meeting.

672 Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 November 2021

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

673 Draft Prioritising Resources to Deliver Better Outcomes – 2022/23 to 2026/27

The Committee considered Minute 605 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on January 2022, which had been referred directly to each of the scrutiny committees, together with a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the draft prioritising resources to deliver better outcomes for 2022/23 to 2026/27.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That it be noted that the final version of the updated Financial Sustainability Strategy 2022-2032 will be available for consideration in February 2022 (Appendix 1 to the submitted report).

2. That it be noted that a Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 – 2026/27 will be available for consideration in February 2022 and the draft Medium Term Financial Forecast and estimated Earmarked Reserves Balances up to 2026/27 (Annexes 1 and 2 to Appendix 2 to the submitted report), be endorsed.

3. That the draft Section 151 Officer's statement on the robustness of the proposed budget, the adequacy of the Council's reserves and the Council's Reserves Strategy (Appendix 3 to the report), be noted.

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4. That the appropriation of the sums to earmarked reserves totalling £2.675M (Appendix 4 to the report), be endorsed.

5. That the appropriation of the sums from earmarked reserves totalling £4.494M, which includes £2.500M that was previously approved to support the budget in 2021/22 and is now requested to be used to support the estimated budget gap for 2022/23 instead. (Appendix 4 to the report), be endorsed.
6. That a General Fund Budget Requirement for 2022/23 of £140.288M and Council Tax Requirement of £91.844M (Appendix 5) and any required commencement of consultation, statutory or otherwise, be endorsed.
7. That it be noted that the 2022/23 revenue budget has been prepared on the basis of using £1.5 million from accumulated Collection Fund surpluses for the core budget to allow for a smoothing of the budget gap across the next four financial years.
8. That a Council Tax increase of 3.99% for the Southend-on-Sea element of the Council Tax for 2022/23, being 1.99% for general use and 2.0% for Adult Social Care, be endorsed.
9. That it be noted that the position of the Council's preceptors is to be determined:
 - Essex Police – no indication of Council Tax position
 - Essex Fire & Rescue Services – no indication of Council Tax position
 - Leigh-on-Sea Town Council – proposed Band D precept increase of 0.53%;
10. That no Special Expenses be charged other than the Leigh-on-Sea Town Council precept for 2022/23, be endorsed.
11. That the proposed General Fund revenue budget investment of £13.672M (Appendix 6 to the report), be endorsed.
12. That the proposed General Fund revenue budget savings and income generation initiatives for 2022/23 of £5.087M (Appendix 7 to the report), be endorsed.
13. That the proposed future outline Budget Transformation Programme 2023/24 – 2026/27 (Appendix 8 to the report), be noted.
14. That the proposed range of fees and charges for 2022/23 (Appendix 9 to the report), be endorsed.
15. That the Dedicated Schools Grant budget and its relevant distribution as recommended by the Education Board (Appendix 10 to the report), be endorsed.
16. That the Capital Investment Strategy for 2022/23 to 2026/27 (Appendix 11 to the report) and the Capital Investment Policy (Annex 1 to Appendix 11 to the report), be endorsed.
17. That the new schemes and additions to the Capital Investment Programme for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27 totalling £12.6M for the General Fund (Appendix 12 to the report) and new schemes subject to viable business cases totalling £33.9M (£15.5M for the General Fund and £18.4M for the Housing Revenue Account) (Appendix 12 to the report), be endorsed.
18. That the proposed changes to the current Capital Investment Programme that were considered for approval as part of the Resourcing Better Outcomes – Financial Performance Report – Period 8 (Appendix 13 to the report), be noted.
19. That the proposed Capital Investment Programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27 of £119.8M to be delivered by the Council and £51.3M to be delivered by Subsidiary

Companies, Partners and Joint Ventures (Appendix 14 to the report) of which £51.1M is supported by external funding, be endorsed.

20. That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for 2022/23 (Appendix 15 to the report) and the prudential indicators (Appendix 16 to the report), be endorsed.

