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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 12th December, 2023

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor T Cox (Chair)
Councillors M Davidson (Vice-Chair), H Boyd, K Buck, J Courtenay,
D Garston, D Jarvis, J Moyies and D Nelson

In Attendance: Councillors S Aylen, R Longstaff and R Woodley
K Sawyer, C Shuter, M Harvey, J Chesterton, C Gamble and
A Richards

Start/End Time: 7.00 pm - 7.55 pm

67 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lamb.

68 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this meeting.

69 Budget 2024/25 - Councillor Budget Ideas and Budget Proposals

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) setting out the ideas from Councillors to help address the financial challenges the Council is facing for 2024/25 and the medium term.

The report also drew attention to the decision of the Cabinet on 31st October 2023 to approve the increase in fees and charges from April 2024 (Minute 51, refers). It was now proposed that the implementation date for the increase in fees and charges be brought forward to 1st January 2024 to urgently assist with the in-year projected overspend reported to Cabinet on 20th November 2023.

In considering the Councillor suggestions the Cabinet noted that the idea put forward for the introduction of new parking bays (page 20 – Appendix 1 of the report) was submitted by Councillor Woodley and not Councillor Dent as indicated in the report.

Resolved:

1. That the ongoing significant financial challenges facing the Council in the medium term and the valuable contributions made by Councillors in coming forward with a range of ideas to help plan for longer term financial sustainability of the Council, be noted.

2. That it be noted that the full range of Councillor ideas and the proposed way to deal with them accordingly, as set out by category in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be noted.

3. That the earlier implementation date of 1 January 2024 for the increase in fees and charges, as set out in the report, subject to the normal notification and consultation periods where required, be approved.

4. That the commencement of market testing, followed by procurement as necessary for the proposed commercial operation of the Pier, be approved.

Reasons for Decisions:

1. The key intention behind the report is to seek a way forward with the Councillor ideas that have been provided as part of consideration for the Council's budget. It will also help to inform the decision making needed to ensure the Council's medium term financial sustainability is maintained and robust budget setting for future years is achieved.

2. The challenge of delivering a balanced financial outturn for 2023/24 remains significant and some of these factors are contributing to increasing the scale of the financial challenge for 2024/25. The Council continues to try to reduce all non-essential expenditure and/or generate extra income. This priority must be achieved whilst ensuring that our most vulnerable residents are looked after appropriately, and our statutory responsibilities are effectively discharged. Improving efficiency and productivity is essential but the scale of the unprecedented financial pressures will inevitably lead to a reduction in the range, quality, cost and responsiveness of other discretionary Council services, as well as challenging our approach to statutory services. There is the need to consider all suggestions put forward to help support the delivery of a robust and balanced budget for 2024/25 and beyond.

Other Options

1. Not to progress with all or some of the Councillor ideas put forward in Appendix 1 to the report. However, this would need to be considered against the significant financial challenges currently being faced by the Council.

2. Not to progress with the earlier implementation of fees and charges but this would mean foregoing an opportunity to generate income to support the 2023/24 budget position.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Not eligible for call-in

Cabinet Member: Cllr Cox

Chair: _____