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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Cabinet

Date: Monday, 16th September, 2024

Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

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

In Attendance: Councillors S Ayles and S Wakefield
C Ansell, A Richards, C Shuter, M Harvey, M Marks, J Chesterton
and C Gamble

Start/End Time: 6.00 pm - 7.40 pm

22 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence at this meeting.

23 Declarations of Interest

The following declaration of interest was made at this meeting:

(i) Councillor M Sadza – Minute No. 36 (Debt Management – Position to 31 July 2024) – Volunteer for Kings Money Advice Centre.

24 Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 24 June 2024

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 24th June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

25 Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 29 July 2024

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 29 July 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

26 Southend-on-Sea City Council Refreshed Corporate Plan 2024-2028

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the Council's refreshed Corporate Plan for 2024-2028.

Recommended:

That the Corporate Plan for 2024-28, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved and that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to make any final changes prior to publication.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure the Council has a robust strategic plan that clearly articulates the priorities for the organisation, enabling efficient use of resources.

Other Options:

None. There is no requirement to have a Corporate Plan, but it is best practice (as set out in the Best Value Guidance) and provides an essential guide to set the direction for our work towards a set of common goals.

Note: This is a Council Function

Not eligible for call-in

Cabinet Member: Cllr Cowan

27 Corporate Performance Report Quarter 1

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the quarter one corporate performance report for the period 1st April to 30th June 2024.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Performance Report as at 30th June 2024, as set out in appendix 1 to the submitted report, be noted.

Reason for Decision:

1. The Corporate Performance Report informs decision making to ensure that the Council's priorities are on track to be achieved and aligns with the Financial Performance Report to ensure that they are delivered within the approved budget provision.

2. 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.

Other Options:

The Council could monitor its corporate performance against an alternative timeframe, but it is considered that the current reporting schedule provides the appropriate balance to allow strategic oversight of the budget by Councillors. More frequent monitoring is undertaken by officers and considered by individual service Directors and the Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) including the implementation of any necessary remedial actions.

Note: This is an Executive Function

Not eligible for call-in

Cabinet Member: Cllr Cowan

28 Financial Performance Report for July 2024 (Period 4)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance & Resources) providing an update of the Council's current financial position and which highlighted the corrective action where necessary and reasonable mitigation required to try to deliver a balanced financial position by the end of the year.

Resolved:

1. That, in respect of the 2024/25 Revenue Budget Performance as set out in appendix 1 to the submitted report:

(i) That the forecast outturn for 2024/25 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at 31 July 2024, be noted.

(ii) That the plans and intentions to try to reduce the forecast overspend of the Council's revenue budget for 2024/25, be noted and that the Chief Executive and Executive Director (Finance & Resources) explore all opportunities within their delegated powers and authority to improve the financial position by the year-end.

(iii) That the budget transfers (virements) of £7,337,726, as set out in section 5.55 of the report, be noted.

2. That, in respect of the 2024/25 Capital Budget Performance, as set out in appendix 2 to the report:

(i) That the expenditure to date and the forecast outturn as at 31 July 2024 and its financing, be noted.

(ii) That the demolition of Civic Two be added to the Council's 2024/25 Annual Procurement Plan and that advertising the tender opportunity via the Council's electronic Tender Facility ProContract and in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 via Open Procedure, be approved.

Recommended:

3. That the requested changes to the Capital Investment Programme for 2024/25 and future years, as set out in section 4 of Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

Reasons for decisions:

To provide detailed financial information on the financial performance of the Council. The report sets out the key variances by budget holders and associated management action being implemented to address the identified issues.

Other options:

The Council could choose to monitor its budgetary performance against an alternative timeframe, but it is considered that the current reporting schedule provides the appropriate balance to allow strategic oversight of the budget by Councillors and to also formally manage the Council's exposure to financial risk.

Note: The decisions in resolutions 1 and 2 above constitute an Executive function.
The recommendation in 3 above constitutes a Council function.
Referred direct to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Cllr Collins

29 Treasury Management Report - Quarter 1 2024/25

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the Treasury Management report for quarter one covering the period from April to June 2024 and compliance with the treasury management strategy for that period.

