

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 13 January 2025
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: No
Title of Report: **Civic Pride Action Plan**
Scrutiny Committee: Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

Executive Director: Alan Richards, Executive Director, Environment & Place
Report Author: Suzanne Newman, Interim Director of Policy & Customer Experience & Simon La Roche, Senior Strategy & Performance Advisor
Executive Councillor: Councillor Daniel Cowan, Leader of the Council

1. **Executive Summary**

- 1.1. The council has developed a civic pride action plan to boost people's emotional connection to living and working in the city. The plan includes a series of actions to be delivered in the current financial year (2024/2025), the following financial year and longer term. Actions in the plan include estimated delivery time and predicted costs, structured by the council's corporate priorities.
- 1.2. Boosting civic pride is a priority for the Joint Administration. The action plan primarily focuses on short-term measures to boost civic pride, such as delivering an annual Southend City Day on 1 March 2025. There is recognition within the council that boosting civic pride requires more than cosmetic, quick-fix interventions. A step change in how we relate to our communities and residents is required, so too a mix of policy levers. Improving high streets, tackling anti-social behaviour, improving the quality and quantity of cultural amenities, green spaces and places for community interaction are all key to boosting pride in place.
- 1.3. Civic pride activity needs to fit within the context of a challenging financial landscape. The action plan sets out an approach to enhance civic pride and meet our objectives, while also outlining how we intend to resource the action plan within existing capacity, potential external funding and grants and where necessary to consider the potential for any additional one-off or permanent resources.
- 1.4. Activity in the action plan has been categorised based on our four overarching corporate plan priorities, which are:
 - A city that is
 - Proud and prosperous

- Safe, clean and green
- Caring with a good quality of life for all
- Led by a transformative, responsive council (which runs through our approach to all objectives and actions)

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **It is recommended that Cabinet endorse the Civic Pride action plan and that where additional ongoing revenue and capital resources have been identified that these are considered and/or included as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26 and separately to approve the one-off revenue requirement from the council's reserves (section 7).**

3. Background

- 3.1. Southend-on-Sea was awarded city status on 1 March 2022. The council wants to celebrate city status and all that Southend-on-Sea has to offer and boost pride among our residents and workers. Starting in 2025, we plan to celebrate our city status with an annual Southend City Day on 1 March 2025 (or nearest weekend in future years).
- 3.2. Research (Sullivan & Day, 2019, as mentioned in [Whose pride is it anyway? A Feeling Towns webinar](#)) shows that boosting civic pride can happen in the context of:
- **Celebration** – celebrating city status
 - **Competition** – sense of competing with other regions
 - **Challenge** – ongoing challenges such as addressing inequality, climate change
 - **Conflict** – pride in anti-racism protests
- 3.3. Many of the people who live and work here are proud of their city and want to stay living and working in Southend-on-Sea. They have a strong sense of civic pride.
- 3.4. Common indicators of civic pride include cultural amenities, green spaces and places for community interaction. Research ([Councils have a central role to play in boosting civic pride - Professor Michael Kenny](#)) suggests that people who live in areas with better facilities feel more positive towards their local area.

4. Our Civic Pride Action Plan

- 4.1. The objectives of the civic pride action plan are as follows:
- promote and celebrate Southend-on-Sea's rich arts, culture and heritage
 - make it easier to navigate around the city
 - focus the social value from our contracts and businesses to enhance civic pride
 - make Southend sparkle
 - communicate environmental benefits of reducing the amount of waste we're sending to energy from waste
 - develop new approaches to parks and open spaces
 - encourage strong and active communities
 - develop effective citizenship, especially among the city's younger residents

