

# Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027

**Southend-on-Sea City Council**

September 2023



# FOREWORD

Our corporate plan for 2023 to 2027 sets out the council's focus for the next four years, what we aim to deliver for our residents, businesses and millions of visitors, and how we will look to transform as an organisation.

As a council we continue to face significant challenges to remain financially stable and resilient for the future. Demand for social care services for adults, children and the most vulnerable, continues to rise and cost pressures are increasing weekly, with UK inflation remaining at high levels. This situation isn't unique to Southend-on-Sea. Like many councils across the country, we will be required to be brave and make difficult financial decisions, transform services and lead the council through these challenging times. Councillors and officers will work closely together to find a better, more cost-effective way forward. We will also continue to listen to residents and businesses, as we work to do things differently as a council and work alongside our stakeholders, including central Government, MPs, neighbouring councils and local partnerships.

Southend-on-Sea has much going for it, but some areas of our city face serious inequality and deprivation. Nearly four in every ten residents live in what are considered to be some of the most deprived areas of the country. This needs to change. Together, we need to give people in these areas skills and confidence and ensure we create good quality local jobs for local people. We will work with our partners to deliver a vision for the city focused on aspiration, wealth creation and creating an environment for success.

We will also engage our partners to deliver genuinely integrated care and support and achieve improved health and social care outcomes for our residents. In addition, we will maintain a clean and safe environment for our residents and visitors and do our bit to enable the roll-out of digital infrastructure in the city, to ensure that growing internet demand from businesses and residents is met and we remain an attractive area to invest in.

In October 2022, we asked the Local Government Association to come in and help us address issues and challenge our progress across key areas. Feedback told us that we are very self-aware and have huge potential. There are many positives within the council and the city, including the strong community ethos and sound financial management, but our approach to leadership, governance and decision making is impacting progress. One of the actions we are exploring in response to recommendations from the Local Government Association is the opportunity to consider changing our election cycle to whole council elections every four years. There is potential to implement this with the proposed boundary review of Southend-on-Sea wards.

We are under no illusions about the scale of the challenges we face. Difficult decisions must be taken around what services to fund with the limited money we have available, balanced against a need for people to pay a bit more for services. While these decisions will be difficult, they will enable us to embrace opportunities, ensure long-term financial sustainability for the council, address the inequalities and disparities that exist across the city's neighbourhoods and create the opportunities for our communities and residents.

Thank you to everyone who makes this work possible. We are grateful to our councillors and employees and also to our partners and stakeholders. We look forward to continuing to work together to achieve our strategic priorities.

**Councillor Tony Cox**  
Leader of the Council

**Rob Tinlin**  
Interim Chief Executive

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# 1 | INTRODUCTION

This corporate plan is the principal corporate strategy of Southend-on-Sea City Council. It recognises our primary role in delivering good quality local government services in the city. It sets out our areas of focus for the city in three overarching priorities and underpins them with a fourth priority for our organisation. It details the outcomes we wish to achieve, the actions we will take to deliver them and how we will resource the necessary activity. It covers the full range of the council's responsibilities and priorities and is an important tool to help focus our effort and resources on the right things. This is even more important in the context of reducing budgets and rapid change.

The council is committed to ensuring good governance principles and management practices are adopted in all business activities to ensure public trust. The Local Code of Governance provides a public statement that sets out the way in which the council will meet and demonstrate that commitment. The council commits in its Local Code of Governance that this Corporate Plan will "provide the necessary focus on the priorities for the council, so that the council's resources can be applied to the delivery of those priorities".

By articulating a clear set of ambitions and commitments, the corporate plan also helps residents to hold the council to account for its performance and challenge it to improve. Through aligning our resources, actions and activities to the corporate plan, we can measure how public money is turned into results for our communities. By defining outcomes, performance measures and key deliverables for each ambition, we regularly chart and report progress towards achieving the corporate plan.

The corporate plan informs other key strategies and plans, whether council documents or those of our partners. These documents vary widely in purpose, scope and time horizon. The corporate plan does not replace these other documents, but it should shape them whenever they are being updated. Good strategic planning also means aligning financial and service planning. The priorities identified in the corporate plan set the context for the allocation of resources within the council's budget and medium-term financial strategy.

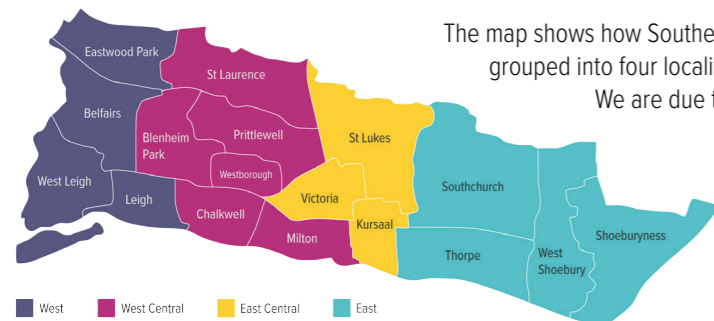
## WE ARE COMMITTED

Southend-on-Sea is a newly designated city with a focus on creating wealth and prosperity for everyone. As one of the UK's leading visitor destinations, we are well-known for our large tourism and visitor economy, but we are so much more than that. Our city is a great place to live, with something exciting for everyone. There are just as many opportunities for sports and leisure as there are for arts and culture.

