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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) - Joint Committee

Date: Thursday, 28th September, 2023

Place: Thurrock Borough Council

Present: Councillor A Jefferies (Chair – Thurrock BC)
Councillor A Baggott (Vice-Chair – Basildon BC)
Councillor B Aspinall – Brentwood BC
*Councillor J Newport – Rochford DC
*Councillor B Palmer – Castle Point BC
Councillor T Cox – Southend CC
Councillor L McKinlay – Essex CC

*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

In Attendance: S Logan, J Stephenson, K Sawyer, L Aelberry, R Gilbert, R Harris, A Hutchings, T Walker, D Smith and L Helm.

Start/End Time: 10.00am – 10.50am

9 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Blackwell (substitute: Cllr B Palmer), J Mason (substitute: Cllr J Newport) and K Bentley.

10 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

11 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Thursday, 27th July 2023, subject to Councillor B Aspinall to be deleted from the list of those present and added to apologies for absence and Councillor K Bentley be added to the list of those present, be confirmed as a correct record.

12 ASELA - The Next Chapter including workstream updates

(a) ASELA – The Next Chapter

The Joint Committee considered a report setting out the next phase of ASELA's development.

Resolved:

That the refreshed approach to the next phase of ASELA's development, be approved, including:

- a) Refreshing the strategy, consolidating the evidence base and revising our implementation plans, including developing investable propositions for future funding.
- b) Exploring the potential for a South Essex Growth Zone as the centrepiece of this future approach, demonstrating ambition and maximising the opportunities for funding from government and private sector.
- c) Reviewing the impact on existing workstreams, potentially integrating key elements of the Economy, Housing and Transport workstreams into a single Growth Zone programme to achieve maximum impact with constrained resources, and retaining other projects that are affordable and impactful.
- d) Identifying quick wins such as publishing principles for good growth.
- e) Exploring further sharing of resources at officer level.
- f) Engaging consultants to provide the necessary capability and capacity to achieve the above by March 2024; reallocating resources allocated to the ASELA Programme Director and Programme Officer positions which will no longer be recruited to, providing up to £100,000 to fund the commission.
- g) Putting businesses at the heart of our approach by developing new business engagement arrangements from April 2024 as set out in the accompanying report (Minute 13 below).
- h) Ensuring that the work of ASELA is effectively communicated and understood by business and public through a rebranding exercise and development of an accompanying communications strategy from April 2024 as set out in the accompanying paper below.
- i) Building on existing work within South Essex Councils to achieve the agenda set in this report.

(b) Good Homes Workstream

- The Joint Committee considered a report presenting an update on the ASELA Good Homes workstream.

Resolved:

That the report, be noted.

(c) Environment and Climate Change

- The Joint Committee considered a report presenting an update on the work of the Environment and Climate Change workstream.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.

2. That the release of 1 day FTE per calendar month per authority towards the operational work to be undertaken by the Workstream, be approved.

(d) Sustainable Transport

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The Joint Committee received a verbal update on the work of the sustainable transport workstream.

Resolved:

That the verbal update, be noted.

(e) ASELA Economy, Jobs and Skills Workstream

The Joint Committee considered a report presenting an update on the work of the Economy, Jobs and Skills workstream.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That it be confirmed that the Joint Committee is content with the key opportunities Identified in the report.
3. That the Joint Committee commit to prioritising this work for the existing officer cadre to enable individuals to effectively drive forward this work within organisations.

13 Future South Essex Business Engagement Arrangements

The Joint Committee considered a report presenting the future business engagement arrangements.

The Joint Committee emphasised the significant role of businesses and they must be at the forefront of this work.

Resolved:

1. That the Joint Committees extends its expression of thanks to the Chair and business members of OSE for their commitment to South Essex and everything that has been achieved.
2. That a further report be brought to the December 2023 meeting of the Joint Committee with proposals for future business engagement arrangements for South Essex, building on and learning from OSE, in the context of LEP transition and a potential Devolution Deal.
3. That each ASELA constituent council shall, no later than 30 December 2023, recommend through their own governance procedures that their Council ceases its financial subscription to OSE at the end of this Financial Year in line with the transfer of SELEP functions to local government.

4. That each ASELA constituent Council shall, no later than 30 December 2023, recommend through their own governance procedures that their Council indemnifies Castle Point Borough Council against all costs and liabilities arising from any redundancy arising as a consequence of resolution 3 above, in the same proportion that each constituent Council pays current OSE subscriptions (as set out in Appendix 1) provided that reasonable attempts are made to secure any outstanding OSE balances or reserves be used to offset the costs.

14 ASELA Rebrand and Communications Strategy

The Joint Committee considered a report outlining the proposal to rename ASELA to South Essex Councils (SEC) and setting out initial activity that will lead to the creation of a new communications strategy for the partnership.

The Joint Committee discussed the resources for the rebranding and new communications strategy emphasising that the costs/resources should be kept to a minimum. It was confirmed that the majority of the costs would come from within existing resources.

Resolved:

1. That the update set out in the report be noted and that the renaming of ASELA to South Essex Councils (SEC) with the tagline 'Working Together', be endorsed and the change be made with immediate effect.
2. That the development of a high-level narrative for SEC be endorsed.
3. That the plan to develop a robust communications strategy once work to consolidate the partnership's workstreams is agreed, with a view to present a draft for approval at the next Joint Committee, be noted.

15 Finance Update Report

The Joint Committee considered a report summarising the 2022/23 outturn position and the latest forecast financial position for the various programmes within SEC / ASELA.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

At the end of the meeting the Joint Committee discussed a number of aspects relating to devolution and stressed the significant importance of the role ASELA/SEC within the devolution agenda.

Chair: _____