- 4.2. The civic pride action plan is aimed at residents, students, under-served communities, volunteers, businesses and children and young people. We will listen to residents and communities to understand:
- when pride is expressed
 - what people actually do individually and collectively and where these activities take place.
- 4.3. Actions in the plan have been categorised based on our corporate plan priorities and sub-themes of celebration, competition, challenge and conflict. The action plan will be divided into phases, with activity to be delivered this financial year ahead of Southend City Day on 1 March 2025, in the next financial year and longer-term. It outlines objectives, actions, due dates, estimated costs, funding sources and who is leading on actions.
- 4.4. Partners and influencers for actions will be engaged in the delivery of the action plan. We aim to foster a shared sense of purpose on civic pride with our partners and communities.
- 4.5. The action plan aims to integrate with other civic pride-related projects and activities carried out by the council, partners, businesses, organisations and residents. Activity will be aligned with the implementation of our new city vision, which is currently being developed by the Southend City Partnership based on the views of people who live, work and study in the city.
- 4.6. New actions will be added to the action plan as it develops. A compelling civic pride narrative will also be developed over time to support efforts to boost people's emotional connection to living and working in the city. Outputs, outtakes and outcomes will be monitored throughout the delivery of the action plan and activity evaluated once it is complete.

5. Reasons for Decisions

- 5.1. The council plays a key role within the city when it comes to boosting civic pride and we are ideally positioned to understand what policy mix is most likely to enhance feelings of civic pride in Southend-on-Sea. The focus of this first phase of the civic pride action plan is on short-term activity, building a sense of shared purpose with our communities and partners and developing a compelling civic pride narrative.
- 5.2. We know that boosting pride in place requires more than cosmetic, quick-fix interventions. It necessitates a step change in the way we relate to our residents and communities and a mix of different policy levers.

6. Other Options

- 6.1. We will continue to engage with our residents and communities about civic pride to understand what they want. promote their opinions and inform our action plan.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The delivery of the proposed Civic Pride action plan will require significant resources through a range of funding sources. The funding will come from within existing council budgets and staffing capacity, potential external funding and grants and where necessary through additional one-off or permanent budget resources.
- 7.2 A summary of the quantifiable financial impact of the proposed action plan is shown in the table below. Where actions are from within existing council budgets these are not included. Where actions are unquantifiable at this stage officers have identified the likely source of funding but will continue to undertake the necessary work to verify and quantify the relevant actions and if additional revenue or capital resources are required these will come back to Members at the appropriate time for the necessary budgetary approval.

Source of funding	£'000s
New ongoing revenue budget	210
New one-off revenue budget	260 (Action 4.4 – may be an extra 150)
New capital budget	405

- 7.3 The additional capital financing costs of the proposed £405k capital investment have been included within the new ongoing revenue budget requirement listed above.
- 7.4 The new capital investment and new revenue budgets proposed will be included as part of the consideration of the 2025/26 budget setting. However, two actions namely 1.1 and 1.2 although new ongoing budgets of £84k, will need member approval at this stage so that the necessary work can be enacted for the March 2025 deadlines for those two actions. This required one-off funding in 2024/25 will need to be met from the Council's Business Transformation Reserve. The remaining £126k will be considered as normal as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process.
- 7.5 The one-off revenue budget requirement totalling £260k (but maybe up to a further £150k – action 4.4) will require member approval at this stage as those relevant actions also have 2024/25 deadlines or lead in time to deliver early in the 2025/26 financial year. This required one-off funding will need to be met from the Council's Business Transformation Reserve. Any works around the Shrubbery trust land will require separate decisions to be taken by the Trustees in due course.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Terms and conditions for a civic pride fund will need to be developed. There are no other foreseen legal implications.

9. Policy Context

- 9.1 Through this action plan we aim to increase social value of our contractors and increase volunteering, both internally within the organisation.

10. Carbon Impact

10.1. The action plan aims to reduce the city’s carbon impact by minimising city day’s carbon impact, increasing recycling, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill, funding community environmental projects and promoting environmental and conservation youth and volunteer initiatives.

11. Equalities

11.1 The action plan aims to have a positive equality impact. We will promote equality and embrace and respect diversity through the delivery of our civic pride action plan and including everyone in city day celebrations, civic fund and volunteering opportunities.

12. Consultation

12.1. The Southend City Partnership is currently consulting with residents and communities to develop a city vision. There will be insight from this and other engagement being carried out by the council and partners, for example, the council’s Big Spark community engagement project on health inequalities. This insight will be used to inform future activities to enhance civic pride across the city.

