

Small Government: Big Society

**Swale Borough Council
Corporate Plan 2012 - 2015**

Published xx/yy/2012

Foreword

The last four years has seen a significant number of changes to the operating environment for the public sector, including a global recession, national deficit problems, a changing policy agenda and legislative framework, and an extremely challenging financial climate.

Swale Borough Council does not operate within a political vacuum and so it is important that its strategic direction is informed by the wider policy context, both nationally and at a Kent-wide level. The new Government in Westminster moved quickly following its election to dismantle many elements of the former administration's control mechanisms over local authorities, including the abolition of comprehensive area assessment and the national indicator set. The Localism Act will give councils a 'general power of competence,' enabling them to undertake any activity which would be lawful for a private individual, reversing the current situation where only activities which are explicitly sanctioned in statute are lawful. Together, these changes provide local authorities with significantly more freedom to determine their responses to local priorities than was previously the case.

Another important facet of the government's localism agenda is the development of the *big society*, and the metamorphosis of councils into essentially commissioning organisations could represent a significant chance to reduce communities' dependency on the state and enhance levels of civic involvement and responsibility: whatever detailed proposals emerge, it will be vital that Swale as a borough maximises the opportunities these changes will bring.

Within Kent, the county and district councils working in partnership have already begun to respond positively to the new national policy context, establishing the Kent Forum as the primary democratic means for the county and district authorities, including Swale, to work together with their local partners from other sectors. At district level, locality boards have been established to bring together local representatives of the county and district councils, and Swale has been quick to seize on the opportunities for smarter, more joined-up decision-making this will offer. In the longer term, it is anticipated that the Swale Locality Board will play a significant role in commissioning local services which have historically been provided by either the county or borough council.

Despite the greater freedom, the recession has had a significant impact on local government finance and the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 set out an extremely challenging financial environment for the public sector in the UK and for local authorities in particular. By 2014/15, the Local Government Association is predicting that local authorities nationally could face an annual funding gap between spending requirements and funding of about £20 billion due to the cuts in central government grants and rising demand pressures on local services. For 2012/13 Swale Borough Council will have a budget of £18m, which represents 20% less than we had two years ago, so for every £10 the Council had to spend on services we now only have £8.

To respond to the budget gap and the challenges set out in the Localism Act we will need to change our approach to the delivery of public services. Whilst councils have become the most efficient part of the public sector, consistently delivering efficiency savings and keeping council tax increases low, we are now at the point where further savings have to come from cutting or radically changing the actual services on which many people rely. We want to avoid cutting front line services wherever possible, and Councils are the only local bodies that can ensure choice over such matters is exercised in a joined-up way that is both accountable to the service user and the local tax payer, and in a way that maximises efficiencies and supports individuals in exercising choice.

Going forwards, we support the five principles for modernising public services set out in the Open Public Services White Paper 2011 of *choice, decentralisation, diversity of provision, fairness and accountability*. Whilst the Council will continue to have a role in direct delivery of some services, we will continue to develop our role as a strategic commissioner of services with shared services and commissioned services already accounting for around 70% of our spend and helping us to deliver the efficiencies needed.