# 2 | OUR CITY

The following infographics show the make-up of our city, illustrating the context in which we are supporting and delivering services to our residents, visitors, businesses and wider stakeholders.

## Our City



Census 2021 population data  
**180,686** residents

**7000+**  
(4.1%) population increase since 2011, when it was 173,568. In England, the population grew by 6.6% from 2011.

**19.1%**  
of population aged 65 and over, a 1.3% percentage point increase since 2011. Across England, the percentage increased by 2 percentage points, from 16.3% to 18.3%.

**19%**  
of population aged 15 years and under, a 0% percentage point change since 2011. Across England, the percentage fell by 0.4 percentage points, from 18.9% to 18.5%.

**78,344**  
households in the city, an increase of 4.9% from 2011, when there were 74,678.

**4,336**  
residents per sq km in 2021, compared to 433.5 people per sq km for England. This is up 4% from 4,167 per sq km in 2011.

**4.2%**  
of households (3,304) had fewer bedrooms than required, down from 4.7% (3,545) in 2011. Some 32.8% (25,698) of households had the required number of bedrooms, and the remaining 63% (49,342) of households had more bedrooms than required.

## Culture and Tourism



**150**  
historic buildings and structures

**Purple Flag**  
accreditation for our evening and night-time economy

**2**  
nationally recognised art companies

**3**  
theatres, including one regional theatre

**5**  
museums

**1**  
university

**2**  
colleges

**56**  
schools

### Ethnicity

Percentage of usual residents in Southend-on-Sea by ethnic group

- 5.5% Asian
- 2.9% Black, Caribbean or African
- 3.1% Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- 87.5% White
- 1% Other ethnic groups

## Schools and colleges

[www.southend.gov.uk](http://www.southend.gov.uk)

## Careers, businesses and jobs

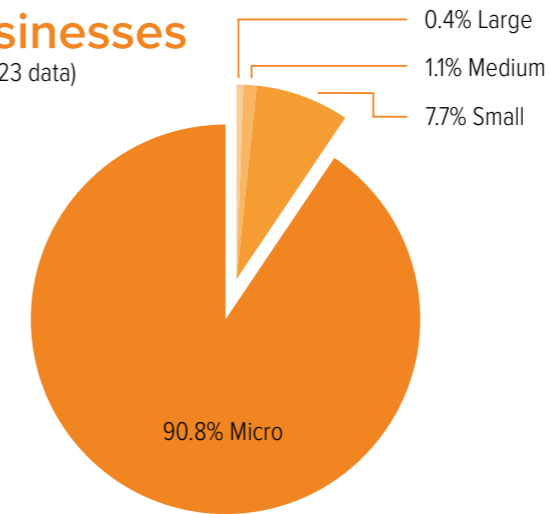
**7025 businesses**  
(Business Counts 2023 data)

**6380**  
micro businesses

**540**  
small businesses

**80**  
medium businesses

**25**  
large businesses



**48**  
commercial areas, including fishing industry in Leigh-on-Sea

**20**  
business/industrial estates

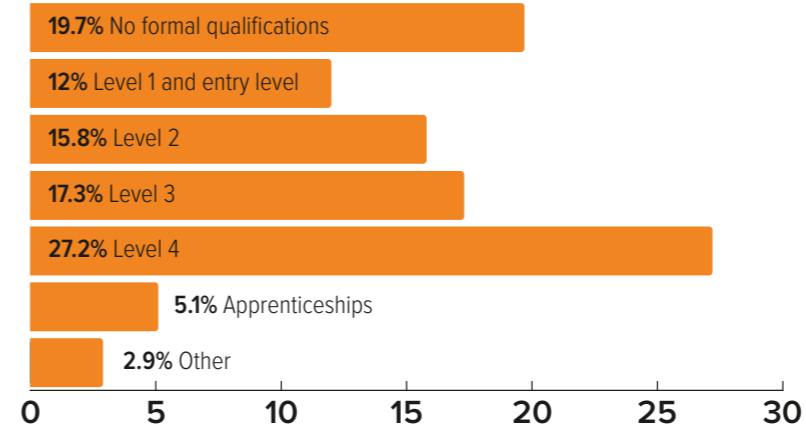
**0.73**  
jobs density, compared to jobs density of 0.85 for Great Britain