Resolved:

1. That the Treasury Management Report for Quarter One 2024/25, be approved.
2. That it be noted that the treasury management activities were carried out in accordance with the CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Sector during the period from April to June 2024.
3. That it be noted that the loan and investment portfolios were actively managed to minimise cost and maximise interest earned, whilst maintaining a low level of risk.
4. That it be noted that £1.578m of interest and income distributions for all investments were earned during this three-month period at an average rate of 4.92%. Also, the value of the externally managed funds decreased by a net of £0.183m due to changes in the unit price, giving a combined overall return of 4.35%.
5. That it be noted that the level of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) (excluding debt relating to services transferred from Essex County Council on 1st April 1998) remained at £347.3m (HRA: £74.2m, GF: £273.1m) during the period from April to June 2024.
6. That it be noted that during the quarter the level of financing for 'invest to save' schemes remained the same at £8.03m.

Reason for Decision:

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management recommends that Local Authorities should submit reports regularly. The Treasury Management Policy Statement for 2024/25 set out that reports would be submitted to Cabinet quarterly on the activities of the treasury management operation.

Other Options:

There are many options available for the operation of the Treasury Management function, with varying degrees of risk associated with them. The Treasury Management Policy aims to effectively control risk to within a prudent level, whilst providing optimum performance consistent with that level of risk.

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

30 **Waste Collection Contract Award**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Environment and Place) which sought approval to award the Contract for Waste and Street Cleansing Services to the highest scoring bidder with the relevant delegated authority to proceed with the completion of contracts.

In referring to paragraph 4.5 of the report, the Executive Director confirmed that the standstill period was in fact 10 calendar days.

Resolved:

1. That the award of the contract for waste and street cleansing services to the highest scoring bidder, be approved. The contract will commence on 5th April 2025 for a period of eight (8) years with an option to extend the contract by a further period or periods (each to be no less than one year in duration) of up to twelve (12) years in aggregate.
2. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Environment and Place) to notify the bidders of the outcome of the procurement and to enter into the relevant contract.
3. That it be noted that the identity of the preferred bidder is confidential (as the procurement is live) until the end of the standstill period at which point Councillors will be notified.
4. That the budget implications associated with the contract award set out in the submitted report and the Exempt Appendix 1 and that this will be considered as part of the budget setting arrangements for the 2025/26 budget year, be noted.

Reason for Decisions:

To enable the award of a contract for Waste and Street Cleansing Services and ensure that the Council can discharge its statutory duties in relation to waste collection and street cleansing services from 5th April 2025.

Other Options:

Not to award the contract, but the Council has no other provision in place that would deliver waste collection and street cleansing services delivered from 5th April 2025.

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

31 Contract for Replacement of Laptops, Desktops and Tablets

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) which sought approval to award the Device Refresh procurement via the aggregated tender framework with effect from 14th November 2024.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed award for new devices through an aggregated tender framework, within the already allocated budget for the ICT capital investment programme for the 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 Financial Years, be approved.
2. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Strategy and Change), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the contract award to the successful supplier.

Reason for Decisions:

An aggregated tender process allows the Council to take advantage of economies of scale. Additionally, if procuring via aggregation we should achieve further savings by submitting our requirements alongside other government entities through a single tender making it very attractive to prospective bidders. This is the same approach used for the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement approved by Cabinet in January 2024.

Other Options:

1. Procure devices via the G-cloud framework. This approach would be more costly as the Council would not benefit from an aggregated purchase achieving reduced item cost and is therefore not recommended.
2. Lease devices from a supplier/manufacturer. This approach would see the Council enter into a lease agreement with a supplier for a fixed period. The benefits of this approach are a much lower upfront cost with monthly, quarterly or annual payments. Additional supplier support could be provided throughout the lease (maintenance, break fix, replacement etc). This approach changes the method of funding from Capital to Revenue. The approach also creates restrictions on how the equipment is used and at the end of the lease equipment needs to be returned to the Lessor and is therefore not recommended.

