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**Angela Hutchings**  
**Chief Executive**

## **AGENDA**

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY</b>
<b>Date and Time:</b>	<b>Wednesday, 8th February 2022 at <u>7.00p.m.</u></b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Council Chamber</b>
<b>Membership:</b>	<b>Councillors Isaacs (Chairman), Acott, Bowker, B Egan, Edwards, Harvey, MacLean, Thomas</b>
<b>Cabinet Members:</b>	<b>Councillor Blackwell - Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Officers:</b>	<b>Ms Angela Hutchings – Chief Executive Mr Ian Butt – Head of Place and Policy Miss Ann Horgan - Scrutiny Officer</b>
<b>Enquiries:</b>	<b>Loretta Hill – Governance Officer (Ext. 2427)</b>

### **PART I** **(Business to be taken in public)**

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Members' Interests**
- 3. ASELA (Association of south Essex Local Authorities)**

Castle Point Borough Council is a member of Association of South Essex Local Authorities formed in 2018 with a Joint Committee established in September 2021. The Terms of Reference provide that scrutiny of the operation the partnership organisation should be undertaken through the respective Council scrutiny arrangement. This meeting has been convened for that purpose.

A report is attached to assist the Committee's consideration.

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**8th FEBRUARY 2023**

**Subject: The Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA)**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Blackwell - Leader of the Council**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

**To provide an update on The Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) and provide information to assist scrutiny of this key partnership.**

**2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives**

**ASELA seeks to all council priorities Economy & Growth, People, Place and environment**

**3. Recommendations**

- (1) To consider the contents of the report**
  - (2) To report on the examination to Cabinet**
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**4. Background**

**4.1 The Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) was established in 2018 and comprises the following 7 councils:**

- **Castle Point Borough Council**
- **Rochford District Council**
- **Brentwood Borough Council**
- **Basildon Borough Council**
- **Southend City Council**
- **Thurrock Council**
- **Essex County Council**

**4.2 ASELA is governed through a Joint Committee and has its own identity and website [www.southessex.org.uk](http://www.southessex.org.uk). Its primary focus is on economic growth and infrastructure investment that can only be achieved collectively through programmes that cross local authority boundaries. It is not concerned with any**

matter that it is the sole preserve of a constituent council, which retains its sovereignty in accordance with its own corporate governance. ASELA is not a strategic planning authority, but does provide a platform for cooperation between councils and fulfils the duty to cooperate requirement.

## Governance

- 4.3 In July 2020 ASELA submitted its Growth and Recovery Prospectus to the Government which can be found on the ASELA website via this link [www.southessex.org.uk/vision](http://www.southessex.org.uk/vision) The prospectus sets out an ambition to deliver a series of priorities with long lasting and wider benefits for both people and place. South Essex is a natural economic corridor and contributes £17.9billion to the national economy. The ambition outlined in the prospectus is that South Essex will contribute an additional £15billion to the UK economy and create 100,000 new jobs by 2050.
- 4.4 In January 2018, ASELA operated under a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was agreed by all ASELA councils. In September 2021 a formal Joint Committee was created for ASELA in order to provide appropriate overview, scrutiny and co-opted membership and allow ASELA to deliver its ambitions. This more formal, accountable and transparent governance arrangement also supports:
- enhanced openness and accountability to constituent authorities and residents;
  - greater local control over direct investment and related financial considerations
  - confidence in private investors, especially long term investors, that ASELA is capable and committed; and
  - confidence to government departments and investors that ASELA is financially sustainable, and a trusted and reliable delivery partner.
- 4.5 The ASELA Joint Committee was established in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and sets the strategic and policy direction as well as commissioning and co-ordinating the delivery of projects and programmes. Joint committees are a common and favoured feature amongst councils because they provide a transparent and accountable means to achieving combined goals whilst ensuring the individual sovereignty of each body remains. Joint committees do not become involved in the daily business of councils outside of the purposes for which it was established. There was, therefore, no transfer of powers or functions currently held by the Council to the ASELA Joint Committee and equally no decision can be taken by the ASELA Joint Committee which relates to any matter that is in the preserve of the Council, unless it indicates its agreement with the proposal. Only full members of the Joint Committee benefit from any of the programmes, funding or investment.