**65,000**  
jobs in Southend-on-Sea  
**40,000** full-time and  
**25,000** part-time  
(2021 figures)

**£697.70**  
resident full-time median weekly wage (by place of residence. 2022 data)  
**£759** male  
**£630.40** female

**£335,000**  
median house price, compared to £286,000 for England Q4 2022/23

### Level of qualifications



## Parks and green spaces

**7 miles of coastline**  
8 beaches and 5 Blue Flags

**33**  
parks

**7**  
Green Flags

**14**  
allotments

**15**  
conservation areas

**8**  
nature conservation areas

**47k+**  
trees, including street trees

**50+**  
sports facilities and pitches

**529.9**  
hectares of protected greenspace

## Transport connections in the city

**31**  
bus routes

**35.39km**  
(21.99 miles) of cycle paths

**9**  
railway stations

**1**  
international airport

**487.15m**  
average distance to the nearest park, public garden or playing field, compared to 379.6m for England

# 3 | OUR PRIORITIES

We have identified three overarching city-focused priorities, with a fourth priority focused on our organisation. These seek to address the needs and the challenges of our city and the council.

## A growing city with a strong and prosperous community

**Challenges:** Growing the economy, tackling the rising cost of living and tackling poor labour market outcomes.

**Our response:** We will boost Southend-on-Sea's local economy in a way that benefits everyone, enhance the city's role as a place for prosperity and opportunity, safeguard businesses and help those most affected by cost-of-living pressures. We will use the council's spending power to support economic growth and regeneration and improve the skills base of the city's workforce and we will do our best to support the Southend pound. We will enhance our tourism, culture and leisure offer, promoting Southend-on-Sea as a welcoming place to visit and stay.

## A safe city with a good quality of life for all

**Challenges:** Making our communities safer; ensuring the right care and access to adult and children's services; improving life chances for all children and young people; and delivering housing and the infrastructure to support housing.

**Our response:** We will build strong resilient communities and create a city that is safe for all. We will ensure the right care and advice is available for those who need social care support. We will ensure every child and young person has the best possible start in life and improve support for children with Special Educational Needs. We will deliver the housing and infrastructure the city needs.

## A clean city with a resilient environment

**Challenges:** Maintaining the street scene; optimising environmental sustainability; addressing risks of natural flooding and coastal erosion; improving the transport system and increasing our recycling rate.

**Our response:** We will protect and enhance the street scene, tackle environmental sustainability, adaptation and resilience, and make Southend-on-Sea a national exemplar for flood and coastal erosion risk management. We will also ensure effective travel choices and optimise recycling and waste collection opportunities.

## A transforming council delivering efficient, cost-effective services

**Challenges:** Financial sustainability and a balanced budget; having an election cycle that offers best value and allows the council more time to conduct business; maintaining employee engagement and performance; having a clear overview of our customers; accessibility of services and delivering the right quality services at the right time.

**Our response:** We will work hard to achieve better value for money for our residents, consider changing our election cycle to whole council elections every four years, transform as an organisation and deliver against service standards. We will provide a properly governed, structured approach to transforming the council and rethink how we offer council services, to make them more efficient, resident-focused and digitally-enabled in their delivery.



# 4 | DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The actions we will take to deliver the priorities.

## A growing city with a strong and prosperous community

### Outcomes:

- economic regeneration and business development
- spending power used wisely
- enhanced tourism, culture and leisure

### Economic regeneration and business development

Our economic growth strategy, being developed during 2023/24, will seek to boost Southend-on-Sea's local economy in a way that benefits everyone, promoting economic growth, ensuring environmental sustainability and securing inward investment into the city, by attracting new businesses and improving business conditions. It will seek to enhance skills and job opportunities for local residents, help local businesses with their recruitment needs, and support Southend-on-Sea's economy through maximising our spend with local businesses and helping local businesses to source and bid for public sector contracts.

We will continue to implement our

Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan by, for example, delivering projects such as council officers going to One Love Soup Kitchen Southend to provide people with face-to-face advice about finances, benefits and ways to improve their household finances (pilot summer 2023); providing our most vulnerable residents with a mobile dentist unit (in place now); and hosting cost-of-living and energy usage drop-in sessions. The strategy's comprehensive approach aims to tackle long-term and emerging inequalities in our city, creating a better life for those impacted by poverty, high living costs, and the challenges of being in debt.

## WE WILL DELIVER

We are committed to boosting Southend-on-Sea's economy, creating resilient communities and improving the city's safety. We will ensure we look after and support our children and young people and deliver housing and associated infrastructure.

## A growing city

All council joint ventures will be reviewed during 2023/24, to ensure that they offer value for money and are operating effectively. We will continue to enhance Southend-on-Sea's important sub-regional role as a leading economy in South Essex, protecting our economic advantages in our strategic sectors (such as retail, aviation and engineering, tourism, fisheries and medical technologies) and growth sectors (such as creative and cultural industries, specialist construction and manufacturing and health and social care).