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

32 School Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools/Coordinated Admission Scheme

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Children and Public Health) presenting the admission arrangements for Community Schools for the academic year 2026/27 and the Coordinated Admissions Scheme for 2026/27.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools for the academic year 2026/27, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, and the requirement for public consultation on the changes proposed, be approved.
2. That the consultation with governing bodies of community schools take place on the published admission number (PAN) for community infant, junior and primary schools for September 2026 as set out in the Admission Arrangements in Resolution 1 above.
3. That the proposed Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for 2026/27, as set out in Appendix 2 of the submitted report be approved and that the final version be ratified by the Executive Director for Children and Public Health in December for publication as required by law on 1 January 2024.
4. That the relevant area for schools be reviewed and agreed as follows: Southend, Castle Point and Rochford for the years 2026 and 2027.

Reasons for Decisions

To comply with the relevant statutory requirements relating to the School Admissions arrangements.

Other Options:

1. To consult on the full set of admission arrangements for all community schools in the City. However, this is not required as no changes are proposed.
2. Not undertaking a public consultation does not change the requirement that the Council must consult admission authorities on the proposed Coordinated Admission Scheme 2026 to ensure the delivery of school places, as required by law.
3. Not undertaking a public consultation does not change the requirement that the Council must consult Governors of community schools on their PAN and inform schools of the minor changes to the coordinated scheme.

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

33 Transitions Working Party Report and Recommendations

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Children and Public Health) presenting the outcomes and recommendations from the Transitions Working Party.

On consideration of the report, the Leader referred to the recommendations of the People Scrutiny Committee concerning the implementation of the findings of the Working Party. As this was not reflected in the report, he asked that the updated version be circulated to all Members of Cabinet.

Resolved:

1. That the findings of the Transitions Working Party be implemented to meet statutory duties.
2. That it be noted that the submitted report now closes the work of the working party.

Reasons for decisions:

To receive the recommendations of the Transitions Working Party.

Other options:

None.

Note: This is an Executive function
Not eligible for call-in
Cabinet Member: Councillor L Burton

34 Notice of Motion - Replacement of Paving Slabs (Referred by Council on 21 March 2024)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Environment & Place) in response to a Notice of Motion seeking a review of the current policy for the resurfacing of footways.

Resolved:

That, based on the original evidence provided in 2020 and subsequent data and provision and the information contained in the submitted report, the policy for replacing footways with black DBM, regardless of current surface type is maintained.

Reasons for Decision:

To respond to the Notice of Motion

Other Options

To revert back to the pre-2020 approach. However, this was not recommended for the reasons set out in the submitted report.

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

35 Updated Local Code of Governance

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the updated Local Code of Governance for approval, as recommended by the Audit Committee held on 17 July 2024.

Resolved:

1. That the updated Local Code of Governance, as set out at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved.
2. That it be noted that the Council's existing Constitution will be updated to reflect the revised Local Code of Governance and will be adopted as appropriate as part of the review of the Constitution programme currently progressing through Standards Committee.

Reasons for Decisions:

CIPFA recommends that all local government bodies develop a local code of governance through their 2016 Governance Framework.

Other Options:

None.

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

36 Debt Management - Position to 31 July 2024

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the debt management position and the position of debts written off as at 31 July 2024.

Resolved:

1. That the finalised outstanding debt position as at 31 July 2024 and the position of debts written off to 31 July 2024 as set out in Appendices A & B to the submitted report, be noted.
2. That it be noted that there are no individual write offs proposed exceeding £25,000.

Reasons for Decisions:

1. Debt collection should form an important consideration for most service areas but predominantly collection is secured by services now reporting into the Director of Financial Services. All action instigated remains in accordance with the Council's Corporate Debt Collection and Recovery Policy to ensure a fair and consistent approach is applied to each case, and to maximise income collection for the Council.

2. Each write off is considered on an individual basis to assess the viability of collection and via compliance with the Council's Corporate Debt Collection and Recovery Policy to ensure a standard consistent approach is applied.

Other Options:

None

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

37 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 item of business set out below, on the grounds that it 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.

38 Waste Collection Contract Award - Confidential Appendix

Resolved:

That the confidential appendix, be noted

Chair: _____