

# Southend-on-Sea City Council

Report of Executive Director (Strategy, Change & Governance)

To

Cabinet

On

13 September 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

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.
- 1.2 This report follows on from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 Cabinet report and recommendations, and subsequent 4-week engagement exercise.
- 1.2 This report sets out the final option for Cabinet to agree on.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The results and comments from the public engagement exercise are noted and that the favoured concept ('Shell' concept) is developed and implemented as the Council's new corporate logo and branding; and
- 2.2 Officers are delegated to carry out the development and implementation work required, along with the creation of full branding guidelines

### 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.
- 3.2 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.

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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 needs 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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 four options set out in the Cabinet reports of 14<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, and the four concepts that underwent a public engagement exercise in July 2022 and early August 2022 (see Section 4).
- 3.7 The issue of copyright was raised at the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Initial Legal advice was sought regarding this and as reported to Cabinet on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, "*the Council and Formara will 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 in any case, that risk is deemed very low.

## 4. Engagement

- 4.1 Following Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and subsequent Scrutiny Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022, Cabinet considered the matter again on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, agreeing that a four-week engagement would take place. An online poll with a free text box for comments was conducted over a four-week period from 6<sup>th</sup> July to 5<sup>th</sup>

August 2022 on the 'Your Say Southend' engagement platform. In addition, local schools were sent a basic activity sheet to give their views (Appendix 3), with over 50 local schoolchildren taking part, along with the Children in Care Council and Southend Youth Council.

- 4.2 The opportunity to participate more generally was promoted through social media and e-newsletters. Across 11 posts, over 4,000 people viewed the short promotional video, with 353 clicks through to the survey.
- 4.3 Results from the public engagement exercise can be found in Appendix 1 and will be available on the Your Say Southend platform, but in summary:
- Over 630 people responded, with 575 comments made;
  - The favoured option (41%) was the 'Shell' concept, followed by the 'S and Pier' concept (29%). The seaside windmill was third with 22% and the modern coat of arms concept was the least favourite, with 46% placing it fourth.
  - There was a free text box with comments generally reflecting the outcome of the poll. These qualitative comments will be considered as the favoured concept is refined and implemented.
- 4.4 The Design Team that have worked up the concept 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.

## **5. Implementation of Southend-on-Sea City Council New Brand**

- 5.1 This report recommends taking the favoured Shell concept forward as the Council's refreshed corporate identity. Once agreed, officers will be able to undertake further work to refine and develop the concept based on the results and qualitative feedback from the public engagement and produce detailed branding guidelines that will ensure the new branding and logo are used correctly and consistently. These guidelines will cover more than just the logo itself (colours/design style/look and feel), ensure flexibility for a digital world, but also ensure the branding is clear, consistent, and recognisable.
- 5.2 In terms of implementation, given the scale and range of services provided by the Council, it is not advised to change the logo/branding across all areas at the same time. The costs associated with this approach would be expensive and will not represent Best Value.
- 5.3 The Council will prioritise areas to be updated with the new corporate logo and branding. Focussing on 'quick-wins' such as digital channels, stationery, and key signage in the first instance and take an 'as and when' approach to longer-term renewals. Taking opportunities to replace branding across service areas where it would be needed. 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.

- 5.4 This pragmatic approach to updating the Council's branding over time, is sensitive to budget challenges and demonstrates value for money.

## **6. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 6.1 Not deciding at this stage will mean that the Council will continue to operate with an outdated logo and branding 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.
- 6.2 Significant and professional advice, support and work from Council Members, officers and a local company have been invested into this project, along with the view of local residents and stakeholders.

## **7. Corporate Implications**

### **7.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map**

- 7.1.1 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.

### **7.2 Financial Implications**

- 7.2.1 Financial implications up to this point total £4,338.75 and is based on 111.25 hours of work. This will increase following agreement of the recommendations, with final development, design, and implementation work to take place. There will also be costs to implement this digitally such as on the Council website which will require our external provider to change the logo and carry out user access testing (UAT) once complete, and other Council platforms. 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 3.7 of this report.

### **7.3 Legal Implications**

- 7.3.1 Legal advice and actions are set out in 3.5 of the main report.

### **7.4 People Implications**

- 7.4.1 There are no People implications associated with this report.

## 7.5 **Property Implications**

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

## 7.6 **Co-design/Production/Consultation**

7.6.1 The results of market testing connected to perception of brand options is set out in section 4 of this report.

## 7.7 **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

7.7.1 It is essential to ensure that a new Corporate Brand is accessible and also contains no reference that could cause offence. The initial testing has been Equality Impact assessed.

7.7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the proposed logo and brand identity options. Initial assessment was that there would be a positive impact for the disability protected characteristic, particularly those with visual impairments who find certain colours inaccessible. The new logo and brand identity will follow accessibility best practice in terms of colour contrast and alt text will be used when using images and infographics. The potential impact for other groups with protected characteristics was anticipated to be low.

7.7.3 We consulted with groups representing the nine protected characteristics. A survey was run on 'Your Say Southend', between 6<sup>th</sup> July to 5<sup>th</sup> August 2022, inviting groups representing all nine protected characteristics to check the proposed logo options for any issues and vote on their preferred logo. In total, the survey was sent to 18 groups and organisations. Responses were received from the Council's BAME Staff Forum and Disability and Carers Staff Forum; Southend-on-Sea's Youth Council, and two external organisations representing age and disability characteristics. Analysis of the feedback did not identify any equality issues with the proposed logo options.

7.7.4 We will continue to monitor and review the equality impact of the logo and brand identity.

## 7.8 **Risk Assessment**

7.8.1 Legal advice has been sought regarding copyright and is covered in 3.7 of this report.

## 7.9 **Value for Money**

7.8.1 Please see 5.3 of this report.

## 7.10 Environmental Impact

7.10.1 There are no Environmental impacts associated with this report.

## 8. Background Papers

8.1 Cabinet Report, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (item 780): [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 14th March, 2022](#)

8.2 Cabinet Report, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 (item 66): [Agenda for Cabinet on Friday, 1st July, 2022](#)

## 9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Summary of engagement exercise.

9.2 Appendix 2 - Recommended concept.

9.3 Appendix 3 – Activity sheet sent to schools.