

# **SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL**

## **Special Meeting of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: Monday, 30th September, 2024**

**Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite**

**Present:** Councillor I Gilbert (Chair)  
Councillors I Ferguson (Vice-Chair), Sam Allen, T Cox, M Faulkner-Hatt, N Folkard, D Garston, J McMahon, M O'Connor\*, D Poulton\*, S Wakefield, N Ward and C Webster

\*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

**In Attendance:** Councillors D Cowan, (Leader of the Council), P Collins, L Hyde and A Jones (Cabinet Members)  
J Chesterton, S Cox and M Harvey and S Cox

**Start/End Time:** 6.30 - 7.58 pm

### **22 Chair's Introduction & Apologies for Absence**

#### **(a) Chair's Introduction**

Prior to the consideration of the matters set out in the agenda, the Chair outlined their expectations of the standard of conduct and behaviour to be shown at the meeting.

#### **(b) Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Borton (Substitute: Councillor M O'Connor), Councillor J Courtenay, Councillor R Longstaff, Councillor R McMullan (Substitute: Councillor D Poulton), Councillor J Moyies and Councillor D Nelson.

### **23 Declarations of Interest**

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

- a) Councillor J McMahon, Minute No. 26 (Financial Performance Report for July 2024, Period 4) – author of Deprivation of Liberty Orders.
- b) Councillor N Folkard, Minute No. 26 (Financial Performance Report for July 2024, Period 4) – concessionary bus pass holder.

### **24 Questions from Members of the Public**

There were no questions from members of the public relating to business included in the agenda for the meeting.

## **25 Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 29th August 2024**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

## **26 Financial Performance Report for July 2024 (Period 4)**

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director (Finance & Resources) which had been referred direct by Cabinet from the meeting held on 16 September 2024.

The finance performance report 2024/25 to end of July 2024 (period 4) presented a key update of the Council's current financial position and provided a financial overview to all relevant stakeholders for the early part of the year.

A brief discussion took place on the key mitigations in place in regard to adult social care, which faced unprecedented levels of demand. This included an update on the prevention work that the authority was undertaking through Connected Southend and the Front Door model to provide early support and advice and mobile units to reduce the risk of falls and preventative measures to avoid hospital admissions over the Winter period. During this discussion there was also clarification regarding the support available through the Better Care Fund, Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) and Housing Support Fund.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Portfolio Holder, key highlights included:

- How staffing restructures and staffing costs were documented and how savings would be delivered and recorded in future reports.
- The temporary housing strain on the budget and what steps were being undertaken to alleviate this pressure.
- What action was being taken to mitigate the projected overspend.
- Spending in children's social care and other key areas, including an external peer review on the cost of placements.
- The Vecteo fleet, potential revenue opportunities and plans to reduce spends in this area, for example through vehicle storage.
- Targeted communication to increase recycling rates and reduce residual waste by households.
- The outcome of the review of parking bays to generate income; it was reported that £157,000 had been put back into the resurfacing programme to improve the quality of roads and pavements.
- The appointment of the Director of Culture, Tourism and Leisure to develop a strategy to attract people to visit Southend. Concessionary fares and the financial pressures that were faced in this area.
- The business case to move £150,000 back into the capital investment programme to enable a new tenant to move into a unit at the Victoria Shopping Centre. Capital works were the responsibility of the Council.

The relevant Cabinet Members undertook to provide written responses to questions raised by members of the Committee, with regard to:

- The process on Council housing refurbishment delivered through partners and the push to bring back void / empty properties back into use.
- If the Council was on track to achieve targets for parking income or whether we were behind for this stage in the year. It was reported that parking income had been down in April, May and June based on the projections that had been previously set, August was in line with expectations, but that September's figures were due to be available shortly. It was understood that the total number of transactions were up 18% and income 11%.

During the debate there was a brief discussion on the democratic process of reports being referred direct by Cabinet and the Committees opportunity to influence decision-making at this stage, including the power to refer the matter back for Cabinet's reconsideration. It was highlighted that it was good practice to have reports available for pre-Cabinet Scrutiny, however it was sometimes challenging to align with financial reporting periods, although this was encouraged going forward.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet, held on 16 September 2024, be noted:

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

- 2.1 Note the forecast outturn for 2024/25 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at 31 July 2024.
- 2.2 Note the plans and intentions to try to reduce the forecast overspend of the Council's revenue budget for 2024/25 and agree 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 (section 5).
- 2.3 Approve the budget transfers (virements) of £7,337,726, as set out in section 5.55. That, in respect of the 2024/25 Capital Budget Performance as set out in appendix 2 of this report, Cabinet:
- 2.4 Note the expenditure to date and the forecast outturn as at 31 July 2024 and its financing.
- 2.5 Approve the requested changes to the capital investment programme for 2024/25 and future years, as set out in section 4 of appendix 2.
- 2.6 Add the demolition of Civic Two to the Council's 2024/25 Annual Procurement Plan and approve advertising the tender opportunity via the Council's electronic Tender Facility ProContract and in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 via Open Procedure".

Note: This is an Executive Function  
Cabinet Members:

Councillor D Cowan, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Corporate Strategy

Councillor P Collins, Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments

**Chairman:**

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