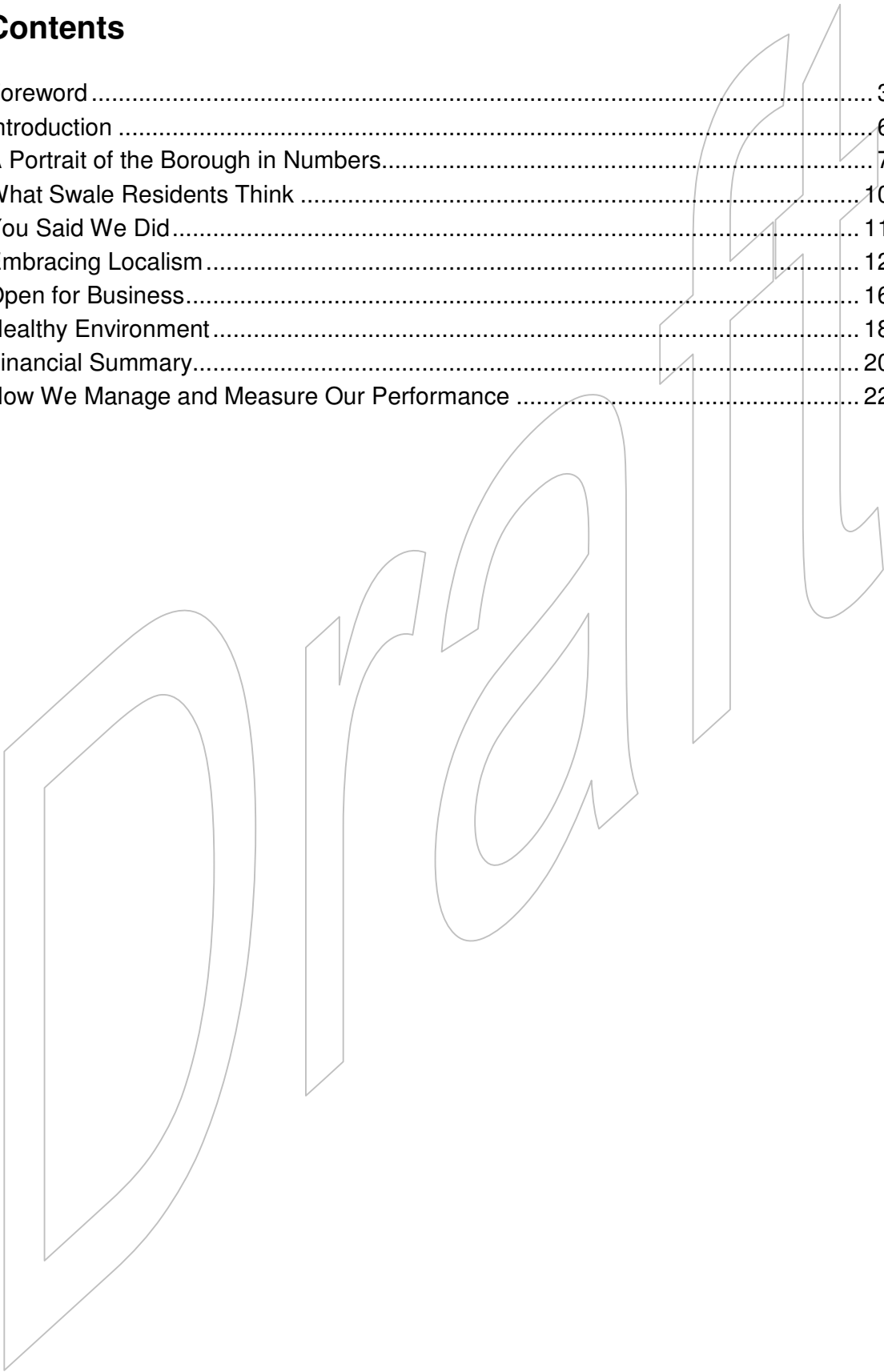
But now, more than ever, we need to be absolutely sure that the money we spend is going to achieve the maximum possible benefit for the Borough. To help us do this in this document we set ourselves a number of corporate priorities which are there to ensure that we focus on what really matters to local communities. It sets out what the Council aims to achieve for its residents over the next three years, the priorities that will help us get there, the key actions we will undertake or engage in to achieve those priorities, the resources allocated to achieve the priorities overall, and how we will manage and monitor our performance to deliver those objectives.

Most importantly, this Plan is about improving the effectiveness of the organisation in the delivery of essential quality services whilst responding to the needs of the people that work, live and visit the Borough. I am confident that it provides a sound basis for achieving these aims.

Councillor Andrew Bowles
Leader of the Council

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Introduction

For an organisation to be effective it needs to have a clear organisational purpose and a corporate plan sets out what an organisation plans to do in order to achieve that purpose. We have simplified our organisational purpose to ***lets make Swale a better place!***

This Plan sets out what the Council aims to achieve for its residents over the next three years, the priorities that will help us get there, the key actions we will undertake or engage in to achieve those priorities, the resources allocated to achieve the priorities overall and how we will manage and monitor our performance to deliver those objectives. It is organised around our three interlinked corporate priorities, focusing specifically on areas of change and improvement rather than attempting to cover everything the council does.