4.6 The ASELA Joint Committee comprises the Leaders (or their substitutes) of each of the 7 constituent authorities plus a co-opted member who is the Chair of the Federated Board of the Local Enterprise Partnership (Opportunity South Essex (“OSE”). Each council has one vote and co-opted Members can speak but not vote. All decisions are reached through majority and no decision can be taken by the Joint Committee which relates to any matter that is in the preserve of a specific constituent authority unless that authority indicates its agreement with the proposal. One authority acts as an ‘accountable body’ in relation to the functions and resources of ASELA which is agreed by the ASELA Joint Committee. This is currently Southend City Council (previously Castle point acting in this role). In addition one local authority is designated to provide secretariat to the ASELA Joint Committee. At the present time this is also Southend City Council.

4.7 Scrutiny of ASELA takes place through each partner council’s existing processes and consequently, this report is presented to the Committee for scrutiny and review.

## **5. Proposals**

5.1 Since the submission of the ASELA Growth and Recovery Prospectus there has been substantial progress in delivering five ‘anchor programmes’:

- Superfast Digital
- South Essex Estuary Park (SEEPark)
- South Essex Technical “University”
- Infrastructure and Housing
- Optimising the impact of the Thames Freeport

5.2 Progress of these programmes is monitored via the ASELA Joint Committee. The latest meeting of the ASELA Joint Committee took place on 15 December 2022. The agenda and accompanying reports/papers are attached as background papers to this report and provide the most up to date status of each of the programmes.

5.3 By way of background, however, the five programmes are set out below:

### **Superfast Digital**

5.3.1 The principal objective of this programme is to provide gigabit connectivity to every household and premises by 2025. The programme received £4.4m funding from central Government to connect fibre to public sector owned facilities resulting in 130km of spine and 129 public buildings being connected with full fibre across South Essex. Following on from that an additional £2.5m was secured to enable the fibre rollout to be extended into more rural areas, specifically around Brentwood borough and Rochford district, and connected up additional public sector/community sites with full fibre including: GP surgeries/care homes, rural schools, community centres and village halls. This

public sector investment paved the way for up to £100m of private sector investment in South Essex by Openreach, Virgin and CityFibre.

17 locations within Castle Point were identified for connecting into this network, include the Council's offices in Kiln Road and its leisure centres and sheltered housing schemes. The network is designed to connect public sector end users but then use that network to allow businesses, and eventually residents to also connect.

This workstream will also consider other vital infrastructure such as energy.

### **South Essex Estuary Park**

5.3.2 The South Essex Estuary (SEE) Park programme, was devised as part of the joint planning work between the partners and aims to provide an extraordinary parkland setting that encompasses all of South Essex, bringing environmental, social, and economic value to the region. It will cover 23,000ha across South Essex (in line with government's aim of protecting 30% of England's countryside by 2030) and will comprise five large-scale landscapes, selected because of their capacity to perform multiple functions and deliver major environmental, ecological, social and health/wellbeing benefits, as well as local networks of green spaces, pathways and wildlife corridors.

SEE Park will address many challenges through its "green" and "blue" spaces including:

- Improved health and well-being through improved active travel networks and enhanced access to green spaces
- Restoring biodiversity and eco-systems including marshland and woodlands which simultaneously create important carbon sinks
- Transition to net zero carbon and providing carbon-offsetting for local business
- Mitigating climate change and flooding by creating adaptive landscapes
- Eco-tourism, green tech job creation and recovery
- Enhancing the environmental identity and brand perception of South Essex to boost inward investment
- Acting as a key conduit to high quality place-making attracting high value jobs ,employment, infrastructure, and housing

SEEPark has won a number of landscape and architecture awards for its vision, scope and impact on the local environments. It is a long-term programme that can feed into local plans (including the Castle Point Plan) and provide opportunities for bio-diversity net gain across South Essex. ASELA and its partners will work with landowners and conservation organisation on that.

The project will be delivered over many years with the concept providing a focus for the coordination of investment, particularly cross boundary.

One of the five strategic project is within Castle Point – the Central Thames Marshes, much of which is now well established in the Canvey marshes. However, the Council can use the SEEPark as a basis for open space, wildlife and nature conservation planning in the borough, including identifying receptor

re-wilding sites for biodiversity credits from across South Essex (similar to how RAMS works).

The Council's Chief Executive is the CEO sponsor for this project.

