Section 1. Context

1. How does your proposal demonstrate delivery of the 2050 Ambition?

The incentivised recruitment & retention project seeks to ensure that the Borough is able to attract and retain a high quality workforce, becoming a first choice destination for employment in key areas such as (but not limited to) education, health and care via:

- housing starts (e.g. keyworker housing)
- professional and career development opportunities
- Transport enhancements.

To ensure a ready supply of skilled workforce that meets the needs of our local employers it is imperative that the Borough is able to encourage those workers to make an active choice to relocate to Southend as well as being able to nurture and retain our own home grown local talent. This project also has the potential to act as a hook to new businesses looking to relocate to the Borough by providing a level of assurance that they will be able to readily attract the type of workforce they need.

2. What evidence have you got that this approach will deliver the outcome?

As part of developing “Ambition Southend – A Skills and Labour Market Strategy for Southend-on-Sea, 2018 – 2023” an analysis of the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) relating to Southend-on-Sea’s labour market was undertaken, this highlighted some specific weaknesses within Southend’s local labour market which are directly relevant to this proposal:

- Recruitment difficulties and skills gaps
- Net exporter of skills
- Lack of affordable housing

Southend-on-Sea has a higher incidence of hard-to-fill vacancies. In 2015, 54 per cent of all establishments in Southend-on-Sea reported that they had at least one vacancy that was hard to fill – higher to the England average (39 per cent). Hard-to-fill (HTF) vacancies occur for a number of different reasons – there may be insufficiently skilled applicants, an insufficient number of applications, or the job on offer may not offer competitive terms and conditions.
The average house price of £235,000 in Q3 2016 was 9.05 times median annual workplace earnings in 2016 in Southend-on-Sea – above the national average rate of 7.72. Southend-on-Sea and surrounding local authority areas all have high housing costs.

Nevertheless, there are specific local opportunities to factor into our plans, namely:

- Strong future labour demand
- Growth of London Southend Airport
- Growing skills provision infrastructure
- Strong regeneration plans

This proposal seeks to identify a range of positive measures that can be taken to address some of the particular weaknesses within our local labour market whilst taking account of the opportunities that terms and conditions of employment opportunities that would go some way to reducing the number of hard to fill vacancies within the Borough.

3. What are the measures of impact, success and how will you embed learning?

- Recruitment and retention rates
- Percentage of hard to fill vacancies
- Take up of key worker housing schemes
- Take up of other negotiated incentives (transport options, training, leisure discounts etc)
- Reduction in being a net exporter of skills

**Section 2. Aims, Objectives & Collaboration**

4. What are the key aims and objectives of the proposal?

The key aims of the project are:
- To agree the definition of what a Key Worker in Southend is
- To undertake a needs analysis for key worker housing matching that with the current supply
- Negotiate appropriate provision with key stakeholders
- Raise awareness amongst local employers of incentives that are available - sign posting where appropriate to negotiate discounts
- To maximise the level of investment in the borough

The key objectives of the project are:
- Reduce the number of hard to fill vacancies
- To increase the number of local jobs available to residents

5. Who else have you involved in discussions and how have the helped to shape the proposal?

See collaboration journey.

Primary discussions have taken place with colleagues within Housing as a prime focus of this project is around affordable housing options and how that might be delivered across the borough linking in with their proposals around the Housing Delivery Pipeline.
Additional conversations have been had internally with respect to work being undertaken looking at the Council’s own reward and recognition processes – and very recently a discussion has taken place with HR around the Hays contract and how we might be able to involve them in helping us to deliver / promote aspects of this project.

6. What are the links and dependencies with the other outcome proposals?

**OP4** - Key regeneration schemes, such as Queensway, seafront developments and the Airport Business Park are underway and bringing prosperity and job opportunities to the Borough. The ability for organisation to recruit and retain the right mix of skilled workforce will have a direct impact on the attractiveness of the borough as a location for new businesses – and subsequently has the ability to ensure the success of new mixed and commercial development in the borough (Airport Business Park, Better Queensway, Etc.).

OP5 - Southend is a place that is renowned for its creative industries, where new businesses thrive and where established employers and others invest for the long term (Business Blanket proposal) – providing a mechanism to provide incentives for the workforce will be an additional component in the offer available to new business to help them succeed in the borough and reduce the likelihood of hard to fill vacancies.

SW3 – Appropriate homes to meet needs (Housing delivery Pipeline proposal) – ensuring that provision is developed locally to ensure a healthy mix of property type, tenure and budget is available, making special provision for key worker housing where appropriate – Southend will be able to determine its own definition of Key Worker to fit local needs.

In addition, there are direct links with work underway within Southend on Sea Borough council – Reward & Recognition, that this proposal can directly support and form part of the employee benefits available for the Council’s own employees.

7. Who are the partners (or potential partners) and how to you envisage their role(s) in collaborating to delivering the proposal to achieve the outcome?

Potential partners include:

- SBC – strategic housing - developing the Southend definition of Key Workers and making provision for this sector within the Housing Delivery Pipeline either directly or via partners and stakeholders
- SBC – HR – Rewards & Recognition task group to promote the benefits and opportunities amongst internal staff group
- Hays - potential delivery partner in promoting the range of incentives linked to recruitment
- Southend Business Partnership – facilitating access to Southend’s business networks for new investors/businesses.
- Local Estate Agents, Landlords and Housing Associations – promoting key worker and other affordable housing options and determining the number of units available with the borough.

8. What potential challenges do you anticipate in respect of a) implementing this proposal, b) caused by this proposal once implemented?

Key challenges and risks associated with this project include:

- Defining a Southend Key Worker.
- Identifying all key worker opportunities currently in existence within the Borough – resource will be required to understand, collate and promote the existing borough wide opportunities into a single access point
- Without sufficient promotion of the incentives available businesses may not be able to link this with recruitment and retentions campaigns.

Section 3. Social Value
9. How could the proposal deliver social value - in terms of the local community, businesses, economy and environment and what will the specific impact and benefits be?

The project looks to support a skilled and readily available local workforce, this may in turn help to attract new businesses to the area and further increase the range of employment opportunities available to local residents as well as raising aspirations.

Outside of that:
- The project will support local people to access local jobs, minimising the requirement for travel and thus negative environmental impact from road travel.
- The project will build the reputation of Southend as a location that has a good local labour supply, increasing the buy-in of local businesses and number of businesses choosing to locate in the borough (subsequent business rates income and retained spend within the borough).

10. What is the perceived impact the proposal will have on groups with ‘protected characteristics’?

Some of the incentives may help to raise aspirations amongst some of the low-skilled, low pay sector within the borough – helping to make employment opportunities more attractive – through lower transport costs, lower housing costs – might help shift people from worklessness into employment.

11. What is the proposal’s potential direct or indirect impact on the wider community?

- Opportunity for increased number of people in employment
- Opportunity to increase aspirations, particularly within long-term workless households
- Reduce congestions and emissions through greater affordability and promotion of public transport
- Opportunity for skills advancement and social mobility