We will ensure that the views of residents and stakeholders are taken into consideration before major projects are undertaken. Local forums will also be set up to enable portfolio holders to consult and pursue ideas with businesses, residents' associations and key stakeholders.

We will bid for funding opportunities throughout 2023/24, focusing resources on funding sources, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Levelling Up Fund, the Housing Infrastructure Fund and the No Use Empty scheme.

We will facilitate the growth of London Southend Airport, in partnership with Rochford District Council and other stakeholders, to realise its potential as a regional transport hub, providing significant new employment opportunities, providing space for growing businesses and an opportunity for any larger manufacturers in the area to consolidate their operations. We are mindful of the impact of night flights on communities and will work with London Southend Airport to minimise the impact of night flights on residents who live under the airport's flight path.

Improving adults' skills levels in the city is an important part of boosting the local economy in a way that benefits everyone. We can do this by maintaining Southend Adult Community College's key role in delivering community learning; offering learning opportunities in our libraries; and securing added social value from our contracts to deliver improved learning and skills. Alongside this, projects such as the A Better Start Southend Work Skills (due to conclude March 2024), will enable adults to upskill, retrain, and to enter, or move back into, the workforce or move to different sectors. This will help to spread opportunities, increase productivity, reduce poverty and inequality and improve health and wellbeing.

We will also ensure that people and businesses in Southend-on-Sea have access to the right digital skills and equipment to access jobs and learning. We will help businesses to thrive and unlock the city's economic potential by encouraging and supporting investment into superfast broadband, connectivity and the use of data. This will include the future delivery of smart technology, such as devices with sensors, and software that connects to and exchanges data with other devices and systems over the Internet or other communications networks.

We will ensure that residents are digitally included and deliver improved experiences to residents by exploring opportunities to offer affordable connectivity, training and access to digital tools and technology. Digital hubs will provide spaces for residents and businesses to connect, collaborate and engage, regenerating libraries and other council buildings, such as the Victoria Centre, into inclusive, accessible and vibrant assets.

## Spending power used wisely

We will use the council's spending power wisely by ensuring that our spending is economical, efficient and effective. We will make sure that all projects we undertake are financially viable and do not put the council and the city's taxpayers at financial risk.

We will also maximise benefits from our spending power by including social value asks in all relevant procurements, which will deliver added benefits for Southend-on-Sea and its residents and visitors through our contracts, particularly benefiting disadvantaged areas and addressing entrenched inequalities (for example, through new facilities, job opportunities, digital enablement, improved living space and improved health and wellbeing.)

## Enhanced tourism, culture and leisure

We will deliver our city centre strategy and investment plan, improve the city centre and optimise commercial and community uses of the Victoria Centre. We want to make the High Street more attractive to businesses and create a place where shops, services and people want to be. This includes making the streets cleaner and more inviting, adding plants and trees, and ensuring easy access for everyone, including those with disabilities and social and economic disadvantages. We will also actively bid for government funding to enhance the city centre.

We will deliver our culture vision and tourism strategy, which will raise the national and international profile of Southend-on-Sea as a visitor destination. We recognise the major contribution that our seven million visitors a year make to our economy and will balance the needs

and impacts of our visitors with those of our residents, to ensure that Southend-on-Sea is a consistently safe, clean and welcoming tourist destination for residents and visitors to be proud of.

We will enhance the visitor experience and levels of satisfaction by bringing varied, vibrant, well-organised and smoothly run events to the city for residents and visitors to enjoy, streamlining our events application process to encourage more organisations and groups to host events and festivals. We will support our businesses and partners to deliver excellent customer service by developing a customer service support programme across the local tourism sector, offering training and development via the Southend Tourism Partnership. We will run campaigns that promote the wide range of experiences Southend-on-Sea and the surrounding area has to offer, encouraging more people to visit Southend-on-Sea and creating a vibrant visitor economy.

We will continue to conserve and enhance our heritage assets. We will invest in our world-famous pier, upgrading and improving it to enhance visitor experience and accessibility and increase visitor numbers. We will make sure the Jazz Centre UK remains in its home at the Beecroft Art Gallery for the long term. We will also work with communities, partners and the building owner of the Kursaal to reopen the Kursaal.

We will continue to work in collaboration with key partners on a series of projects to ensure our beaches, streets, parks and public places are clean and inviting, and ensure our libraries, museums, galleries and leisure facilities support community needs and play an important role in the life of our city.

## A safe city with a good quality of life for all

### Outcomes:

- safe, inclusive communities and neighbourhoods
- people live well, age well and care well
- children and young people, including those in care, feel and are safe at home, school and in their communities
- quality, affordable safe homes

### Safe, inclusive communities and neighbourhoods

We will take a place-based approach for reducing health inequalities, including mental and physical health and life expectancy inequality. We will make sure our sports facilities, parks, open spaces and coastline are accessible to our residents and visitors. For example, we will not introduce parking charges in our park car parks and will make sure there is no charging to use our public toilets.

