

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 8th June, 2023

Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor S Wakefield (Chair)
Councillors L Burton (Vice-Chair), B Beggs, S Buckley, O Cartey,
P Collins, T Cowdrey, M Dent, F Evans, N Folkard, S George,
A Jones, R McMullan, M Sadza and J Warren
(*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.)

In Attendance: Councillors T Cox, J Courtenay, J Lamb, D Cowan and C Mulroney
J Chesterton, M Harvey, S Newman, K Pachalko and T Row

Start/End Time: 6.30 - 8.45 pm

1 Chair's Introduction & Apologies for Absence

(a) Chair's Introduction

Prior to the consideration of the matters set out in the agenda, the Chair outlined their expectations of the standard of conduct and behaviour to be shown at the meeting.

(b) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Borton (Substitute: Councillor Anne Jones), Councillor Harland (no substitute), Councillor Walker (no substitute) and Councillor Wexham (substitute: Councillor Collins).

2 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

(i) Councillor Collins – Minute No. 9 (Petition – Save the Jazz Centre UK) – Trustee of Eastwood Community Centre Association;

(ii) Councillor Cowdrey – Minute No. 10 (Debt Management – Position to 31 March 2023) – Charges for Adult Services – Carer for family member;

(iii) Councillor Cox – Minute No. 9 (Petition – Save the Jazz Centre UK) – Involved in raising the petition;

(iv) Councillor Dent – Minute No. 9 (Petition – Save the Jazz Centre UK) – Very involved with the campaign to save the Jazz Centre;

(v) Councillor Folkard – Minute No. 7 (Council Procurement & Contract Management Strategy 2023-26) – Fusion is mentioned in the report and is visitor to SLTC Garon Park;

(vi) Councillor Anne Jones – Minute Nos. 6 (Annual Procurement Plan 2023/24) and 7 (Council Procurement & Contract Management Strategy 2023-26) – Son is an employee of Southend on Sea City Council;

(vii) Councillor Anne Jones – Minute No. 12 (Association of South Essex Local Authorities – Joint Committee) – Husband’s employer is a partner;

(viii) Councillor Lamb – Minute No. 7 (Council Procurement & Contract Management Strategy 2023-26) – Voluntary Sector was mentioned in the debate and is a Trustee of SAVS;

(ix) Councillor Sadza – Minute No. 9 (Petition – Save the Jazz Centre UK) – Had correspondence with the Chair of Trustees of the Jazz Centre and visitor to the Jazz Centre;

(x) Councillor Sadza – Minute No. 10 (Debt Management – Position to 31 March 2023) – Works for KMAC money advice centre;

(xi) Councillor Wakefield – Minute Nos. 6 (Annual Procurement Plan 2023/24) and 7 (Council Procurement & Contract Management Strategy 2023-26) – His local business works with the Council; and

(xii) Councillor Warren – Minute No. 8 (Armed Forces Covenant & Defence Employer Recognition Scheme) – Employed by Help for Heroes.

3 Questions from Members of the Public

The Committee noted the response of the Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services to a question submitted by Mr A Grubb, which would be sent to him as he was not present at the meeting.

The Committee also noted the response of the Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Public Protection to a question presented by Mr Webb and the response of the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Adult Social Care and Constitutional Affairs, present by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Protection in his absence, to a question by Mr Webb.

4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 March 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday, 15th March 2023 be received, confirmed as a correct record and signed.

5 Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 22 March 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the special meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday, 22nd March 2023 be received, confirmed as a correct record and signed.

6 Annual Procurement Plan 2023/24

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director (Finance & Resources), by way of pre-Cabinet scrutiny, that presented the Annual Procurement Plan for 2023/24 as well as tabs for the remaining years of our original 5 Year Procurement Plan (2022-27). The attached procurement plan provided a full plan for the year and covered all

procurements with a value over £25,000, this being the threshold within the regulations where tenders must be publicly advertised unless via a previously advertised framework or equivalent.

The Committee discussed the report in some detail and asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services and the Council's Head of Procurement.

Whilst noting the report, the Committee requested that the following comments be forwarded to Cabinet:

- Links to the social value policy and how this is evidenced should be included in the Plan;
- The details of the contract manager for the contract with Southend Care Ltd on page 31 needed to be updated from the previous Executive Director (Adults & Communities) to the relevant Service Manager;
- A breakdown of the Highways Improvements and Transport systems totalling £65m should be provided;
- An additional column should be added to the Contract Register and Plan to record carbon reduction and environmental benefits;

The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services and the Council's Head of Procurement gave their assurances that this would be done. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services also gave an undertaking to provide the spreadsheet (rather than a pdf document) as this was more accessible and user-friendly. They also undertook to provide written responses to the following matters:

- Details of the carbon reduction levels as part of the Waste Management Contract; and
- A breakdown and more details of the Southend Inclusion Review, alternative provision and Childrens Services.