The corporate priorities have a clear link to our sustainable community strategy *Realising Ambitions for Swale*, and the Vision for Kent document, showing how we will be working with others in the borough to have an impact locally. The table below shows these linkages.

Links to the countywide and borough wide ambitions		Swale Borough Council Corporate Priorities		
		Embracing Localism	Open for Business	Healthy Environment
Countywide Ambitions (vision for Kent and Bold	To grow the economy		✓	
	To tackle disadvantage	✓		✓
	To put citizens in control	✓		✓
Borough wide ambitions (Realising our Ambitions for Swale)	Children and young people	✓	✓	✓
	Economy and regeneration	✓	✓	✓
	Environment and liveability	✓		
	Health and housing	✓		
	Safer and stronger communities	✓		

A Portrait of the Borough in Numbers

In order that they will represent the most effective use of council resources, these priorities have been grounded in a robust analysis of all available evidence. This evidence falls into three main categories:

- a detailed understanding of the current state of the Borough, including its shortcomings and any areas in which it is under-fulfilling its potential;
- a clear understanding of residents' views of what is important and what needs to be improved; and
- an appreciation of the wider policy context in which the council operates.

Swale at a Glance

Figure 1: Map of Swale Borough



Area: 140 square miles (37,340ha)

Population: 133,400 people

Main towns: Sittingbourne, Faversham, Minster on Sea, Sheerness

The Borough and Its Residents

Swale benefits from a great location on the northern coast of Kent, some 40 miles east of central London. With an area of 140 square miles, the borough includes the towns of Faversham and Sittingbourne plus the Isle of Sheppey and a significant rural hinterland. There are excellent connections to the national and international road network via the M2 and A249, while Ebbsfleet International station, with high-speed rail services to London, Paris and Brussels, is located in neighbouring Gravesham.

The Borough's population in 2010 was 133,400, giving a population density of around 950 per square mile. Just over 5% of Swale's population identified themselves as not being of White British ethnicity in 2009, compared with just over 9% in South-East England and nearly 13% in the UK as a whole. Swale's age profile is not significantly different to that of the rest of the country, although it has a slightly higher proportion of under-15s and over-45s, and a correspondingly lower proportion of 15- to 44-year-olds.

A Changing Borough

Swale's population has increased by almost 10% since 2000, compared with an increase in the UK as a whole of under 6%. By 2033, Swale's population is expected to rise to nearly 160,000, a further 22% increase. Reflecting an ageing population across the UK, population increases in Swale will not be even across age groups, with the number of people aged between 55 and 74 and those aged 75 or over each set to double over the next two decades. The ethnic make-up of Swale is also changing, with 5.7% of the population identifying themselves as not White British in 2009, up from just 1.9% in 2001

Economy and Skills

Swale's overall economic situation does not match that of a more typical district in the generally affluent South-East: less than 40% of jobs in the borough are of a senior, managerial or professional nature, compared with nearly 50% in the South-East as a whole. Conversely, 15% of Swale jobs are in unskilled occupations, more than half as many again as the regional figure.

At 14%, the proportion of jobs in the manufacturing sector in the borough is almost twice that of the South-East as a whole, while only 15% of jobs are in the more lucrative finance, IT and other business sectors, compared with a regional figure of 24%. Swale compares unfavourably on these measures not only within the South-East, but also with the UK as a whole. Given this, it is unsurprising that earnings are also relatively low in the borough, at an average £485 per week, compared with £500 across the UK, and £525 in the South-East. Unemployment and state dependency are also higher in Swale than in other areas, with 3.8% of the working-age population claiming Jobseeker's Allowance – almost half as many again as the overall regional figure.

Swale's economy suffers from a significant skills shortage, with a population which is generally less well-qualified than the regional or national averages. Only a quarter of the borough's residents are qualified to NVQ level 4, compared with national and regional averages of around a third. Twice as many Swale residents (18%) have no

qualifications at all than is the case in the South-East as a whole (9%). However, at 62% the proportion of Swale school pupils achieving five or more good GCSEs is considerably higher than the national average of 54%.