### **South Essex Technical “University” (SETU)**

- 5.3.3 The “University” is not a traditional university but rather a virtual learning environment for degree level apprenticeships with local employers, providing opportunities for local people, leading to high skill local jobs. This is a business led venture, with a number of the leading businesses in the area identifying requirements for both young people and reskilling of existing employees. A Partnership Board has been established, which includes senior representation from DP World, Thames Freeport, Leonardos, Olympus, Nat West Bank, Ford, and Southend Airport. Higher Education providers are also represented through Anglia Ruskin University, University of Essex, and the University of East Anglia. The programme will reach into the school system to encourage students from communities that wouldn't historically have considered higher skills as attainable.

Although SETU is initially focussed on major employers in South Essex and focussed around a new type of facility, once established it will reach all businesses, support the supply chain and need include existing colleges and schools in its network, some of whom, such as USP have links to universities.

### **Infrastructure and Housing**

- 5.3.4 The focus of this programme is the provision of infrastructure and accelerating the delivery of homes that are needed to support the economy and meet existing housing needs. A detailed pipeline of housing schemes has been developed with a specific focus on schemes that are stalled because of issues of viability. By working together across all South Essex Local Authorities, the area has been able to create a trail blazing strategic place based partnership with Homes England. one of two such partnerships in the country. In addition to this activity, progress is also being made through joint working with regional housing associations, through a new initiative to create greater opportunities for small and medium sized builders. These programmes combine to provide strategic place shaping and delivery on a regional scale that is not possible by any organisation or agency acting alone.

In January 2022 ASELA entered into a Place Based Partnership with Homes England (one of only two in the country – Greater Manchester being the other). This partnership provides Homes England resources to the ASELA authorities and prioritises resource investment in the area. It does not guarantee funding, but already the benefits are being seen with investment by Homes England in projects, development of a guide for those promoting new settlements in South Essex and resources to support bringing forward stalled site.

One such site is the Hadleigh Island site, which is one of five selected for interventions to bring the development forward that meets the objectives of the Council.

In addition, work is advanced on establishing a partnership or joint venture with housing associations which will help de-risk development for them in South

Essex, mean that they can be more successful in securing funds and accelerate the delivery of quality and affordable homes in South Essex.

Also within this workstream is a joint strategic framework. When ASELA was established it was proposed to prepare a Joint Strategic Plan. However, that has not been possible due to local plan production, so a vision for the future in the form of strategic framework is being prepared.

The Council, through the Head of Place and Policy, has been the operational lead in this project until November, and therefore, the Council has been central to the establishment of the partnership and the other activities.

### **Thames Freeport**

- 5.3.5 The Thames Freeport bid is private sector led (DP World, Forth Ports, and Ford) and covers the geography of the local authorities of Thurrock, LB Havering, LB Barking and Dagenham. The bid creates significant financial incentives to the private sector partners and create the potential for business rate retention for the designated areas. The initial feasibility study identified substantial economic benefits including over 25,000 new jobs and over £5bn of inward investment. In addition, the priority policy objective is to capitalise on the Thames Freeport opportunity as a catalyst for regeneration and levelling up deprived communities.

Although not an ASELA led programme, the strategic impact of the Freeport will be felt across the whole of South Essex and beyond. Therefore, it is now a crucial strand of economic growth in the area and critical to that will be the need for suppliers and staff working there to access the area.

To that end, discussions are now taking place on how access to the freeport zone can be improved including to Canvey.

### **Transport**

- 5.3.6 Although not on the 'original' five, work has progressed on a transport workstream. South Essex has three local transport authorities in close proximity – Essex, Southend on Se and Thurrock. Whilst the three have cooperate din the past the strategic planning and coordination of delivery has been understandably, not as strong as it could be. Therefore, by bringing the three together under the ASELA umbrella that cooperation will be strengthened with the commissioning of work which provides clear cross boundary benefits, in particular in active travel and Sustainable transport.

### **Benefits of ASELA**

- 5.3.7 ASELA does not remove the sovereignty of the Council. It provide a platform for joint working to tackle issues that are common across south Essex. It has enabled Councils to pool resource and joint commission work which has and will continue to provide savings for all councils (for example for planning, from which the SEEPark developed).

It has also strengthened joint working in other ways: the sharing of best practice on how to deliver projects or achieving new high standards of sustainable development; a collective voice to central government (for example the Place

Based Partnership would only have been possible as a collective partnership of councils); and a better understanding of issues across boundaries (such as a collective approach to higher education working with businesses across South Essex).

