

Southend-on-Sea City Council

Report of Executive Director (Strategy, Change & Governance)

To

Cabinet

On

1 July 2022

Report prepared by: Stephen Meah-Sims, Executive Director (Strategy, Change and Governance) and Adam Keating, Strategic Communications Manager

Agenda
Item No.

City Council corporate branding refresh (engagement)

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

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The new city designation for Southend has provided an opportunity for the council to consider options connected to the council's existing corporate branding and updating it to reflect the new name of the council.

This report follows on from 14th March cabinet report and recommendations, and subsequent referral back from Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 16th March 2022.

- 1.2 This report sets out the opportunities connected to updating the corporate branding for the council and re-presents options for Cabinet to agree on, and for those options to be engaged on more widely.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet consider the corporate branding options set out within this report

- 2.1 **To agree on the four branding concepts to go out to wider engagement, as set out in section 4.1.**
- 2.2 **To agree to the timeframe of engagement of 4 weeks.**
- 2.3 **To use the feedback as an evidence-base to inform the final decision on the council's new corporate branding**

3 Background

- 3.1 Following the tragic death of Sir David Amess MP in October 2021, Southend-on-Sea, the place, was granted the privilege of being granted City Status; a long-standing ambition which Sir David Amess fought for on behalf of Southend. Southend, the place, officially became a city at a Civic Commemoration Event on the 1st of March 2022, where His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales and Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cornwall bestowed city status, through the handing of the Letters Patent to our serving Mayor at a Full Council meeting, as part of the Commemoration Event.
- 3.2 The current branding, known as the council's corporate brand, should enable users of council services to instantly recognise the council. Corporate branding aims to identify the council and the range of services that the council is connected to across the city. Branding also raises awareness of council services and makes the council publicly accountable. Our branding also conveys our authenticity as a local authority, whether that is in council communication, policies, and strategies, to official correspondence from the council.
- 3.3 The change of Southend to a city includes the council changing its name to Southend-on-Sea City Council to reflect its new status within a new city. Looking forward as a strong, ambitious, and cohesive city; the council has the opportunity to embrace the change of status by updating the corporate branding, which reflects where the council sees itself in the city and how it wants to be perceived going forward. Whilst digital social media accounts and references in content have been changed to Southend-on-Sea City Council, the council's current logo naturally refers to Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.
- 3.4 Developing a new corporate brand for any organisation comes with challenges as brands can mean different things to different audiences. It is important to emphasise that the corporate branding for the council is not the same as the place branding that was developed for Southend as a whole, in 2021. The corporate branding for the council is focused on the council. Drawing in ideas and preferences from across the political spectrum was essential in working up the design brief. A Cross-Party Working Group, chaired by the Leader of the Council came together in January 2022 to start the conversation about a new corporate brand for Southend-on-Sea City Council. This engagement and other conversations with political group leaders outside of the working group informed the options set out in appendix 1 of this report.
- 3.5 The design team that have worked up the options are the council's contracted bespoke design and print company. They are a local company that have worked with the council since a procurement exercise in 2017, with a track record of high-quality design work across council services.
- 3.6 Through the Cross-Party Working Group, and conversations with political group leaders outside of the working group, several points around design preferences

were established to create the new council branding brief and specification and the evolving designs.

These included:

- a) Keeping the new branding simple and identifiable
- b) Drawing on our location as a city by the sea
- c) Using colour, shapes and form in our branding to signal our city as a diverse one, where many council services operate for a diverse range of residents and businesses
- d) Must work well across different settings, e.g., for social media and digital channels, to large vehicle livery
- e) Looks forward, not backwards
- f) Draws on good recent examples from other local authorities and sectors

3.7 The design preferences under 3.6 were used as the framework to work up design options for consideration, which were presented back to the Cross-Party Working Group and political group leaders. In a process of further discussion, the design options were further refined based on a range of feedback, with some new additions, such as the Southend 'S' Monogram with the pier option. The corporate branding options set out in detail within appendix A illustrates four branding options.

3.8 The four options set out very different design concepts which work across the visual platforms that the council use. The options apply the design preferences across three very different styles yet remain consistent with contemporary branding concepts used by local authorities and other sectors.

