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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Economic Recovery, Regeneration & Housing Working Party

Date: Wednesday, 2nd November, 2022

Place: Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

- Present:** Councillor I Gilbert (Chair)
Councillors M Davidson, C Mulroney, M Sadza and M Terry
- In Attendance:** R Awan (Southend Citizens Advice), E Lindsell, C Oksuz, A Richards and S Tautz
- Start/End Time:** 6.30 pm - 7.30 pm

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Berry (no substitute) and Councillor T Cox (no substitute).

5 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made by members of the Working Party.

6 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2022

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Working Party held on 5 September 2022 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

7 Cost of Living Workstream Activities

The Working Party reviewed a schedule of current actions and activities that were being developed or delivered by the Council and its partner organisations, in response to the national cost of living emergency. It was reported that each of the activities, and the actions previously identified by the Working Party, had been mapped to appropriate cost of living workstreams for delivery by the Council and relevant partners.

Members were advised that the publication of a cost of living information booklet was currently being finalised for distribution at key venues across Southend and by councillors and partner organisations, that would provide information for local residents around food provision, housing and fuel issues, digital exclusion, benefit, budgeting support and warm places. The Working Party noted that relevant information was also now available on the Council's website and was updated regularly, to complement the information also available on the 'One Southend' website managed by Southend Association of Voluntary Services.

The Working Party received a comprehensive report from Rizwana Awan, the Chief Officer of Southend Citizens Advice, on the support that was currently available from Citizens Advice to support local residents to address the impacts of

the emergency, including the provision of advice in respect of the availability of cost of living payments, the ability to claim benefits or increase current benefit payments, help with meeting energy bills and other essential costs, personal budget management and mental health support. Ms Awan advised the Working Party that Southend Citizens Advice was currently operating at near capacity across all areas of its service provision and that options for the future provision of an out of hours service were currently being considered as part of the response to the cost of living emergency.

Resolved:

That, following the declaration of a cost-of-living emergency in Southend-on-Sea, the following recommendations be made to the Cabinet:

- (a) That progress against the current range of actions and activities being developed or delivered by the Council and its partners in response to the cost of living emergency, be noted.
- (b) That a directory of local organisations currently operating donation and/or collection schemes for clothing, goods and products etc., be developed to support vulnerable residents to help mitigate some of the personal impacts of the cost of living emergency.
- (c) That consideration be given to the publication of appropriate information on the Council's website around 'eating on a budget', to support local residents with initiatives such as smart shopping, batch cooking and generating less food waste, to help address the healthy eating impacts of the cost of living emergency.

Chair: _____