A Changing Borough

Many of Swale's economic difficulties can be traced back to the decline of large-scale manufacturing bases on which the borough has historically depended. The easy availability of low-skilled industrial work brought about a tradition of low educational aspirations among some parts of the population, which has not helped the borough to recover from the loss of this employment. Nonetheless, diversification of the economy towards smaller-scale enterprises during the 2000s was broadly successful. However, Swale was hit relatively hard by the recession of the late 2000s, with the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance increasing by three-quarters in the eighteen months to August 2011. Although the borough is well-placed to take advantage of economic opportunities in areas such as green technology, science-based industries and the creative sector, it remains held back by its poor skills profile.

Quality of life

Swale's varied natural environment includes internationally protected wetlands on the Isle of Sheppey, part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and an extensive coastline with a variety of economic uses.

Swale's overall ranking in the indices of multiple deprivation is 99 out of 327, placing it among the most deprived third of all local authority areas in England. However, the borough is unusual in the degree of disparity between different local areas: alongside a number of affluent neighbourhoods, 17 super output areas in Swale are within the most deprived 20% nationally, and eight are within the most deprived 10%. Most of these highly deprived areas are located on the Isle of Sheppey, but they are also to be found in parts of Sittingbourne and Faversham.

Health is an area in which the inequalities between different neighbourhoods in the borough are particularly stark, with male life expectancy almost eight years lower in the most deprived areas than in the least. Overall, the health of Swale residents is poor compared with the rest of the country, including a high proportion of obese adults, high rates of diabetes, and a low proportion of children who are physically active. Crime figures in the borough are slightly higher than in Kent and Medway overall.

A Changing Borough

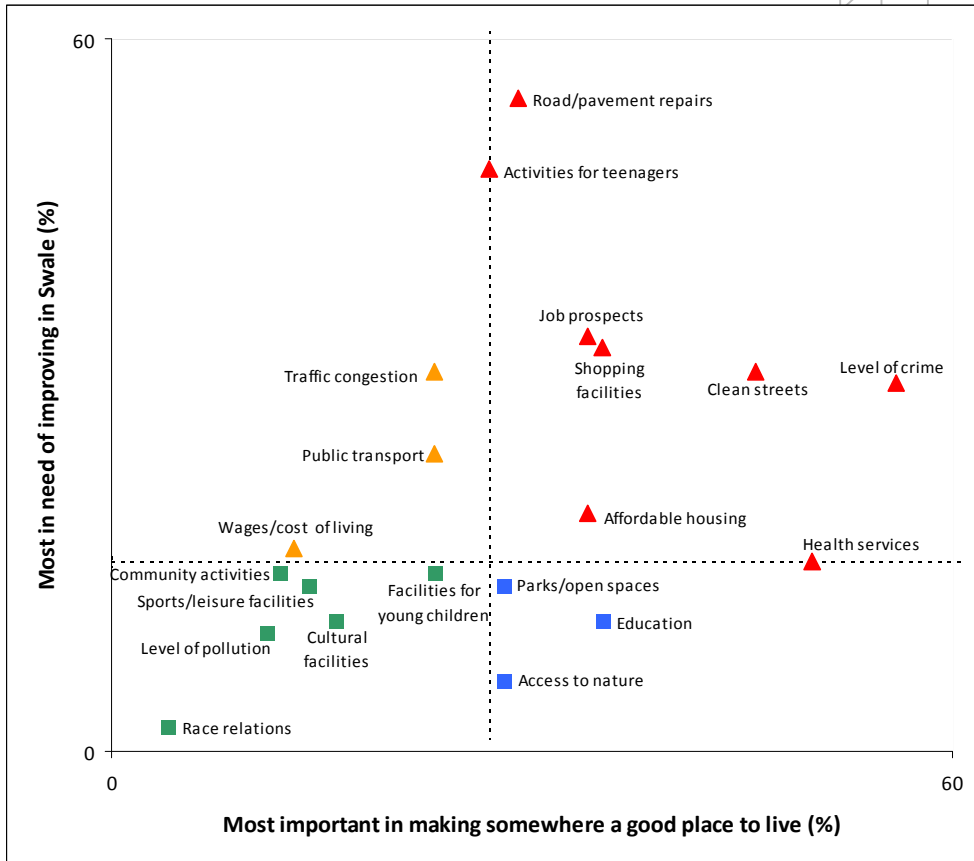
Swale's position on the index of multiple deprivation worsened in relation to other local authority areas between 2007 and 2010. Education and skills remains the borough's weakest area on the index, although its relative position improved slightly in 2010, while the sharpest relative decline in 2010 was in the area of health and disability. Overall crime and antisocial behaviour fell by 4.3% during 2010/11, more than five times the drop achieved across Kent and Medway as a whole. Looking to the future, the changing global climate represents a particular threat to a borough such as Swale, with its long coastline, relatively high fuel poverty and low rainfall.

