

Southend-on-Sea City Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Interim Executive Director
(Strategy, Change and Governance)
to

Place Scrutiny Committee, People Scrutiny Committee
and Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

4th, 6th and 7th July 2022

Report prepared by: S. Tautz
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Summary of Work 2021/22 & In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2022/23

A Part 1 Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For the Committee to review the work that it carried out during the previous municipal year.
- 1.2 For the Committee to consider a possible approach to in-depth scrutiny activity for 2022/23.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee note the summary of the scrutiny work that it has undertaken during the 2021/22 municipal year.
- 2.2 That the completion of the joint in-depth scrutiny project undertaken for 2021/22, around the theme of 'Enabling Councillors to be Effective', be noted.
- 2.3 That the Committee consider the proposed approach to in-depth scrutiny activity for 2022/23, as set out in this report.
- 2.4 That, subject to the agreement of the proposed approach to in-depth scrutiny activity for 2022/23, no other topic(s) be selected by the Committee for additional in-depth scrutiny during 2022/23.

3. Work Undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees 2021/22

- 3.1 A summary of the work undertaken by each of the scrutiny committees during the 2021/22 municipal year is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.2 The Committee is requested to note the summary of the work it has undertaken during 2021/22.

4. In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2021/22 - 'Enabling Councillors to be Effective'

- 4.1 As the Committee will be aware from the report included elsewhere on this agenda, the joint in-depth scrutiny project undertaken on behalf of the People

Scrutiny Committee, the Place Scrutiny Committee and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for 2021/22, has recently been completed

- 4.2 The report and recommendations arising from the completion of the joint in-depth scrutiny project will be considered by each of the scrutiny committees during the current cycle of meetings.

5. In-Depth Scrutiny Projects 2022/23

- 5.1 As councillors will be aware, each of the scrutiny committees has traditionally undertaken an in-depth scrutiny project each year. The scrutiny projects are selected at the beginning of each municipal year and have generally been focussed on the Council's corporate priorities or matters of local concern. Recent in-depth scrutiny projects have also been aligned with the ambition and outcomes arising from the Southend 2050 programme. Details of the in-depth scrutiny projects previously undertaken by the scrutiny committees are attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 5.2 The delivery of the in-depth scrutiny projects inform the development of a report and recommendations which advise the Executive and the Council on its policies, budget provision and service delivery in specific areas. Each project is driven through a member Programme Working Party (Project Team), supported by relevant officers. Participation in the in-depth scrutiny projects enables councillors to be actively involved in a particular topic and to influence and shape proposals around improvement that will result in benefits and outcomes for residents and service users.
- 5.3 The undertaking of the annual in-depth scrutiny projects is not a statutory requirement and is derived from the power set out in Section 9(c) (Policy Review and Development) of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules at Part 4(e) of the Council's Constitution, which provides that the scrutiny committees may hold enquiries and investigate options for future direction in policy development.
- 5.4 At this meeting, the Committee would normally agree the nature of the in-depth scrutiny project that it wishes to undertake during the municipal year. As already indicated, the undertaking of the annual in-depth scrutiny projects is not a statutory requirement and is based on local practice over a number of years.
- 5.5 The undertaking of individual in-depth scrutiny projects for each scrutiny committee can be resource intensive. Each Programme Working Party (Project Team) must be fully supported throughout the scoping, delivery and outcome reporting of the project and appropriate specialist capacity is often required to facilitate aspects of projects. In addition, it has regularly been necessary to arrange and undertake appropriate site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, and commission research etc. to inform the delivery of in-depth scrutiny projects.
- 5.6 As a consequence of the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued need to also focus on local recovery priorities going forward, the traditional approach to the undertaking of separate in-depth scrutiny projects was not considered the best use of resources and capacity for 2021/22 and the single project around the theme of 'Enabling Councillors to be Effective' was therefore undertaken jointly on behalf of each of the scrutiny committees, as it was

considered important that scrutiny activity recognised the level of resources and capacity available to support projects.

- 5.7 Joint in-depth scrutiny projects have also previously been conducted by the scrutiny committees on a number of occasions. In 2016/17, a joint project was undertaken by the Policy and Resources and Place Scrutiny Committees, to investigate whether there was a need for additional enforcement resources for Southend. A joint scrutiny project was also undertaken during 2018/19, also by the Policy and Resources and Place Scrutiny Committees, looking at the re-imagining the town centre in the context of the vision for Southend 2050.
- 5.8 It is suggested that a single joint in-depth scrutiny project could again be undertaken for 2022/23 on behalf of each of the scrutiny committees. The following issues have been identified by Corporate Management Team as matters of particular importance to councillors and residents, which could constitute a possible focus for joint scrutiny activity during the year:
- The Cost of Living Crisis - Exploring how the Council provides supportive and streamlined service for citizens of Southend.
 - 'MySouthend' - Co-designing and recommending future digital solutions, whilst considering services that are inclusive and accessible to all.
- 5.9 The Interim Executive Director (Strategy, Change and Governance) will provide further detail around the possible scope of these suggested themes for in-depth scrutiny project activity.
- 5.10 The undertaking of a joint scrutiny project as described above would enable scrutiny activity to be coordinated and directed towards areas of key importance to members, without the need to dedicate resources and capacity to separate projects. This would therefore have advantages in terms of a reduced and beneficial impact on other work to support local COVID-19 recovery and the delivery of key schemes, than would be case if separate projects were to be undertaken.
- 5.11 If the nature of such a joint in-depth scrutiny project is agreed by the scrutiny committees, further consideration will be given to the scope of the project and the development of an appropriate project plan and work programme for agreement at the next cycle of meetings. The scoping of the proposed joint scrutiny project will also need to consider how the project could be undertaken and delivered by a Programme Working Party comprising members of each of the scrutiny committees. Member appointments to the individual Programme Working Parties were made by the Council at its meeting on 19 May 2022 (Appendix 3) and appointments to a joint Working Party would also need to be made by the Council.
- 5.12 It is therefore recommended that, subject to the agreement of each of the scrutiny committees, a single in-depth scrutiny project around one of the issues identified at paragraph 5.8 of this report be undertaken jointly on behalf of each scrutiny committee during 2022/23 and that, in light of the proposed scrutiny project, no additional topic(s) be selected by the Committee for in-depth scrutiny activity during the year.

5.13 This report will be considered by each of the scrutiny committees during the current cycle of meetings and the views of councillors on the proposed approach to in-depth scrutiny activity for 2022/23 will be reported to each meeting.

6. Corporate Implications

Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

Becoming an excellent and high performing organisation.

Financial Implications

There are costs associated with organising in-depth projects relating to officer time, but this will all be contained within existing resources.

Legal Implications

None

People Implications

None.

Property Implications

None

Consultation

As described in report.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

None

Risk Assessment

None

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Summary of work of the Scrutiny Committees for 2021/22

Appendix 2 - Previous In-Depth Scrutiny Projects

Appendix 3 - Membership of Programme Working Parties for 2022/23