We want to tackle social isolation, so people feel connected to their community, valued and included. We will make sure council officers who provide frontline services to residents are trauma informed. We will strengthen our community, faith and voluntary sector to increase community resilience.

We will work with our partners to improve community safety, protect vulnerable people, reduce crime and create a city that is safe for all. This will include giving powers to council officers and the police to tackle anti-social behaviour and strengthening the relationship between the council and the police. We will also support Essex Police's drive to have more Special Constables in Southend-on-Sea and look to encourage new opportunities for enhancing community safety in the city.

### People live well, age well and care well

We will ensure the right care and advice

is available for those who need social care support, ensuring independence and opportunity as well as dignity throughout their lives. The council will work with residents to co-design a new delivery and practice model based on our Living Well, Ageing Well and Caring Well strategies. We will ensure care and support services are resilient, diverse, sustainable and high quality, including for those who pay for their own care. Care and support services must also meet the needs of all who are eligible. We will ensure we make the most of our collaboration with health partners and the community sector to create a public health service which meets the needs of local people, focusing on health-related priorities, such as tackling health inequalities, developing a Healthy Food Environment policy, focus on suicide prevention, building our resilience to public health issues and improving workplace health. We will continue to work positively as part of the Integrated Care Partnership to deliver better care and health support for our residents.

We will use co-production, so that services and strategies are designed by those who have first-hand knowledge and experience of the challenges being addressed and the improvements that are needed. We will also modernise and improve our information, advice and prevention offer as set out in the Care Act 2014.

## Children and young people, including those in care, feel and are safe at home, school and in their communities

We will ensure every child and young person has the best possible start in life and access to the opportunities they need to thrive in life, including an excellent education. In partnership with early year providers and partners, we will:

- work to ensure every child and young person has the opportunity to attend an Ofsted-rated Good or Outstanding school
- coproduced improved support for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND)
- make sure school-age children have access to suitable, full-time education and attend the setting regularly.

We have created a portfolio for Special Educational Needs and Disability to focus on the outcomes for children and young people with SEND. We will also continue to improve the experience of SEND parents and carers by involving them and by delivering the SEND Strategy, maintaining our focus on safeguarding all children and young people.

### Quality, affordable safe homes

We will deliver the housing and infrastructure the city needs. For example,

we will:

- make sure all our council housing stock continues to meet the Decent Homes Standard
- invest all right to buy receipts into new council housing
- continue to build more council housing and affordable homes in appropriate areas

We will encourage good housing design, management and maintenance in social housing and the private sector, including building new carbon net zero homes and piloting retrofit in our council-owned homes. We are also strongly committed to reducing the number of empty homes.

Those at risk of homelessness will be supported to live independently in their own homes and avoid homelessness. We will make any instance of homelessness brief and non-recurrent.

We will deliver a new Local Plan for Southend-on-Sea that is shaped by the needs of our communities. We will make sure the ambitions set out in the Local Plan are achieved. We will plan for new homes, jobs and infrastructure and contribute to tackling climate change, improving quality of life, reducing inequality and protecting and enhancing our natural spaces, Green Belt land, parks, biodiversity and habitats.





## A clean city with a resilient environment

### Outcomes:

- enhanced and protected street scene and environment
- improved transport system
- prevent waste, promoting re-use and increase recycling

### Enhanced and protected street scene and environment

We will make sure our street scene is attractive and welcoming for our visitors and residents. This will include:

- maintaining our parks and open spaces
- planting new trees and shrubs
- maintaining our grass verges
- clearing weeds from street pavements
- keeping public land clear of litter
- maintaining street furniture to a good standard and making any ongoing repairs
- cleaning and maintaining gullies.

We will develop the council's pathway to net zero carbon and take a strategic approach to reduce emissions for the council and the city. For example, we will reduce emissions by requiring all new council-built homes to be carbon neutral.

Air quality in Southend-on-Sea has improved over the past 40 years, but we recognise there is still more to do. We will take measures to meet national air quality targets and further improve our air quality. We will also continue to monitor air pollution in air quality management areas, implementing our Local Air Quality Action Plan and monitoring our outcomes via annual status reports.

We will undertake flood and coastal erosion risk management and continue to invest in protecting and nurturing our coastline and its marine biodiversity, which continues to be our much loved and best

used asset.

### Improved transport system

We will work to ensure effective travel choices for all residents in the city, including travelling by car, public transport, taxi, private hire, bike or on foot. The Local Transport Plan 4 (2024 to 2040) will set out the council's plans, policies and programmes on transport and transport infrastructure.