What Swale Residents Think

Each year, the council undertakes a survey of residents as a way of finding out their views on the positive and negative features of local life and gauging the issues which are most important to them. The last survey took place during autumn 2011.

Overall 71% of residents say that they are satisfied with their local neighbourhood as a place to live, rising to 87% in the Swale rural area and falling to only 59% in the Sittingbourne area. Figure 3 below shows which aspects of community life residents consider most important in making the Swale area a good place to live and what most needs improving in Swale

Figure 2: What is important and what most needs improving in Swale



Items in the top-right quadrant are thus those which local people think are both important and in need of improvement. A high proportion of these are either services for which the borough council is not responsible at all, or those which are provided by the borough council working in partnership with other agencies; in both cases, this underlines the importance of continued close cooperation among local partners.

A more detailed set of statistics on the borough, [Swale in 2011](#), is available at [insert link](#). All figures in this section are drawn from these statistics, and individual references are therefore not provided.

You Said We Did

Figure 1 is a *word cloud* showing the words Councillors and officers have used to describe the organisation’s purpose. We have simplified our organisational purpose to ***lets make Swale a better place!***



Figure 3: Word Cloud

It is important to us that the community helps shape our priorities and activities, and so between December 2011 and March 2012 we asked you your views on our emerging corporate priorities. The following table sets out the key things you told us and how we have responded.

The feedback we received broadly fell into five areas

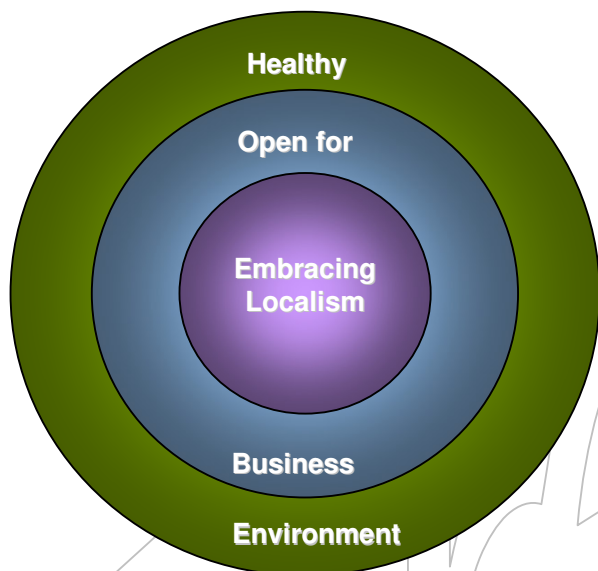
- Engaging communities and support for new community groups
- Support for local business
- The importance of growing local jobs and improving skill levels locally
- Improving the transport network locally and
- Issue relating to tackling climate change and enhancing the environment more generally.

A detailed you said we did/we propose response to the responses received can be found at [add link to webpage](#)

These comments have helped us shape our detailed plans and influenced the key projects and priority actions we have set out in this plan.

