

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Response to the Seafront Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel Recommendations</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 January 2015</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director for Environment, Development and Housing Assistant Chief Executive</b>		
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All Seafront Wards</b>		

## FOR GENERAL RELEASE

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Seafront Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013, following a request from the council's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to consider the issue.
- 1.2 ELT had recognised that the heritage structures and infrastructure managed by the council along the seafront requires significant investment. Key issues include the condition of the seafront arches which house many businesses and provide structural support to the A259, and Madeira Terrace which needs extensive renovation. Maintaining seafront infrastructure is currently one of the highest priority issues on the Strategic Risk Register.
- 1.3 However, maintenance and renovation requires considerable resources, and the council needs to investigate how to fund any renewal programme. The cost of structural works needed for the seafront is estimated to be in the region of £100 million. In addition, the prioritisation of available resources would be necessary to best support the aspirations of the draft Seafront Strategy.
- 1.4 The panel included Councillor Gill Mitchell (Chair), Councillor Vanessa Brown, Councillor Ian Davey, and Dr Angela Benson, Principal Lecturer, Sustainable Tourism at Brighton University (co-opted member).
- 1.5 The council's Overview and Scrutiny Panel endorsed the panel's report on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the committee notes the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel and agrees the responses to each of the individual recommendations as provided in appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the committee agrees a further report is considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in March 2015 as recommended by the Scrutiny Panel to outline how a seafront investment programme will be managed.
- 2.3 That committee agrees a further report is considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in September 2015 as recommended by the Scrutiny Panel, to outline the key challenges faced by a seafront investment programme and identify potential solutions and resources to meet the challenges.

## **3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The seafront is of considerable importance to the city as a much visited recreational resource by both residents and visitors alike. The seafront plays a major part in the tourism offer of the city and therefore contributes significantly to the visitor economy of the city, which is valued at £800 million per year and supports 20,000 jobs (15,000 full time equivalents). Therefore, it is essential that the seafront is well maintained and managed to not only reduce the health and safety risks but also as a very attractive place to visit.
- 3.2 The initial focus of the Scrutiny Panel was to consider the renovation and rebuilding of structures on the seafront. However, the range of evidence that was presented led the panel to widen the remit and look at how the seafront could work towards generating more income, which could be used to fund structural works.
- 3.3 The panel were acutely aware of the financial climate that is facing the council and hence the focus on looking for the seafront to be as self-sustaining as possible. The Chair highlights that the panel wanted “the seafront to retain its unique offer but we have to make the most of every opportunity to raise income while ensuring that the income the seafront generates is used as efficiently as possible to sustain its future”.
- 3.4 The panel acknowledged that the seafront is complex, which was reflected by the wide range of officers and stakeholders that gave evidence. The one key message that the panel gave is for the council to consider the way the seafront is managed to meet the challenges that are faced. In particular, with reference to the need to renovate structures on a substantial scale, the panel recommends that the council manages the seafront as a single, coherent programme – strategically, financially and operationally.
- 3.5 The complexity and scope of the seafront led the panel to define eight key outcomes. The recommendations in appendix 1 are a response to achieving these outcomes. Some outcomes have a single recommendation while others are addressed by several recommendations (pages 18-23 of the report of the Scrutiny Panel). The outcomes identified are:

- The council has a collective understanding of the seafront's needs and opportunities and who is responsible for it.
- A seafront which is working towards being financially self-sustaining.
- Everyone is working together to develop the seafront.
- The seafront is no longer seen as a major risk.
- An accessible and connected seafront.
- The council is in the best possible position to develop robust and successful bids for funding when opportunities arise to enable projects on the seafront to succeed.
- A seafront which offers the best possible experience for visitors, residents and businesses.
- A greater understanding and appreciation of the seafront and its history.

3.6 The recommendations that seek to achieve these outcomes are in appendix 1 together with the responses to the recommendations.

#### **4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

4.1 It is not an option to not respond to a Scrutiny report.

#### **5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

5.1 The panel interviewed thirty witnesses during panel meetings of which sixteen were external to the council. The panel also held a drop in session for those who wished to give their views to the panel on the seafront and over fifty people attended. A consultation workshop was also held with the Brighton & Hove Tourism Advisory Board in which panel members were provided feedback on the seafront.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

6.1 The seafront is of significant strategic importance to the city. Therefore, it is essential that the seafront is maintained and developed to ensure that the city benefits fully from this primary asset.

6.2 Within the context of the difficult financial climate, it is essential that new resources are identified and that they are used in the most effective way through a planned programme.

## 7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The recommendations of this report do not directly create financial commitments or implications. The responses to the scrutiny panel recommendations set out in appendix 1 include commitments to bring forward reports to Policy & Resources Committee. The reports will set out how the Seafront Investment Programme will be lead and managed, the seafront investment plan and the feasibility of ring fencing resources generated by the seafront. These reports will include the direct financial implications.
- 7.2 The proposal to create an Enterprise Officer will require external funding and council officers will explore funding options.

*Finance Officer Consulted: James Hengeveld*

*Date: 12/01/15*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.3 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report and the ongoing position will be kept under review.

*Lawyer Consulted: Bob Bruce*

*Date: 02.01.15*

### Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 A key outcome identified by the Scrutiny Panel is to provide an accessible and connected seafront. A well maintained and attractive seafront would enhance accessibility to the wider public.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 The sustainability of the seafront is the focus of the Scrutiny Panel report. While the sustainability of the physical infrastructure was the initial remit, the broader sustainability of the seafront from other perspectives e.g. economic has been considered.

### Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.6 No other significant recommendations.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Seafront Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel recommendations and responses
2. Seafront Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel Report

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. None

### **Background Documents**

1. Draft Seafront Strategy