We will keep people and goods moving in Southend-on-Sea by:

- keeping Queensway free-flowing as a major city centre traffic artery
- increasing parking in and around our High Street and seafront
- only installing traffic calming measures in residential areas following full consultation and with the support of residents
- maintaining our roads, pavements and footpaths to an acceptable standard
- improving signage to all major destinations and attractions in the city and erecting new signage to signpost visitors to our beaches
- promoting low-carbon vehicles by rolling out the necessary infrastructure to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points across the city.

We value our local bus service provision and will work with bus companies to improve bus services. Bus service improvements in the Southend-on-Sea

Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 to 2027 will be delivered through the Southend-on-Sea Enhanced Partnership Plan 2023 to 2028.

We will make walking and cycling more convenient and accessible. For example, by creating an integrated cycle network of segregated cycle paths and quieter routes across the city, supporting the national safe passing of cyclist's campaign, which promotes the safe passing of cyclists by drivers, and enhancing retail areas for the safety of pedestrians.

### Prevent waste, promoting re-use and increase recycling

We will provide recycling and waste collection and treatment services aligned to the needs of our communities and local environment. We will continue to provide a high-quality waste collection service for all residents. We are committed to increasing recycling across the city and encouraging people to prevent waste, re-use and recycle.



## A transforming council delivering efficient, cost-effective services

### Outcomes:

- value for money
- change our election cycle
- transformation
- clear service standards

### Value for money

We are taking proactive steps to deal with the predicted budget challenges and avoid potentially more difficult financial decisions in the future and to deliver a balanced budget for 2023/24 and to set a balanced budget for 2024/25. We will maintain robust financial planning, scrutinise budgets, manage risks, measure social value, robust contract management and strive to deliver better value for money for people.

We will continue to seek to better understand key cost and income drivers across all our services and have a commercial mindset when thinking about our assets.

We will support people to enable them to be included in our future planning and will continue to measure the satisfaction of our customers and residents through consultation and gain insight, learning from compliments, complaints and information requests.

### Change our election cycle

Following the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge in October 2022, a number of recommendations were made, mainly relating to governance and decision-making. We will deliver our action plan in response to the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations to strengthen and improve these areas.

This includes consulting our residents on changing our election cycle to whole council elections every four years. This will be done within a timeline appropriate to the relevant boundary review.

### Transformation

To achieve our strategic priorities, we need to transform how we work as an organisation. Our transformation programme will provide a structured approach to transforming the council using digital as an enabler and service redesign. It will help us to deliver a programme of optimised services, using our knowledge of how the council operates, how services could be delivered differently and what is needed to enable change to happen. The next stage of our transformation journey means working together to modernise and improve how we deliver services, create efficiencies to close the budget gap, and drive positive outcomes for residents. We are working with partners to improve and transform the organisation. This will build on the good progress we have already made and is focused on ensuring that services are sustainable, fit for purpose, and put residents at the centre - now and in the future. In November 2023, a plan and roadmap will be agreed, setting out how the organisation will implement the transformation and change.

We will build a future-proof council that

lays the foundation for future financial sustainability and smart city ambitions. Modernisation of the council will include the digital transformation of key resident facing processes on the council's website by April 2025.

We will deliver robust oversight and good governance arrangements, ensuring that we operate in accordance with the law and proper standards, and public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. We will review our governance framework which will set out how the council's governance arrangements work towards meeting the seven principles of good governance.

We will work to create a great employee experience, building a working environment where all employees feel respected and included, everyone receives equal opportunities to the council's resources, discrimination is eliminated, and underrepresented groups are supported at senior levels. By 2026, we aim to reach the 'Excellent' standard within the Local Government Association Equality Framework.

### Clear service standards

We are committed to making sure residents receive the best possible service from the council.

We will monitor service provision and adhere to mandatory service standards and we will ensure this is transparent and accessible to the public.





HOW WE  
**WILL DELIVER**

To achieve this ambitious plan, we must build on our strengths, reflect on our development areas, follow Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations and transform into an outstanding, inclusive organisation.

5 | HOW THE  
**CORPORATE PLAN  
WILL BE DELIVERED**

To deliver this ambitious plan we need to build on our strengths. We must take forward the recommendations from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, reflect on our areas of development, and transform as a council. As a major employer and leader in the city, we must become an outstanding and inclusive organisation that all councillors, employees and residents can be proud of.

**A clear set of priorities**

This plan sets out a clear and ambitious set of priorities, which provide a sense of purpose for every council employee and are collectively owned by the organisation's leadership at political and officer level. All departments in the council will deliver on or enable one or more of these priorities to be delivered.

**Outcome-based approach**

We are committed to achieving changes for the better for our residents and visitors. We will make better use of insight gained from analysing data and information, effectively engage and coproduce where possible with our residents and communities and deliver the right services to achieve desired outcomes.

**Measure and monitor our progress**

We will measure and monitor our progress in delivering priorities and flex our resources and approach accordingly. Our performance monitoring is aligned with our financial reporting and risk management. Key performance indicators are aligned to each of our strategic priorities, reporting to our Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team. All council employees will have performance and development conversations, connecting them to the delivery of outcomes.