Embracing Localism

This priority is about demonstrating how we will embrace the localism agenda whilst empowering individuals and communities to take more responsibility for their own futures. It about the council becoming an agent for change, promoting new ways of thinking about, and taking action in, community life, thus playing our part in growing the big society across the borough.



Embracing the Localism Agenda

We have a legal responsibility to respond to the Localism Act, which includes five key measures as set out below.

- **Implementing the new community rights to challenge, buy and build** - ensuring that community organisations have a fair chance to bid to take over land and buildings that are important to them.
- **Supporting neighbourhood planning** - helping local communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans.
- **Taking more decisions about housing locally** - enabling us to determine in partnership with our housing provider how best to help homeless people, manage housing waiting lists and determine the length of tenancy that best fits a household's needs.
- **Empowering local communities** - transferring public functions in order to improve local accountability or promote economic growth.
- **Exploring the general power of competence** – which will enable to us to be more innovative and work more creatively to meet local needs.

Localism has been a part of Swale's agenda for some time. Further embracing this agenda has the potential to radically transform how the council works. We will aim to be more innovative by exploring use of the general power of competence, promote more joined up working across the council, aim to be more open and transparent, and further develop our approach to community engagement.

Importantly, we see this priority as extending well beyond the Act and underpinning everything we do - continuing to be the best-run organisation that we can be, providing efficient, high-quality services and offering excellent value for taxpayers' money whilst adopting new ways of working and with greater consideration of how services are commissioned.

By further embracing localism we aim to be:

- **Listening** – a council that listens and responds to community aspirations.
- **Open** – a council that is receptive to new ideas and suggestions.
- **Cost conscious** - a council that expects value for money from itself and others.
- **Achieving** – a council that commissions for excellence from the best-qualified provider.
- **Localist** – a council that actively seeks to hand power to local people.
- **Inclusive** – a council that promotes access for all.
- **Supportive** – a council that encourages community responsibility for assets and services.
- **Transparent** – a council that is open in its decision-making.

We believe that counties, boroughs, parishes and town councils are the only local bodies with a democratic remit that enables them to take an objective view about the needs of Swale residents, whilst holding providers of services to account on their behalf. Commissioned and shared services already account for around 70% of our total spend and, whilst the council will inevitably continue to be involved in the direct delivery of some services, we will further develop our role as a strategic commissioner of services. A truly localist and decentralised approach gives both councils and residents the responsibility to decide which services are suitable for commissioning locally and how they go about doing it.

This priority also recognises that the council, and the local public sector generally, are not solely accountable for the wellbeing of Swale's residents, and that the onus will increasingly be on individuals and civic organisations to take further responsibility, whether in terms of individual lifestyle choices or of the big society pulling together to tackle local issues. Within the scope of the Act, we want the council to become more responsive to local needs, but we also envisage residents, parishes, local businesses and voluntary organisations taking more ownership of, and control over, the issues that affect them.

Working in Partnership

We already enjoy good relationships with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary & community sector, and a number of joint 'big society' projects are already underway, some of which are listed below:

- devolving budgets to members
- supporting community asset transfers
- providing Local Engagement Forums (in Faversham, Sittingbourne and Sheppey)
- holding a Rural Forum;
- supporting neighbourhood planning;

- supporting co-operatives for local markets;
- setting up Sports Trusts;
- supporting trusts to run/take over community halls;
- supporting local sports clubs;
- engaging with 'Friends of Parks' groups;
- engaging with 'Friends of Beaches' groups;
- engaging with Allotment Management Associations;
- supporting Swale in Bloom Groups; and
- supporting local Tourism Associations.

Localism also implies an opening up of services to the voluntary sector market and we would welcome conversations with Parish and Town Councils and community groups on what kind of support we might be able to provide to take that further.

Members Championing Communities

This priority recognises the important role Councillors have to play in championing communities, representing the interest of their wards, and in recognising residents who are also championing localism. We believe that Councillors as directly elected representatives should be directly accountable to their communities for decisions on the allocation of public money. This gives them an essential role in scrutinising decision-making, ensuring services are transparent, accountable and representative, and contributing to the development of council policy.

Priority Projects and Actions

Over the lifetime of this Plan we will deliver a number of key projects and priority actions under the localism agenda.

