

Cover Note

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Committee for submission: Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee, 15 February 2024

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee has received the draft minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee of South Essex Councils (SEC) held on 6th December 2023.
- 1.2. This cover note seeks to highlight any implications, benefits or considerations for the city of Southend and Southend-on-Sea City Council (the council), and its interests arising from the SEC Joint Committee, its work programme, and its operations.

2. Background

The Leader of the Council, at the meeting of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee that took place on 8 June 2023, undertook to provide a brief summary of the discussions at meetings of the SEC Joint Committee and highlight the benefits for Southend.

3. Implications for Southend

Policy and strategy

- 3.1. The outline Specification of Requirements for commissioning expert support to develop and implement a South Essex Economic Growth Action Plan was approved. This means there is now an opportunity for the council to significantly influence the approach to boosting economic productivity in south Essex over the next 15 years, setting outcomes for place and people and shaping SEC's project portfolio and delivery plan for 2025-27, and the design and implementation of a new South Essex Economic Development / Growth Team.

Finance and resourcing

- 3.2. In September 2023 the Joint Committee approved expenditure up to £100,000 to commission support to design a South Essex Economic Growth Action Plan. At the December 2023 meeting, it was confirmed that during December 2023 the Specification of Requirements would be refined and put out to tender; and in February 2024, SEC officers would commence selection of the supplier that will undertake the work.
- 3.3. As a pre-cursor to developing a South Essex Economic Growth Action Plan and creating a consolidated South Essex Economic Development / Growth Team, SEC members were invited to explore ways in which south Essex councils can pool economic development resources and work together.

This is a clear opportunity for the council to influence the design of shared economic development services in south Essex and play a key role in identifying opportunities for service improvements, financial savings, and systemic solutions for south Essex-wide challenges and aspirations.

- 3.4. It is now proposed that each SEC member assigns a lead person to co-work on exploring shared services opportunities. To this end, a report on potential shared services will be tabled at SEC's February 2024 meeting.
- 3.5. The current SEC 2023/24 budget forecast is a surplus of £279,000, which will bring the reserve balance to £311,000 at year end.

Communications and Engagement

- 3.6. The final version of a new SEC partnership narrative was approved, to be followed by a communications strategy (a first draft of which will be tabled at SEC's February 2024 meeting). The [minutes](#) from the December joint committee meeting contain the approved narrative text.
- 3.7. The previously agreed proposal to decommission SEC's existing five workstreams and consolidate them into a singular programme for growth will be a key part of determining SEC's communication objectives and therefore provide a foundation for a communication strategy.

4. Other

The next meeting of the SEC Joint Committee will take place on Thursday 22 February 2024, at which time the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee can expect further briefing and analysis of the Joint Committee's work programme and its implications and benefits for Southend.

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