## Tackling inequality

We will challenge inequality to make sure Southend-on-Sea is a city that works for everyone. Inequalities between the city's most and least disadvantaged communities in areas such as income, productivity, housing affordability, life expectancy and skills levels cannot continue to hold people back and prevent them from reaching their full potential. We will act to remove barriers that people face, such as poor-quality housing, low educational and skills attainment, poverty and ill-health, with particular emphasis on spatial inequality, equality of access to opportunities and giving every child the best start in life.

## Employee and member development

Together our councillors and employees combine the essential skills, experience and knowledge to manage and lead our council. A core component of our People Vision is to build a collaborative learning culture that embeds personal growth, ensuring the right skill sets and behaviours to build mutual trust and respect are at the heart of the working relationship between councillors and officers. We will be clear to our present and future employees what our employment proposition is, how they will be supported to perform their roles well and progress their careers. We will support underrepresented groups at senior levels and eliminate discrimination. The council's constitution review will enable better decision making by councillors and council employees.

## Improving equality, diversity and inclusion

Our Equalities Statement sets a vision about the type of council we aspire to be - a council that values the benefits of diversity and inclusiveness in our city, supports all councillors and employees to feel they belong at the council and have opportunities to succeed, and that works in collaborative partnership with residents from all groups of protected characteristics to design, co-produce and deliver high quality services that work for all. We will deliver on our equality objectives and commitments under our Equalities Statement to ensure that we achieve our equalities vision.

## Empowering our communities and residents

We will engage and empower our communities and residents through co-design and co-production, where service providers and users work together to reach a collective outcome.

We will further develop our online engagement platform 'Your Say Southend', develop a consistent approach for working with communities and residents, and reach out to voices seldom heard. We will involve residents in the design and delivery of services and help increase the capacity for communities to come together to enhance their environment. Understanding the knowledge and experiences that people gain in their lives is crucial to co-producing local solutions. We will build trust and relationships with residents and communities, work jointly on challenges, provide support and training, and where possible, share power and resources.

## Working in partnership

We will continue to work alongside national, regional and local stakeholders, including central government, MPs, neighbouring councils and local partnerships. We will share services where appropriate. We will also work jointly with our partners in the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Partnership. This includes the Integrated Care Board and Integrated Care Partnership. We will continue to explore the potential for joint working and additional powers that could bring in south Essex and wider work across pan Essex with the Association of South Essex Local Authorities.

## Financial sustainability

The council ended the financial year 2022/23 with the largest level of reported overspending since becoming a unitary authority in April 1998. Following years of strong financial management, we had enough reserves to cope with the impact of this overspend as a one-off critical event. We cannot continue to overspend at that level. The 2023/24 financial forecast puts the council at serious risk, posing the largest financial challenge in our history.

Urgent action is required to make sure the council remains financially stable and resilient for the future. Elected Members and council officers need to work together at pace to control overspending and maintain the approved budget for 2023/24, as well as reduce forecast overspending throughout the period of this corporate plan.

We must reduce all non-essential expenditure and generate extra income. This must be achieved while making sure our most vulnerable residents are looked after appropriately and our statutory responsibilities are discharged effectively. Like other local authorities, we need to consider how we deliver our statutory responsibilities. The scale of the continuing financial pressures will inevitably lead to a reduction in the range, quality, cost and responsiveness of other discretionary council services.

We will continue to strive for financial sustainability over the next five years. We will do this by growing local income sources and relying less on government grants. We will work with our partners and increase focus on the delivery or joint commissioning of services to make sure those in most need are the recipients of services.

**COLLABORATIVE**  
**HONEST**  
**INCLUSIVE**  
**PROUD**

## Our values and behaviours

This corporate plan is underpinned by our organisational values and behaviours. Our values and behaviours represent our core principles and ethics for how we approach our work, and collaborate as individuals, teams and one organisation.

Our values are collaborative, honest, inclusive and proud. In terms of our behaviours, we will drive positive change, embody trust and respect, demonstrate strong leadership, act with integrity, behave responsibly, and build relationships to work well together.



## Equality, diversity and inclusion

The council's equalities statement and equality objectives were produced in 2022 following consultation with residents, council employees and representatives from groups and organisations who work with and support people with protected characteristics.

### Equalities statement:

Southend-on-Sea City Council recognises and values the benefits of diversity and inclusiveness in our city, where people from different backgrounds are valued and get on well together. We will work to bring equality, diversity and inclusion issues into sharper focus and seek out improvements to our services and work environment.

We are committed to supporting all councillors and employees to feel they belong at the council and have opportunities to succeed. We will work with employees to identify and remove barriers to inclusivity and diversity.

The council will actively celebrate the value that a diversity of perspectives brings and will proactively seek opportunities to celebrate our differences as well as the common goals that connect and unify us all – together we are stronger.