For the Council, leaders and officers have provide a strong voice, providing leadership on driving the partnership forward and the programmes, that have highlighted the needs of the borough and support for direct investment. Furthermore, officers working in the best interests of the Council and borough, have been instrumental in providing a strategic steer to the partnership culminating in the prospectus, the Place Based Partnership, SEEPark, and an expanded giga-byte digital network.

## **6. Corporate Implications**

### **a. Financial implications**

To date an annual subscription of £60,000 has been paid to ASELA by each of the member authorities and an equivalent sum has been built into the Council's 2023/24 budget. Going forward it will be for the ASELA Joint Committee to decide its required budget and associated contributions, if any, required from each constituent authority. The intention is that the ASELA Joint Committee should explore funding from other sources such as grants and private sector investment. If there was any further call on the public purse, the ASELA Joint Committee would need to be satisfied that the sums requested were justified and provided value for money. The Leader would not be entitled to agree any financial commitment on behalf of the Council without the relevant internal Council governance being satisfied.

The up-to-date financial position is set out in the ASELA Joint Committee Finance Report included in the agenda for the ASELA Joint Committee on 15 December 2022.

### **b. Legal implications**

The formation of the joint committee as described within the report conforms with the provisions of Local Government law and the Constitution of Castle Point Borough Council. Any further actions or decisions made by ASELA or in relation to ASELA will require further legal consideration.

### **c. Human resources and equality implications**

#### **Human resources**

Work undertaken by senior Council officers on ASELA is not charged or remunerated and is delivered in kind as part of the Council's approach to partnership working. The level of work varies depending on the role of the officer in each programme.

#### **Equality implications**

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out as no relevant decision is recommended.

### **d. Timescale for implementation and risk factors**



N/A

**7. Background Papers:**

Agenda and reports/papers of the ASELA Joint Committee on 15 December 2022.

**Report Author: Angela Hutchings, Chief Executive**



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

**The meeting will be held at 9.30am on 15 December 2022**

**Place: Council Chamber, Castle Point Borough Council, Kiln Road,  
Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 1TF**

**Contact: Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Thurrock  
Council**

**Email: [Rhiannon.Whiteley@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Rhiannon.Whiteley@thurrock.gov.uk)**

**AGENDA**

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<b>2 Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>3 Minutes</b>	<b>1 - 6</b>
To approve the minutes of the Joint Committee held on 20 October 2022.	
<b>4 Chairman's Report - Verbal Update</b>	
<b>5 ASELA Joint Committee Secretariat Arrangements</b>	<b>7 - 8</b>
<b>6 ASELA Joint Committee Finance Report</b>	<b>9 - 12</b>
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<b>8 Any Other Business</b>	

**Members:**

Cllr A Baggott (Leader - Basildon Borough Council), Cllr D Blackwell (Leader - Castle Point Borough Council), Cllr K Bentley (Leader - Essex County Council), Cllr M Coxshall (Deputy Leader - Thurrock Borough Council), Cllr S George (Leader - Southend-on-Sea City Council), Cllr C Hossack (Leader - Brentwood Borough Council), Cllr S Wootton (Leader - Rochford District Council and P Glading (Opportunity South Essex (Co-opted Member))



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

**Date: Thursday, 20 October 2022**

**Place: Council Chamber, Castle Point Borough Council, Kiln Road,  
Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 1TF**

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**Present:** Councillor C Hossack (Chair) (Brentwood Borough Council)  
Councillors S Wootton (Vice Chair) (Rochford District Council), A  
Baggott (Basildon Borough Council), K Bentley (Essex County  
Council), S George (Southend-On-Sea City Council), S Cole  
(Castle Point Borough Council)

**In attendance:** I Butt (Castle Point Borough Council), E Helm (Southend-On-  
Sea City Council), A Hutching (Castle Point Borough Council), A  
Lewis (Southend-On-Sea City Council), S Logan (Basildon  
Borough Council), M Snaith, J Stephenson (Brentwood Borough  
Council and Rochford District Council), A Wardle (ASELA  
Communications Lead), T Walker (Essex County Council), K  
Wheeler (Thurrock Borough Council)

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**Start/End Time** 10.00am – 11.35am

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Coxshall (Leader-  
Thurrock Borough Council), Councillor D Blackwell (Castle Point Borough  
Council) and Sharon Bayliss.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 14 July 2022 be  
confirmed as a correct record.