3.9 The issue of copyright was raised at the Policy and Resources scrutiny committee on 16th March. Initial legal advice has been sought regarding this and is summarised below:

It is important that the Council, when considering its rebranding, respects the trademarks and intellectual property of others. Legal advice suggests that so long as the logos developed were done so independently and there was no copying, the risk of challenge from third parties is very low.

Once a logo and branding are chosen, it is not considered necessary for the Council to register its logo as a trademark, as it is not delivering goods or services in a commercial capacity (and where it does through council companies, these have their own branding).

However, although the council has a contract in place with Formara, it is recommended that the Council and Formara enter into an appropriate deed of assignment once the final logo is decided upon. Following entry into the deed of assignment, the Council would be able to rely on the warranties and associated

indemnities contained therein which would significantly reduce risk exposure in this matter, although that risk is deemed very low.

4 Seeking views on the four options

4.1 As part of engaging, a market testing exercise on public perceptions around the four proposed options, an on-line poll to different testing groups will be conducted to obtain feedback. The groups approached for feedback, in addition to the Cross-Party Working Group and Political Group Leaders will be:

- All 51 Councillors
- Council staff
- Business community leaders
- Voluntary and Community leaders
- Young people
- Anyone wishing to share views through the council's engagement platform
- Strategic partners

4.2 The opportunity to participate will be promoted through social media and direct contact that signposts to where the four options are, with the ability to feedback.

4.3 It is essential to ensure that a new corporate brand is accessible and contains no reference that could cause offence. The initial testing will also assess Equality Impact.

4.4 An updated report will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration after the engagement has taken place

5. Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 A delay, pause or undertaking further work at this stage will require additional budget and resource, and mean that the council will continue to operate with an outdated logo that does not reflect the areas new city status or the council's new name. It is important reputationally that the council responds to its new city status and has an up-to-date brand and logo that reflects the council's new name, showcases a new visual identity for the council, and demonstrates that we are a confident and bold new city council delivering for its local community.

5.2 Significant and professional advice, support and work from council members, officers and a local company have been invested into this project.

5.3 Although this is about the council's organisational brand, and not the brand of Southend-on-Sea as a place, it is important that there is a level of engagement with the local community and other stakeholders and their views are sought and considered.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

The council is a major delivery partner of Southend 2050 and though the updated corporate branding will not affect the agreed outcomes in Southend 2050, the council being perceived as a pro-active, engaging, and a forward-looking organisation is essential in successful leadership of Southend 2050.

6.2 Financial Implications

Financial implications up to this point total £4338.75 and is based on 111.25 hours of work. This is likely to increase with final development and design work, following the engagement connected to this report. This is within the budget identified for council rebranding, which was established to support the council with its City Status programme of work. A further budget of c.£2,500 has also been allocated for advice provided on copyright on intellectual property and trademarking, following comments made at the March scrutiny committee, and as set out in 3.9 of this report.

6.3 Legal Implications

Initial advice has been sought in regard to copyright and intellectual property rights, following questions at the Policy and Resources scrutiny committee on 16th March. This is set out in 3.9 of the main report.

6.4 People Implications

None

6.5 Property Implications

Updated signage to electronic property, buildings, signs and vehicles will be required in due course.

6.6 Co-design/production/consultation

Market testing connected to perception of brand options is set out in section 4 of this report.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

It is essential to ensure that a new corporate brand is accessible and contains no reference that could cause offence. The initial testing will also assess Equality Impact.

6.8 Risk Assessment

Legal advice has been sought regarding copyright and is covered in 3.9 of this report.

6.9 Value for Money

Given the scale and range of services provided by the council, it is not advised to change branding across all areas at the same time. The costs associated with this approach will not represent best value.

Once the decision is made on the new corporate brand, it is advised that the council prioritises areas to be updated with new corporate branding. This is a common approach across local government and other sectors. This will enable the council to focus updated branding where it has the most impact and value for money. It is also advised that the council update its Corporate Style Guide, which sets out the guidelines for use of corporate branding where all newly commissioned items requiring branding contain the new format and new branding replaces the old as part of a programme of 'as and when' renewal. This pragmatic approach to updating the council's branding over time, is sensitive to budget challenges and demonstrates value for money.

6.10 Environmental Impact

None at this stage

7. Background Papers

Appendix 1 – corporate branding options for engagement

8. Appendices

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