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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Cabinet

Date: Monday, 29th July, 2024

Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor D Cowan (Chair)
Councillors A Jones (Vice-Chair), L Burton, P Collins, M Dent,
I Gilbert, M Sadza and M Terry

In Attendance: C Ansell, S Zeiss, C Shuter, M Harvey, C Gamble, K Ramkhelawon,
A Keating and T Holland

Start/End Time: 6.00 pm - 6.53 pm

11 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hyde.

12 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this meeting.

13 Southend-on-Sea City Council Annual Report 2023-24

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the Council's Annual Report 2023/24, which set out what activity had been delivered to progress the priorities and outcomes detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan. The Plan also provided a high-level overview of the past year's successes and achievements and summarised how services are funded.

Recommended:

That Council note the achievements, successes and challenges within the Annual Report 2023-24.

Reasons for recommendation:

The Annual Report is a key document of the Council's adopted Policy Framework and sets out what has been delivered against the Council's Corporate Plan.

Other options:

None

Note: This is a Council Function
Not eligible for call-in
Cabinet Member: Cllr Cowan

14 Better Queensway Project Progression

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Environment and Place) presenting an update on the Better Queensway Project and the options for future phases to regenerate the whole estate over a period of time and in phases.

Resolved:

1. That the Reserved Matters Application for Phase 1a (the first phase of housing) be approved and to proceed with the procurement of a partner to submit a planning application to bring forward the development of the area occupied by the existing temporary Essex Street Car Park, as set out in the submitted report.
2. That the commencement of the highways work in line with the consented outline planning application, conditionally granted on 6th September 2021 which states bringing the Queensway underpass up to grade, creating a new roundabout and providing a new 4-lane carriage way with associated footpath as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
3. That the need to provide additional resource funding for the proposed project for the remainder of 2024/25 and futures years, be noted and once that resource requirement is established a further cabinet decision and Council approval for addition to the Capital Investment Programme would be required.

Reasons for decisions:

1. Decent, affordable homes are the foundations for people's lives. By creating these new homes, the Council will be providing residents with stability, comfort and security to enrich their lives which will support mental and physical health.
2. Without the Council's commitment to this project the HIF grant Homes England are providing will be at risk. There would be a risk of clawback of £500k by Homes England and the opportunity to secure and invest the further £14.5M which must be spent by 31st March 2025 would be lost.

Other options:

1. Stop and do not carry on with the Project. This option is drastic and would cause financial loss and potential reputational damage.
2. Look at a different first phase. This would involve starting fresh on a new area within the redline boundary. The other sites opportune for this could be Short Street and/or the Range site (which is subject to an income generating lease which includes a break clause exercisable in 4 years). This would be time consuming with new architect drawings/ viability work needing to be undertaken.
3. Re-design Phase 1. The work carried out to date would be wasted, new architectural designs would need to be instructed and viability work undertaken and would cause a significant time delay.

Note: This is an Executive Function save that the final decision on any additions to the Capital Investment Programme is a Council Function.

Not eligible for call-in

Cabinet Member: Cllr Gilbert

15 Next Stage of the Housing Pipeline

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Environment and Place) presenting an overview of the Housing Pipeline work to date and sought approval for the next stage of the Pipeline, including site sales and appropriations, three housing development opportunities and an external funding opportunity.

Resolved:

1. That the progress made on the housing pipeline to date, as set out in the submitted report, be noted.

2. That the revised governance structure for the Housing Pipeline, as set out in the report, be noted.

3. That the following next steps for the Housing Pipeline, be approved:

(a) The sale of 291-297 Victoria Avenue site to secure full capital receipt, with the capital receipt to be ringfenced to help fund future Housing Pipeline development opportunities.

(b) That under S122(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 36 Satanita Road be appropriated from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), with existing HRA budgets to be utilised to undertake the necessary void works to bring the home into use as affordable council housing.

(c) That under S122(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 The former Cattery site on Prince Avenue be appropriated from the General Fund to the HRA.

(d) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Environment and Place, in consultation with the Executive Director for Finance and Resources, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investment, and the Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing, and the Local Plan, to progress the Futures development through the planning process to establish an indicative scheme and site density on the principle of residential use and to engage with the market and prospective development partners.

Recommended:

4. That the following next steps for the Housing Pipeline, be recommended to Council for approval:

(a) The development of c.30 council homes on the Cattery (affordable rent capped at Local Housing Allowance) be funded by the release of c.£12m (inclusive of appropriate contingency) of HRA funds. Of this, 40% (c.£4.8m) is to be funded from right-to-buy receipts, while 60% (c.£7.2m) is to be funded from HRA capital reserves.

(b) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Environment and Place and the Executive Director of Finance and Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing, and the Local Plan, and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments, to authorise the completion of the Grant Funding Agreement for the council's Brownfield Land Release Fund bid,

subject to successfully securing funding. Or, if the bid is unsuccessful, fund £0.467m of enabling works through 60% of HRA capital reserves (£0.28m) and 40% of Right-to-buy receipts (£0.187m).