### **4. Chairman's Report - Verbal Update**

The Chair noted that nationally we are facing difficult times however he stated that ASELA knows its purpose and the things it is focussed on and continues to pursue them. The Chair also noted the issues Thurrock Council were experiencing and stressed that Thurrock remains a partner of ASELA and confirmed that all the Local Authorities that make up ASELA are supporting Thurrock.

The Chair highlighted that the time is right to re-group and for ASELA to look at its strategic priorities. The Chair proposed that within the next 3 weeks a date is agreed for a workshop to be arranged to look at the pressures Local Governments are under and to consider how to take this level of collaboration to the next level.

Councillor Bentley updated the Committee that Essex County Council has completed their submission to Government for Investment Zones in 4 areas, the North of Essex - Clacton, in the south of Essex - the A127 corridor, the A120 corridor and over to the west of Essex - North Weald. Councillor Bentley praised staff for their hard work on the submission which was put together in just two weeks. The outcome of the submission should be received before Christmas. Councillor George confirmed that Southend-On-Sea City Council's submission related to the city centre and linking it up with the area around Southend Airport. The Chair confirmed he had received communications from Environment groups referring to investment zones as an attack on nature. The Chair clarified that all the submissions from Essex were part of Local Development Plans already or brownfield sites and are not an attack on nature.

The Joint Committee members present agreed to attend a workshop in November to look at ASELA's priorities in the context of devolution and current financial pressures.

*Councillor Baggott joined the meeting.*

## **5. ASELA Joint Committee - Finance Report**

The Joint Committee received the ASELA finance report. Members were advised that since the last meeting Homes England have confirmed the grant to ASELA of £250k of funding and Southend-On-Sea Borough Council are just waiting for this to be received into their account. The forecast is for ASELA to end 2022/23 with a surplus of £2k. There have been some other grants received since the report was written and they will be contained within the next finance report.

Resolved:

That the Joint Committee note the content of the ASELA Finance report for September 2022

## **6. South Essex Estuary Park Programme - Highlight Report**

The Joint Committee received an overview of the current progress regarding the South Essex Estuary Park (SEE PARK) programme.

S Logan confirmed that the Pathfinder Demonstrator Project is being developed. A business case for each of the 5 landscape spaces has been completed and the focus is now on how in the current climate to resource SEE Park.

The Vice Chair raised that it would be helpful to see in future highlight reports where the income stream may be coming from and where the expenditure is for the programme.

Members were advised that the SEE Park vision contained within the South Essex Green and Blue Infrastructure study has won a World Architecture Festival award. The World Architectural Festival takes place at the end of November and will be an opportunity to showcase the work going on in South Essex on a global stage.

Councillor Baggot raised the need for further detail on what the financial costs to each Council will be once SEE Park is created and what the plan will be for ongoing maintenance and security.

Resolved:

That the progress of the South Essex Estuary (SEE Park) programme be noted and that the continued provision of support to deliver the programme, be endorsed.

## **7. South Essex Technical University Programme - Highlight Report**

The Joint Committee received an overview of the current progress with regard to the South Essex Technical University programme.

S Logan reported that the key workstreams they are focussing on are setting up the Operating company, procuring the HE Provider to deliver the planned courses and procuring a HE Advisor.

Councillor Baggott queried what the process is for assessing and finding the Provider.

S Logan confirmed they are starting work on a soft marketing exercise and will then invite interest. It will be the businesses who make the decision as to who the Provider is.

S Logan reassured the Committee that they have got a number of experts involved with the programme now who have experience of this process.

Resolved:

That the progress of the South Essex Technical University programme to be noted and the continued provision of support to deliver the programme, be endorsed.

## **8. Digital Programme - Highlight Report**

J Stephenson introduced the Digital Programme Highlight Report and requested that Item 8 and Item 9 of the agenda are heard together as item 8 provides details of the work completed in the last quarter and item 9 summarises the work undertaken over the last 2 years. J Stephenson highlighted the four key themes of the Digital programme and confirmed that the 200km of full fibre network has been delivered and is due to be lit very soon. He stated that the Project Manager M Snaith will provide a more detailed summary to the Joint Committee.

## **9. Digital Programme Briefing Report**

M Snaith thanked all colleagues that have supported this programme and stated that they wouldn't be where they are today without this level of collaboration. M Snaith explained that they had been fortunate in securing 7.5 million pounds of funding to deliver 200km of full fibre network which has now linked over 200 public sector buildings.

