

Meeting:	Place Scrutiny Committee, People Scrutiny Committee and Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee
Date:	10 th , 11 th and 12 th July 2023
Classification:	Part 1
Key Decision:	No
Title of Report:	In-Depth Scrutiny Projects 2022/23 and 2023/24
Report Author:	S Cox (Principal Democratic Services Officer)
Executive Director	Joe Chesterton (Executive Director – Finance & Resources)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the draft report and recommendations of the In-Depth Scrutiny Project undertaken on behalf of the Committee for 2022/2.
- 1.2 For the Committee to consider a possible approach to in-depth scrutiny activity for 2023/24.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report and recommendations arising from the In-Depth Scrutiny Project for 2022/23, detailed at Section 11 of the attached report, be agreed.
- 2.2 That the Chair of the Project Team for the In Depth Scrutiny Project (Councillor T Cowdrey) present the report and recommendations of the scrutiny project to a future meeting of the Cabinet.
- 2.3 That the Committee consider the proposed approach to in-depth scrutiny activity for 2023/24, as set out in this report.
- 2.4 That, subject to the agreement of the proposed approach to in-depth scrutiny activity for 2023/24, no other topic(s) be selected by the Committee for additional in-depth scrutiny during the year, but that other Task and Finish working groups may be identified by individual committees.

3. In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2022/23 - Report and Recommendations

- 3.1 At its meeting on 6 July 2022, the Committee agreed that an In-Depth Scrutiny Project be undertaken during the 2022/23 municipal year on the theme of 'Providing First-Class Services for Families of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities,' as part of the scrutiny work programme for the year.

- 3.2 The Project Team for the In-Depth Scrutiny Project comprised the following members appointed by the Council on 19 May 2022:

Councillors: T Cowdrey, A Dear, N Folkard, K Murphy, M O'Connor, L Salter, M Stafford and A Thompson.

- 3.3 Councillor T Cox was appointed to membership of the Project Team by the Council on 14 July 2022 to replace Councillor L Salter and Councillor B Hooper was appointed to membership of the Project Team by the Council on 20 October 2022, to replace Councillor A Thompson. Councillor Cox was appointed as Chair of the Project Team at its initial project scoping meeting held on 26 September 2022. At the request of Councillor Cox and with the agreement of the Project Team, Councillor Cowdrey subsequently assumed the role of the Chair of the Project Team from January 2023. The Project Team was supported by relevant officers including M Marks (Executive Director (Children and Public Health)) and S Tautz (Principal Democratic Services Officer/Project Co-ordinator). Other officer support was provided in respect of specific elements of the in-depth scrutiny project.
- 3.4 Progress with regard to the joint in-depth scrutiny project was achieved throughout the 2022/23 municipal year, including the development of an action plan and a comprehensive work programme. Efforts were made by the Project Team to ensure that the timescale for the delivery of the project was maintained and that the project was completed by the end of the 2022/23 municipal year.
- 3.5 The final report arising from the In-Depth Scrutiny Project is attached as Appendix 1 and the recommendations of the Project Team are set out in Section 11 of the report. These have been agreed by the Project Team. A number of the recommendations arising from the in-depth scrutiny project have budget implications that will require consideration as part of current and future years' budget processes prior to implementation.
- 3.6 The Committee is recommended to endorse the recommendations of the joint In-Depth Scrutiny Project, for consideration by the Cabinet.
- 3.7 The report and recommendations arising from the completion of the In-Depth Scrutiny Project will be presented to the Committee by Councillor T Cowdrey, as Chair of the Project Team.
- 3.8 In accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (Part 4 (e) of the Constitution), the report and recommendations of an In-Depth Scrutiny Project would normally be presented to the Cabinet by the chair of the relevant scrutiny committee. As the scrutiny project for 2022/2 has been undertaken on behalf of each the Committee, it is suggested that the report and recommendations

arising from the project should be presented to the Cabinet by T Cowdrey as Chair of the Project Team that led the project.

4. In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2023/24

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 The delivery of the in-depth scrutiny projects informs 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 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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 The undertaking of individual in-depth scrutiny projects for each scrutiny committee can be resource intensive. Each 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.
- 4.5 The Scrutiny Chairs Forum met on 27 June 2023. The Membership of this forum is constituted from the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of each of the Council's three scrutiny committees.
- 4.6 It was felt by those present at the Scrutiny Chairs Forum that the focus for 2023/24 should be to embed Pre-Cabinet Scrutiny processes, focus on effective work programming and direct resources to shorter Task and Finish reviews to drive specific areas of concern forward.

- 4.7 At this meeting the membership and representation on Outside Bodies was identified as a potential first topic for a Task and Finish review, subject to agreement by Scrutiny.
- 4.8 This would allow further time to add topics of concern to the Scrutiny work programme, clarify the shortlisting process and allow the opportunity of establishing further Task and Finish Groups further in the year to undertake shorter and more focussed scrutiny work if Members wished.
- 4.9 It is recommended that, subject to the agreement of the proposed approach to the set out above, that no additional topic(s) be selected by the Committee for in-depth scrutiny activity during the year 2023/24.

4 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

6. Background Papers

None

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Final report of In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2022/23

Appendix 2 - Previous In-Depth Scrutiny Projects