As an inclusive local authority, we will seek opportunities to work with residents from all groups of protected characteristics to design, co-produce and deliver high quality services that work for all. Collaborative partnership working is the way to achieve this.

We will achieve our equalities vision through our equality objectives. These are:

### Our employees, councillors and volunteers

Support and enhance resilience in our employees, councillors and volunteers who are representative of our communities.

### Cohesive community

Raise awareness of the richness in diversity, by celebrating our communities' differences and what unites us.

### Access to services

Provide support in accessing services for all, accommodating diverse needs, and promoting inclusion at all levels, including a developed digital literacy offer.

### Partnership working

Seek opportunities to co-produce, co-design and bring partners' knowledge and experiences into policy making, strategy development and implementation / service delivery.

# 6 | ANNEX

## Supporting strategies and plans

This plan and the priorities in it are supported by a range of strategies and plans (both current and new), which set out how and what the council will deliver, including:

- **Our Performance Management Framework** sets out how we will manage and review the performance of the council's strategic priorities.
- **Service Planning** sets out the activity of each service area, how it will support the delivery of the corporate plan and how success will be measured.
- **Individual Performance Agreements** support the performance of employees, making sure individuals are set goals that help the council to deliver its priorities and outcomes.

There are also enabling strategies, frameworks and structures in place to support and enable the council to deliver priorities:

- Our **Governance Framework** allows the council to operate in accordance with the law and proper standards, and ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. It brings together a set of values, legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes.
- Our **Financial Sustainability Strategy 2022 - 2032** and **Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2023 - 2024 to 2027 - 2028** underpin the priorities set out in the corporate plan. They support the achievement of desired outcomes in the corporate plan and will ensure the council remains financially resilient.
- Our **People Vision** supports the creation of a great employee experience linked to the council's strategic priorities. Our People Vision is structured to reflect the stages of employee recruiting, induction, development and retention.
- Plans to improve the council's efficiency, effectiveness and ways of working include:
  - o **Our Transformation Programme** provides a framework for transforming our organisation with digital as an enabler and service redesign.
  - o The **Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan** is our response to recommendations arising from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, which took place in October 2022.
  - o Our **Smart Digital Strategy** will enable efficiency, effectiveness, smarter working and savings.
  - o Our **Data Strategy** will ensure good quality data and confidence in data-driven decisions.



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## Relevant delivery strategies and plans for each of our priorities

### A growing city with a strong and prosperous community

- Destination Southend 2020 - 2050
- Essential Living Fund Scheme Southend
- Financial Sustainability Strategy 2022 - 2032
- Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023 - 2028
- Our Culture Vision
- Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2023 - 2026
- SMART Digital Strategy 2021 - 2024
- Social Value Policy (in development)
- Southend Adult Community College's strategic plan (in development)
- Southend City Centre Strategy and Investment Plan
- Southend Skills Strategy 2023 - 2028 (in development)
- Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan 2023 - 2026

### A safe city with a good quality of life for all

- Ageing Well Strategy 2022 - 2027
- Caring Well Strategy 2022 - 2027
- Co-production framework (in development)
- Core20PLUS5 – Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Partnership
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Essex Armed Forces Community Covenant
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 - 2024
- Healthy Environment – Food policy (in development)
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
- Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 - 2028
- Living Well Strategy 2022 - 2027
- Local Plan (in development)
- Modern Slavery Statement (in development)
- Music Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2025
- Neighbourhood plans (in development)
- Prevent Action Plan (in development)
- School Performance Strategy 2019 - 2023
- Social Care Workforce Strategy for external 2023 - 2027 care and support providers of Southend (in development)
- Southend Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2023 - 2026
- Southend-on-Sea Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2022 - 2025
- Southend-on-Sea Prevention Strategy (in development)
- Street Prostitution Strategy 2022 - 2023
- Tenancy Strategy (in development)

### A clean city with a resilient environment

- Air Quality Action Plan
- Bee Happy - A Strategy for bees and other pollinators 2020 - 2025
- Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 - 2027
- Green City Action Plan 2024 (in development)
- Local Plan (in development)
- Local Transport Plan 4 2024 - 2040 (in development)
- Low Carbon Retrofit Action Plan (in development)
- Net Zero Carbon Strategy (in development)
- Resources and Waste Strategy (in development)

- Southend-on-Sea Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2015
- Southend-on-Sea Shoreline Strategy 2019
- Tree Policy 2020
- Urban Heat Stress Strategy 2023/24 (in development)

### A transforming council delivering efficient, cost-effective services

- Equality, diversity and inclusion improvement plan
- Financial Sustainability Strategy 2022 - 2032
- Governance Framework
- Individual performance agreements
- Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge action plan
- Local Code of Governance
- Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023 - 2028
- People Vision
- Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2023 - 2026
- Service plans
- SMART Digital Strategy 2021 - 2024
- Transformation Framework