M Snaith highlighted that in July 2021 the level of full fibre coverage in Rochford was 8%, it is now 33%. In Thurrock coverage was at 13.6% and is now at 48%. M Snaith acknowledged that Castle Point is still at 4.5% and commented that this is not good enough.

M Snaith confirmed that Thurrock have now lit the network and have derived over a million pounds worth of savings over the next 4 years. All other sites will be enabled with a lit service over the next 12 months. There is connectivity for all the sheltered housing in Thurrock and they are working with colleagues in adult social care who support those sites to use that fibre to provide virtual opportunities for residents to engage in such as to provide yoga sessions across 29 sites or a digital skills course. This can then be extended to other sites in the ASELA area. Community sites and village halls can also be used as digital hubs and this may provide somewhere to work for residents who work from home. M Snaith highlighted that the network can also collect anonymous data to inform policy.

The Joint Committee discussed the issue of inclusion. M Snaith confirmed in the current climate take up of full fibre connectivity is quite low and the issue of affordability needs to be looked at. The Chair requested if data could be provided to confirm the amount of people taking it up. M Snaith responded that it is likely to be commercially sensitive information to the companies and internet providers.

S Logan highlighted the need to communicate the wider benefits of the Digital programme and other ASELA programmes to residents and businesses.

Resolved:

That the progress of the Digital programme be noted and the continued provision of support to deliver the programme, be endorsed.

## **10. ASELA Communications Update Report**

A Wardle reported that there has been a delay in the communication of the success around the digital programme as they are waiting to get a few key milestones over the finish line first. They have also joined up with Highways England to help promote this through some video work. A Wardle also advised the Committee that there are a number of opportunities for communications coming up with SEE park and the World Architecture Festival and also SETU.

The Joint Committee discussed how to maximise communication opportunities around each of the programmes and using the ambassadors of the programmes to do this. It was also raised that ASELA communications should be linked up with all 7 of the ASELA Local Authority Communications teams to maximise reach as it was noted that the majority of the Council's staff are also Essex residents.

Resolved:

That the Communications Report be noted.

## **11. Any Other Business**

J Stephenson provided a short update on the Housing programme. He noted that the finance report had covered the grant of funding from Homes England earlier on in the meeting. He confirmed they can now appoint a programme director to support delivery of the programme but whilst this goes out to market, Inner Circle Consulting will be working on this in the interim as there is a need to use the funding gained otherwise they will lose it.

J Stephenson confirmed he hoped to be able to provide a full update at the next Joint Committee meeting or the one after where a representative from Homes England and the programme director can also be present.



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<b>DATE: 15 December 2022</b>	<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>ASELA Joint Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Report Title: ASELA Joint Committee Secretariat Arrangements</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Executive, Southend-on-Sea City Council	
<b>Programme Implementation Director:</b> N/A	
<b>Accountable Programme SRO:</b> N/A	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

The constituent authorities of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) Joint Committee who form part of the Joint Committee are:

- Basildon Borough Council
- Brentwood Borough Council
- Castle Point Borough Council
- Essex County Council
- Rochford District Council
- Southend-on-Sea City Council
- Thurrock Council

The report asks the Joint Committee to consider and approve the transfer of the role of Secretariat for the ASELA Joint Committee from Thurrock Council to Southend-on-Sea City Council.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **That Southend-on-Sea City Council act as the Secretariat in relation to the ASELA Joint Committee with effect from the date of this meeting.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Governing Documents states that a local authority will be designated to provide secretariat to the Joint Committee which shall be agreed by the Joint Committee. It is recommended that Southend-on-Sea City Council shall provide secretariat to the Joint Committee.
- 2.2 The Joint Committee has the option of asking another constituent authority to undertake this role, however this is not being recommended as Southend Council have agreed to undertake the role at no direct cost to ASELA and have

the necessary expertise to do so. Southend Council also undertake the role of Accountable Body for the joint committee and therefore provides a consistent point for support.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 No other authority was in a position to provide the support to take on the role of Secretariat and it was felt that Thurrock did not have the capacity at this time to provide the potential increased level of support required by the partnership.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 This report asks the Joint Committee to approve the transfer of the Secretariat from Thurrock Council to Southend-on-Sea City Council who will be able to provide the increased level of support required by the partnership.

### **5. Consultation (if applicable)**

- 5.1 Consultation on the content of this report has been undertaken with the Chief Executives for each of the constituent ASELA local authorities.