(c) The use of existing funds or funds received from site sales for detailed feasibility works, cost planning, and design works for the Hamlet Court Road site.

Reasons for recommendation:

1. The South Essex 2022 Housing Needs Assessment details the increasing need for housing of all sizes and tenures throughout Southend. The work of the housing pipeline will help to alleviate some of this housing pressure through the delivery of new housing, including affordable housing.

2. The development of new housing will assist the council financially with increased council tax income and additional rental income for the HRA. Further, where the council sells sites for development (either commercial or residential) which would otherwise have sat empty in Council ownership, the council will be assisted financially through receiving council tax or business rate income.

3. The proposed development on the Cattery of c.30 houses along Passivhaus principles (the largest Passivhaus development in the city) will be an opportunity for the council to lead on the delivery of sustainable housing in the city.

4. The revolving investment fund, the position of which will be bolstered following site sales and the Futures development, will enable a sustainable supply of housing for the city through the pipeline.

Other options:

1. Selling all sites within the Housing Pipeline - while it makes sense from a financial and development perspective to strategically sell some sites within the Pipeline, there are other sites it makes more strategic sense to retain and develop.

2. Develop all sites - due to the constraints identified on 291-297 Victoria Avenue, sale would be a better option, with the funds ringfenced within the revolving investment fund in order to assist the financing of future development opportunities.

3. Registered Provider Partner/Joint Venture partner- Partnering in a Joint Venture will be explored for the Futures site, however due to the size of the Cattery it has been determined that the Council has a sufficient experience and the required skills within its development team in order that it can progress this development in-house.

4. Do Nothing - this option would result in no new housing including affordable housing being developed and would therefore not assist the Council in reducing its housing pressures and would not improve the financial position of the Council. It would also leave the Council with residual liabilities and costs for sites it currently owns.

Note: This is an Executive Function save that the decisions in Resolution 4 (a), (b) and (c) above constitute a Council Function.

Not eligible for call-in

Cabinet Member: Cllr A Jones

16 Annual Public Health Report

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Children and Public Health) presenting the Annual Public Health Report 2023/24.

Resolved:

That the Annual Public Health Report 2023/24, be noted.

Reasons for decision:

The Council has a statutory duty to protect the health of the local population. The 2023-24 Annual Public Health Report highlights some of the key issues and actions to address them for the people in Southend

Other options:

None. This is a statutory duty.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Not eligible for call-in

Cabinet Member: Cllr Sadza

17 Hybrid and Transactional Mail Contract Extension

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) proposing to extend the Council's existing Hybrid and Transactional Mail contract by 24 months to 31st August 2026.

Resolved:

That the option to extend the Council's existing Hybrid and Transactional Mail contract by 24 months to 31st August 2026, be approved.

Reasons for decision:

There is a need to have printing and mailing services available to the Local Authority.

Other options:

1. To perform a procurement process to award a new contract with the same terms and conditions. However, this will be both time consuming and costly with no obvious additional benefit.

2. Discontinue using an offsite hybrid solution. This would be both impractical due to the volumes currently operating within the contract and increase costs to the Local Authority as printing and posting on site was historically more expensive and more time consuming. Offsite arrangements improve efficiency and productivity.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Not eligible for call-in

Cabinet Member: Cllr Collins

18 Approval to Award a Contract for the Enterprise Resource Planning Solution

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) proposing the award of a contract for the Enterprise Resource Planning solution.

Resolved:

That a new 3-year contract, which includes an option to extend for a further 12 months, for the Enterprise Resource planning solution, be approved.

Reasons for decision:

The reason for the decision is the significant cost avoidance on this contract. The current contract (minus the possible extensions) runs until 30th September 2024 and the new contract under G-Cloud 13 will need to be awarded by the end of August 24.

Other options:

Do nothing. Whilst there is a compliant contract in place with an option to extend for a further 12 months from 1st October 2024, it is considered that it does not make financial sense to utilise this option.

Note: This is an Executive Function
Not eligible for call-in
Cabinet Member: Cllr Cowan

19 Feed and Food Controls Service Plan 2024-2025

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Environment and Place) presenting the Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan for 2024-25.

Recommended:

1. That the achievements against the previous Plan 2023-24, be noted.
2. That the Official Feed and Food Control Service Plan 2024-25, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report be adopted.

Reasons for recommendation:

To comply with the letter from the Food Standards Agency dated 8 February 2024 regarding appropriate resourcing of official controls for feed and food. To comply with the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement and in line with the Food Standards Agency audit findings. The audit findings were agreed by Cabinet on 18 June 2013.

Other options:

None. This is a statutory duty.

Note: This is a Council Function
Not eligible for call-in
Cabinet Member: Cllr Gilbert

20 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below, on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

21 Hybrid and Transactional Mail Contract Extension - Confidential Appendix

Resolved:

That the confidential appendix, be noted.

Chair: _____

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