13. Appendices

13.1. **Appendix 1**: Draft Civic Pride Action Plan

14. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
Executive Director(s)	Alan Richards	5 December 2024
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	2 December 2024
Monitoring Officer	Susan Zeiss	1 November 2024
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Daniel Cowan	1 November 2024

Appendix 1: DRAFT Civic Pride Action Plan

Actions have been categorised based on our corporate plan priorities and sub-themes of celebration, competition, challenge and conflict (contexts in which civic pride can occur). The action plan includes both new civic pride actions (shaded in yellow) and existing civic pride-related actions or business as usual activities carried out by the council (shaded in blue).

Objective	Action	Due Date	Cost estimate	Funding	Lead
Proud and Prosperous					
Promote and celebrate Southend's rich arts, culture and heritage	1.1 An annual Southend City Day on 1 March 2025 (or nearest Saturday in future years) <i>Celebration</i>	March 2025 and then annually early March	£80k	New ongoing revenue Budget	Executive Director of Adults & Communities
	1.2 Community projects and events celebrating Southend's rich arts, culture and heritage. <i>Celebration</i>	March 2025	£4k	New ongoing revenue budget	Executive Director of Adults & Communities
	1.3 City Jam annual event <i>Celebration</i>	Ongoing	£90k	New ongoing revenue budget	Executive Director of Adults & Communities
	1.4 Promote conservation walks: Southend Heritage Walks <i>Celebration</i>	Continue work to promote	Business as usual activity	Within existing budget	Executive Director of Adults & Communities
Make it easier to navigate around the city	2.1 Improve the approach from Southend Victoria train station to the High Street to draw people into the High Street <i>Challenge</i>	30 December 2025	£130k	New capital budget	Executive Director of Environment & Place
	2.2 Review and commission wayfinding signage in the city, including directional signage,	31 March 2026	Southend sign: £100k	New capital budget, new CIL funding,	Executive Director of Adults & Communities

	<p>'you are here' maps, large 'welcome to Southend' signage and Belfairs Park signage strategy and works</p> <p><i>Celebration</i></p>		<p>Belfairs Park signage: £75k</p> <p>Other wayfinding signage: not possible to quantify costs at this stage</p>	<p>plus available arts grants</p>	<p>Executive Director for Environment & Place</p>
<p>Focus the social value from our contracts and businesses to enhance civic pride</p>	<p>3.1 Social value and volunteering days for large contractors</p> <p><i>Challenge</i></p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>£0</p>	<p>Within existing budget</p>	<p>Executive Director of Finance & Resources</p>
	<p>3.2 Improve the reporting and removal of graffiti</p> <p><i>Challenge</i></p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Business as usual activity</p>	<p>Within existing budget</p>	<p>Executive Director of Environment & Place</p> <p>Executive Director of Adults & Communities</p>
	<p>3.3 Partner with small businesses and shop owners to maintain shop fronts through artwork and painting. Consider limited grants for businesses to paint buildings, improve shopfronts and add art to vacant windows.</p> <p><i>Celebration</i></p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>£50k for city dressing</p>	<p>Government funding</p>	<p>Executive Director of Environment & Place</p> <p>Executive Director of Adults & Communities</p>
<p>Safe, Clean and Green</p>					
<p>Make Southend sparkle</p>	<p>4.1 Jet wash streets</p> <p><i>Celebration</i></p>	<p>Ongoing and February 2025</p>	<p>Business as usual activity</p>	<p>Within existing budget</p>	<p>Executive Director of</p>

			Cost of High Street clean is £4k	(waste and street cleansing contract)	Environment & Place
4.2 Clean The Victoria Centre's entrance and car park spiral <i>Competition</i>	1 March 2025		£25k	New one-off revenue budget	Executive Director of Finance & Resources
4.3 Promote ways people can get involved to 'make Southend sparkle', e.g. litter picks and volunteering, including a funded coordination post and access to a grant finder platform <i>Competition/Celebration</i>	1 March 2025		£60k	New one-off revenue budget	Executive Director of Environment & Place
4.4 Clean Civic Centre building and steps, fountain and Central Museum <i>Challenge</i>	Civic Centre building and steps – 1 March 2025 Fountain – 5 months from go ahead Central Museum – 9-12 months from go ahead	Civic Centre building and steps – £20k (including repairs) Fountain – £15k Museum – £50k (Extra £150k if materials damaged)	Cleaning Civic Centre building and steps, fountain and Central Museum - new one-off revenue budget	Executive Director of Finance & Resources	
4.5 Review bins and ways people can recycle in the city, eg multiple recycling points, different shaped bins and bins with larger openings <i>Challenge</i>	31 March 2026		Unable to quantify at this stage	New capital budget	Executive Director of Environment & Place