### **6. Impact on policies, priorities, performance and community impact (if applicable)**

- 6.1 N/A

### **7. Implications**

- 7.1 **Financial** – NA

- 7.2 **Legal** – N/A

### **7.3 Other implications (where significant)**

There are no direct inclusion, diversity and community cohesion implications arising from consideration of this matter. The report primarily deals with governance arrangements of the Joint Committee as opposed to impacting on any individual or group. Necessary arrangements will be made to ensure that all members, and any future co-opted members, can effectively participate in the proceedings of the Joint Committee.

### **8. Appendices to the report**

N/A



<b>DATE: 15 December 2022</b>	<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>ASELA Joint Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>ASELA Financial Report</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Elizabeth Helm, Senior Finance Business Partner, Southend-on-Sea City Council	
<b>Programme Implementation Director:</b> N/A	
<b>Accountable Programme SRO:</b> N/A	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report summarises the latest forecast financial position for the various programmes within ASELA.

### 1. Recommendation

**1.1 That the Joint Committee note the content of the report and agree an approach for mitigating the forecast deficit.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The budget for ASELA is set at the start of the financial year and adjusted throughout the year as plans are changed and updated. Provisional budgets for future years are also compiled to aid longer term financial planning.

2.2 Southend-on-Sea City Council maintain a separate accounting structure for ASELA and produce financial monitoring reports which are shared with Programme Implementation Directors, ASELA Chief Executives and Finance leads.

2.3 Financial and operational monitoring is enabled through the routine highlight reporting mechanism undertaken by each Programme Implementation Director, supported by a Finance lead, and which are also reported on this agenda.

2.4 Financial implications detailed in highlight reports are monitored against the budget set at the start of the financial year. Changes to a programme budget may occur when additional external funding is confirmed which enables increased programme spend or when unavoidable costs have been incurred.

### 3. 2022/23 Current Forecast

3.1 The 2021/22 outturn and the 2022/23 forecast income and expenditure for ASELA is summarised in Table 1 below:

Income and Expenditure Summary	2021/22 £000's	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's
<b>Income</b>			
Partnership Investment (ASELA authorities)	(420)	(420)	(420)
Other partners			
Homes England	180	(227)	(144)
SEE Park - Highways England	(65)	(750)	(215)
Digital - National Highways	0	(506)	(394)
SE Tech Uni - private sector investment	(30)	0	0
SE Tech Uni - Opportunity South Essex	(20)		
Digital - SELEP Getting Building Fund	(1,869)	(631)	
Additional funding ASELA authorities			
SEE Park - Thurrock	(200)	0	0
SE Tech Uni - Essex CC	(60)	(75)	0
Cost Reimbursement (Thurrock/Freeport)	(30)	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(2,514)</b>	<b>(2,608)</b>	<b>(1,173)</b>
<b>Programme Expenditure</b>			
SEE Park	387	865	240
South Essex Technical University	161	155	0
Full Fibre Digital	1,918	1,212	419
Thames Freeport	60	0	0
Infrastructure and Housing	118	227	144
Operating and Other Costs	121	55	55
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>2,765</b>	<b>2,514</b>	<b>858</b>
<b>In year (surplus) / deficit</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>(95)</b>	<b>(315)</b>

ASELA Reserve	2021/22 £000's	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's
Balance brought forward	(77)	174	79
Non-ringfenced in year (surplus) / deficit	271	(115)	(315)
Ringfenced income: SE Tech Uni	(20)	20	0
Net in year (surplus) / deficit	251	(95)	(315)
Balance carried forward	<b>174</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>(236)</b>

3.2 Following Southend taking over the accountable body responsibility for ASELA, a review of where all funding currently sits and the commitments



against the various funding streams has been undertaken. Arrangements to transfer funding received this financial year, where possible depending on the terms, to Southend are underway.

- 3.3 Based on these revised financial forecasts, a revised surplus of £95,000 is anticipated in 2022/23. This has changed since the previous meeting following the detailed review of commitments and the terms and conditions of various grants awarded. This will bring the reserve deficit to £79,000 by the end of this financial year. One option to mitigate this remaining deficit this year is by reducing the amount of partnership investment to programmes where that resource could be funded through alternate funding secured, subject to grant terms and conditions. Alternatively, the deficit could be carried forward to 2023/24 and funded as first call on the partnership investment.