Resolved:

That, subject to the inclusion of the comments and amendments detailed above, the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive function
Cabinet Member: Cllr Lamb

7 Council Procurement & Contract Management Strategy 2023-26

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director (Finance & Resources), by way of pre-Cabinet scrutiny, that presented the revised Council Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2023-26.

Resolved:

That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive function
Cabinet Member: Councillor Lamb

8 Armed Forces Covenant & Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change), by way of pre-Cabinet scrutiny, that sought approval for Southend-on-Sea City Council to

sign the updated Southend Armed Forces Covenant with relevant pledges and for Southend-on-Sea City Council to sign up to the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

The Committee made the following observations, that were acknowledged by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services:

- The Executive Director stated in the header of the report should be corrected to the Executive Director (Strategy and Change);
- The Executive Councillor stated in the header of the report should be Councillor John Lamb as the matter falls within the remit of the Regulatory Services portfolio.

Resolved:

That, subject to the above amendments, the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive function
Cabinet Member: Councillor Lamb

9 Petition - Save The Jazz Centre UK

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change), by way of pre-Cabinet scrutiny, setting out the Council's response to the following petition: ***'Britain's first-ever cultural centre for jazz opened in 2016 at Southend's Beecroft Art Gallery is facing eviction on August 1st, 2023. If you oppose this decision by Southend City Council, please sign below to help us fight this decision.'***

The Committee discussed the report in some detail and asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Leader of the Council. In response to a question, the Leader of the Council undertook to provide a written response as to whether the Jazz Centre was an accredited museum and, if not, whether the ambition to become one could be included in the negotiations.

The Leader of the Council also gave assurances that the discussions with the Jazz Centre would include them having a more robust business model, clarification of the responsibilities for the payment of insurance how the Jazz Centre and Museum Service could maximise the use of the footprint and the best location for the authorised performances.

Resolved:

That the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive function
Cabinet Member: Councillor Jarvis

10 Debt Management - Position to 31 March 2023

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change), by way of pre-Cabinet scrutiny, that presented the end of year position, 31 March 2023 of outstanding debt to the Council, the debts that have been written off, or are recommended for write off, for the financial year to 31 March 2023 and to obtain approval for the write off of irrecoverable debts that are over £25,000.

The Committee discussed the report in some detail and asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Leader of the Council and the Executive Director (Finance & Resources).

Whilst noting the report, the Committee requested that the following amendments to be made to the report:

- The designations of the appropriate level officer to be authorised to write off approved levels of debt for the Debt Types relating to “Accounts Receivable/Adult Services/Housing and Council Tax Benefit” and “Parking” as detailed on page 82 should be corrected.

The Leader of the Council and Executive Director (Finance & Resources) gave an undertaking to circulate to all Councillors the recently published booklet on money advice. The Executive Director (Finance & Resources) also gave an undertaking to investigate the possibility of including a more reader friendly covering letter to any statutory worded notices in respect of and debt collection enforcement.

Resolved:

That subject to the comments and amendments to the report as detailed above, the report to Cabinet be noted.

Note: This is an Executive function
Cabinet Member: Councillor Cox

11 Work Programme Evaluation 2022/23

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director (Finance & Resources) providing information on the work carried out by the scrutiny committees during the previous municipal year.

The Committee took the opportunity to thank Councillor Cowdrey for the able way in which she had conducted the meetings of the Working Party which undertook the study.

Resolved:-

1. That the Committee note the summary of the scrutiny work that it has undertaken during the 2022/23 municipal year.
2. That the completion of the in-depth scrutiny project undertaken for 2022/23, around the theme of ‘Developing Strong Governance - Strengthening Joint Working Between Councillors and Officers’, be noted.

Note: This is a scrutiny function.

12 Association of South Essex Local Authorities - Joint Committee

The Committee received the draft minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), held on Thursday, 23rd March 2023.

In response to questions:

- The former Leader of the Council undertook to provide a written response to the Committee detailing the five stalled sires identified as a priority;

- The Leader of the Council undertook to provide a brief summary of the discussions at future meetings of the ASELA and highlight the benefits for Southend.

Resolved:

That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities held on Thursday, 23rd March 2023, be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function

Chair: _____