21. That the operational boundary and authorised limits for borrowing for 2022/23 are set at £385M and £395M respectively (Appendix 16 to the report), be endorsed.”

Note: This is an Executive Function, save that approval of the final budget following Cabinet on 15 February 2020 is a Council Function

Cabinet Members: Councillors I Gilbert and P Collins

674 SEND Peer Review

The Committee considered Minute 606 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 January 2022, which had been referred directly to the Committee for scrutiny, together with a report of the report of the Executive Director (Children and Public Health) presenting the findings and recommendations from the Local Government Association (LGA) Independent Peer Review into Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Children with Disability services, which also set out the proposed actions to be taken by the Council to drive necessary change in order to improve services to residents and families.

The Executive Director (Children and Public Health) undertook to provide a written response to questions raised by members of the Committee, with regard to the current level of completion of training by members of the Council in respect of the challenges of working with residents with SEND issues and awareness of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process.

Resolved:

1. That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

“1. That the Local Government Association Independent Peer Review Report, be noted.

2. That the recommendations made by the LGA Peer Review Team, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be accepted.

3. That the Implementation Plan in response to the recommendations in the LGA Peer Review, as set out at Appendix two to the report, be approved.

4. That the matter be referred to the People Scrutiny Committee for consideration.”

2. That a report be made to the next meeting of the Committee setting out progress on the delivery of the Implementation Plan, on the basis of the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status of each action.

3. That the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning consider how the reference in the Peer Review report, that the route to the Children with Disabilities Team through a safeguarding ‘lens’ is not always appropriate, could be addressed within Recommendation 7 (Threshold of Need Document) of the Implementation Plan.

4. That the Committee review options for the possible establishment of a Working Group to support the delivery of the Implementation Plan, at its next meeting.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Cabinet Member: Councillor L Burton

675 Community Children's Services - South-East Essex

The Committee considered a report of the NHS Alliance Director and Interim Director for Children and Young People and Learning Disabilities, with regard to the current position and proposed arrangements for the transfer of Southeast Essex Community Children's services currently provided by Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust within the Lighthouse Child Development Centre, to Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust.

Resolved:

1. That the planned transfer of service provision for Southeast Essex Community Children's Services to Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust during March 2022, be noted.
2. That the plans to commence on a co-design programme to further transform Community Children's Services across Mid and South Essex Health Care Partnership Integrated Care System, be noted.
3. That it be noted that the System Leadership Executive Group have identified Children and Young People as one of the top three priority areas for the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System.
4. That an update on the transfer of service provision for Southeast Essex Community Children's Services be made to the Committee in July 2022.

Note: This is a Scrutiny Function

676 Children's Services Improvement Board

The Committee received a presentation by the Executive Director (Children and Public Health), that provided a six-monthly update on the work of the Children's Services Improvement Board.

The Executive Director (Children and Public Health) undertook to provide a written response to questions raised by members of the Committee, with regard to the current number of Looked-After Children that have special educational needs and disabilities.

Resolved:

1. That the current work programme and progress of the Children's Services Improvement Board, be noted.
2. That the presentation made by the Executive Director (Children and Public Health) on the work of the Children's Services Improvement Board be circulated to all members of the Committee.
3. That future updates on the work of the Children's Services Improvement Board be made to the Committee on the basis of a presentation by the Executive Director (Children and Public Health).

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor L Burton

677 Joint In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2021/22

The Committee was advised of current progress with regard to the joint in-depth scrutiny project for 2021/22.

Councillors noted that the project had recently been delayed and that, as a result, the Project Team had requested that the work programme activity around Officer/Councillor Engagement, be reviewed to reflect that such aspects of the project could be aligned with the separate work taking place to implement the actions arising from the review of the Member/Officer Protocol. The Committee was informed that the Project Team had recently received a presentation on the current performance of the 'Councillor Queries' portal and plans for its development and had also asked to receive a presentation in respect of appropriate member casework management systems that could be considered by the Council.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function

Chair: _____