#### 3.4 **SEE Park**

Phase 1a delivery should be completed this financial year, whilst the Phase 2 design is forecast to occur in 2022/23.

Funding is from the partnership (£115,000 this year) and Highways England - £750,000 for Phase 1a delivery and £215,000 for Phase 2 Design. The Highways England agreement sits with Thurrock, with the funding being received in arrears once expenditure has been incurred for work completed.

Additional commitments in this programme are programme support and £40,000 for creative industry resource, of which £30,000 has been incurred to date.

#### 3.5 **South Essex Technical University**

Planned spend is progressing on track, with Pinsent and Masons engaged to provide the legal expertise required and Essex providing the HE advisor.

Funding this year has come from three sources: £60,000 from the partnership, £75,000 from Essex County Council and £20,000 from Opportunity South Essex – which was received in 2021/22.

#### 3.6 **Full Fire Digital**

There is a £631,000 remaining of the original £2.5m of funding from MHCLG received through the LEP for this financial year for Digital Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) Phase 2. This is currently held by Thurrock council; however, the unspent balance will be transferred to Southend and is forecast to be spent in full this year.



A funding agreement with National Highways was recently signed for £900,000 for the Internet of Things and Phase 2a of LFFN. As work is complete, invoices will be raised for the funding which is anticipated to be spent over 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Additionally, this programme also receives £75,000 of partnership investment for programme support.

There is a bid in train for LFFN Phase 3 which is anticipated to be confirmed shortly.

### **3.7 Infrastructure and Housing**

A project director is being recruited to assist in the implement of the ASELA Housing delivery programme. A funding agreement for £250,000 of has been signed with Homes England and an agreement for a further £120,000 is also in the process of being signed and sealed. Spend is planned across 2022/23 and 2023/24 in line with the grant agreements.

### **3.8 Operating and other costs**

The £420,000 partnership contribution has been received. This funding is utilised to facilitate a resource to support programmes as necessary to enable funding to be secured and a communications resource.

#### **Report Author:**

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TITLE Senior Finance Business Partner, Southend-on-Sea City Council



<b>DATE 15 December 2022</b>	<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>ASELA Joint Committee</b>	
<b>Communications update</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Adrian Wardle	
<b>Programme Implementation Director:</b> Karen Wheeler	
<b>Accountable Programme SRO:</b> Scott Logan	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This paper provides an update on the communications work done in support of ASELA since the committee last met in September.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**That the Joint Committee:**

**1.1 notes the update provided in this report.**

### 2. Introduction and background

2.1 The review of ASELA priorities and programmes has given members the opportunity to reaffirm its vision.

2.2 The ASELA website has been revised and now reflects the key themes members have agreed and the progress being made on the programmes currently being enacted within these themes.

2.3 ASELA has had some real successes in the period since the last meeting of its Joint Committee, which has led to positive publicity. Notably, the funding agreement with National Highways Lower Thames Crossing to support the extension of the digital infrastructure and to work on an Internet of Things, on which ASELA and National Highways collaborated to produce effective PR.

2.3 This report identifies the upcoming opportunities for further PR in section 6.

### 3. Content update



3.1 Content updates we have produced and shared in this period are set out below:

- World Architecture Festival award win for Green and Blue Infrastructure Study
- [Lower Thames Crossing and South Essex councils to boost economy by connecting Brentwood to South Essex superfast broadband network](#)
- [ASELA partnership remains strong](#)

#### 4. Channels update

4.1 The following metrics help understand interest and engagement in our work. Please be aware that we were in pre-election period for much of this time.

<i>Channel</i>	<i>Last 3 months</i>	<i>+/-</i>
LinkedIn	29 new followers 437 followers	+7%
Website	1,200 users 1,700 sessions	+36% +39%
Twitter	58 followers	+4%

#### 5. Forthcoming events

5.1 The following events and project milestones provide proactive communication opportunities:

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Event/milestone</i>	<i>Date</i>
South Essex Technical University	Operating company formation HE provider procurement HE partner(s) appointed Business engagement	Dec 2022 January 2023 March 2023 Spring 2023
Digital Connectivity	Taking of service procurement result Award of £500,000 Getting Building Fund for full fibre network Phase 3 Sheltered accommodation pilot update. MoU with fibre installation partner	January 2023 January 2023 Spring 2023 January 2023
SEEPARK	Phase 1a delivery progress updates, including planning applications, contract awards and work on site	Dec 2022 – March 2023