Communicate the environmental benefits of the waste management hierarchy	5.1 A multi-channel communications and PR campaign to increase recycling and minimise black sack waste <i>Competition</i>	1 April 2025 onwards	Part of SUEZ contract	Within existing budget	Executive Director of Strategy and Change Executive Director of Environment & Place
	5.2 Promote community upcycling opportunities and refreshed household waste recycling offer <i>Celebration / competition</i>	Ongoing	£0	Within existing budget	Executive Director of Environment & Place Executive Director of Strategy and Change
	5.3 Engage businesses to increase recycling and reduce waste <i>Competition</i>	1 January 2025 onwards	£0	Within existing budget	Executive Director of Environment & Place
Develop new approaches to parks and open spaces	6.1 Appoint new head of parks <i>Challenge</i>	28 February 2025	2024/25: £25k 2025/26 and onwards, full year cost: £100k	Within existing budget	Executive Director of Environment & Place
	6.2 Improving the maintenance of the highway verges <i>Challenge</i>	Ongoing	£0	Within existing budget	Executive Director of Environment & Place
	6.3 Complete playground upgrade projects	Summer 2025	£856k	Existing CIL funding	Executive Director of

	<i>Challenge</i>				Environment & Place
	<p>6.4 Develop proposals for new Never Never Land and cliff stabilisation options on Western Esplanade. Include costings to investigate</p> <p><i>Challenge</i></p>	<p>12 months to design, obtain planning and other statutory permission, tender and build scheme</p> <p>Note: The Shrubbery is a trust asset and trust process and procedures will need to be followed.</p>	<p>Design work to planning on new attraction including cliff movement mitigation. First stage is to undertake a financial feasibility study to establish a viable business case £100k</p>	<p>New capital budget, plus CIL funding</p>	<p>Executive Director of Environment & Place</p>
	<p>6.5 Look at design for a new inclusive playground at East Beach</p> <p><i>Challenge</i></p>	<p>18 months to be up and running</p>	<p>£590k, broken down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design team fees initial schemes: £10k • Design team gaining statutory consents, detailed design, tender documents, tendering the 	<p>CIL fund allocation of £590k</p>	<p>Executive Director of Environment & Place</p>

			<p>scheme, administration the construction contract: £53.5k</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction: £526.5k 		
Caring with a good quality of life for all					
Encourage strong and active communities	<p>7.1 Promote volunteering through community outreach, partnerships and sponsored rewards, including special constables, police cadets and environmental volunteering</p> <p><i>Celebration</i></p>	Ongoing	£10k	New ongoing revenue budget	<p>Executive Director of Environment & Place</p> <p>Executive Director of Adults & Communities</p>
	<p>7.2 Promote council employee volunteering opportunities for volunteering days and review our volunteering policy to make it more accessible and user-friendly.</p> <p><i>Challenge</i></p>	1 January 2025 onwards	All employees will be encouraged to take up their two volunteering days.	Social value	Executive Director of Strategy and Change
	<p>7.3 Civic Pride Fund for community groups to bid for funding to support local projects.</p> <p><i>Challenge</i></p>	1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026	£85k	New one-off revenue budget	Executive Director of Adults & Communities
Develop effective citizenship, especially among	<p>8.1 Promote UK Parliament Week</p> <p><i>Celebration</i></p>	18-24 November 2024		Within existing budget	Executive Director of Strategy and Change

the city's younger residents	8.2 Encourage youth groups to participate in community activities and earn a Southend Civic Pride badge <i>Celebration</i>	28 February 2025	£500 for providing badges	Within existing Budget	Executive Director of Strategy and Change
	8.3 Work with local school leadership to develop sense of 'civic pride' through opportunities for schools to put something into the community through tasks such as beach litter picks, visiting care homes, raising money for charities etc <i>Celebration</i>	Ongoing	£0	Within existing budget	Executive Director Children & Public Health
	8.4 Young portrait artist of the year competition, including various categories <i>Competition</i>	June 2025	£5k	New one-off revenue budget	Executive Director of Adults & Communities