Key Localism Priorities For Action

➤ **Flagship projects across the borough**

- Initiatives to establish parishes across the whole of the Borough
- Support to local neighbourhood planning projects e.g. Faversham Creek
- Improve consultation and engagement - "No decision about me without me"

➤ **Other projects and priorities for action**

- Develop a local Prospectus of services
- Support Members to champion communities
- Map the extent and commitment to localism across Swale
- Progress swiftly with asset transfers
- Refresh our voluntary and community sector strategy
- Produce an open data policy and open book policy

- More effective Swale Locality Board and Local Engagement Forums
- Greater promotion of “Doing business with the council”
- Much better linkages with county, town and parish councils
- Help build community capacity, including through staff secondment arrangements
- Encouraging personal, economic and civic responsibility especially with young people
- A communications strategy that supports these proposed actions

DRAGG

Open for Business

This priority is about working with the private sector and other public sector partners to create the conditions for growth and to promote a positive image for the Borough.

Support and develop catalytic regeneration

Swale has significant pockets of deprivation in some areas that are driven by low levels of employment, skills and incomes. There is a low ratio of jobs relative to the working age population, despite overall growth in the economy during the past decade. If we are to extend prosperity and reduce income deprivation and welfare dependency it is essential that we make certain there is a diverse range of good-quality jobs, improve local people's access to them, and ensure that there is adequate employment-led housing provision.

Foster an Environment where local Business Can Flourish

Swale has strengths in manufacturing, transport and logistics and other key sectors, but lower levels of higher-skilled employment in the service sector. It is vital that we make Swale 'open for business', by promoting and encouraging an environment where local business can thrive, where unnecessary barriers to growth are removed, and where new businesses are welcomed into the borough.

Increase the range of Vocational Learning Opportunities

This priority also recognises the need to improve our range of learning and skills opportunities. With low skill levels in the resident workforce, higher than average dependency on out of work benefits, and unemployment amongst young people, learning and skills remains a key issue for Swale. We want to work with partners to refocus learning provision to meet the needs of business, giving local people the best chances of accessing suitable employment while also increasing opportunities for higher-skilled and more value-added employment in the professional and service sectors. In particular, we need to do everything we can to reduce the impact of the negative economic climate on young people's life chances, including an expansion of the vocational opportunities available to them.

Improve Transport infrastructure

The Borough has seen significant change in its transport infrastructure in recent years. Major investment has provided the Sheppey Crossing and Sittingbourne Northern and Rushenden Relief Roads, and these represent significant improvements. However, serious challenges remain, including congestion at junction 5 of the M2 and poor public transport provision in some areas. We need to work with local businesses to lobby for the necessary investment and transport infrastructure improvements to improve these constraints on local growth.

Priority Projects and Actions

Over the lifetime of this plan we will deliver a number of key projects and priority actions under the open for business agenda.

Key Open For Business Priorities For Action

➤ Flagship projects across the borough

- Work with partners to deliver regeneration in Sittingbourne Town Centre
- Development of a major Wind Turbine Manufacturing facility
- Encourage and promote the creation of new apprenticeship opportunities for young people

➤ Other projects and priorities for action

- Encourage the development of Sheerness and the rest of the borough as a centre for offshore wind engineering and manufacturing
- Continue to support Kent Science Park as a key employment site
- Encourage the sustainable development of Faversham Creek
- Increasing the Borough's range of retail shops
- Continued expansion of the Eurolink Industrial Estate
- Support the local Tourism Industry
- Encourage growth in green industries
- Extend the range of vocational opportunities available to young people locally
- Work with partners to shape the future of the borough through the Local Plan
- Press the case for a staged development solution to the issues of transport congestion throughout the borough
- Ensure there is adequate housing supply to meet the demands of employment growth and demographic changes
- Work with partners to deliver the Queenborough and Rushenden Master Plan

Healthy Environment

This priority is about nurturing place that is Swale in its broadest sense, both as a physical place, and as a community. In particular, it is focused on the significant impact that council activities in areas such as town planning, housing and regulatory services have on the general health and wellbeing of the population. It also includes our responsibilities for the stewardship of the natural and built environments. Clearly, the wellbeing of communities is also closely connected with the level of crime and disorder, as well as a successful adaptation to a changing climate. Swale residents rank the level of crime, clean streets, and health services as the three most important things in making an area a good place to live.

Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

Swale's varied natural environment includes internationally protected wetlands on both sides of the Swale estuary, part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and an extensive coastline with a variety of economic uses. Approximately 75% of the land area in the borough is covered by an environmental designation. The Council, through its planning policies, has an important role in safeguarding and enhancing these natural environments. The effects of climate change represent a particular threat for Swale, with its long coastline of low-lying land, relatively high fuel poverty and low rainfall.

Improving the built environment

Important though the countryside is, most people live in towns and villages. Our planning policies will continue to protect our built and historic heritage wherever possible, and we will encourage new building which is well designed, attractive and environmentally sustainable. Good planning, and the incorporation of public open space, will make our town centres a better place to be. We will encourage developers to provide adequate affordable housing for our residents. We will continue to reduce through traffic, and especially heavy goods vehicles, from our town centres, thus reducing air pollution and improving pedestrian safety.

Keeping Swale clean

Three-quarters of local residents are very satisfied with refuse collection, kerbside recycling and local waste disposal sites. However, despite the fact that Swale's streets were officially among the cleanest in the country in 2010/11, resident satisfaction with how public spaces were kept clear of litter and refuse was below the national average. By continuing to working with our residents, parishes, schools and businesses, we aim to keep litter off the streets and open spaces to create a cleaner and greener borough.

Keeping Swale safe

Although during 2010/11, overall crime and antisocial behaviour in Swale fell by more than five times the drop achieved across Kent and Medway as a whole, crime remains slightly higher in Swale than in Kent and Medway as a whole. Swale residents rank the level of crime as the eighth thing most in need of improvement locally. Working in partnership to keep Swale safe remains a key area of focus for us, and we welcome the opportunity to work with the new Police and Crime Commissioner to tackle local issues of crime and disorder.

Health Inequalities

Health inequalities between different neighbourhoods in the borough are particularly stark, with male life expectancy almost eight years lower in the most deprived areas than in the least. Overall, the health of Swale residents is poor compared with the rest of the country, with a high proportion of obese adults, high rates of diabetes, and a low proportion of children who are physically active. County-level local authorities are taking on major new responsibilities for public health, and in Kent it is likely that some of these will be devolved down to locality boards. The key challenge for Swale is to work with our partners to reduce the health inequalities in the borough.

Priority Projects and Actions

Over the lifetime of this plan we will deliver a number of key projects and priority actions under the healthy environment agenda.

Key Healthy Environment Priorities For Action

- Flagship projects across the borough
 - Successful completion of the waste contract and mobilising the new provider
 - Development of shared routes for cycling, walking and horse riding on Sheppey
 - Initiatives to help troubled families e.g. community budgets
- Other projects and priorities for action
 - Excellent stewardship of the countryside and coastline.
 - Improving the built environment
 - Implementing the core strategy
 - Further improving our recycling rates.
 - Improving residents' satisfaction with street cleanliness
 - Continuing to mitigate and adapt to climate change
 - Continuing to tackle crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour
 - Helping connect communities to open and green spaces, footpaths, cycle ways and wildlife
 - A framework for sport and physical activity in Swale
 - Implement an effective local health and well being board

Financial Summary

The recession has had a significant impact on local government finance, and the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 set out an extremely challenging financial environment for the public sector in the UK and for local authorities in particular. By 2014-15, the Local Government Group is predicting that local authorities nationally could face an annual funding gap between spending and funding of about £20 billion due to the cuts in central government grants and rising demand pressures on local services.

For 2012/13 the Swale Borough Council will have a budget of £18m which represents 20% less than we had two years ago, so for every £10 the Council had to spend on services we now only have £8. Figure 4 below sets out where our income derives from. This will change significantly from 2013/14 when the Council will retain a proportion of business rates income collected and this will be matched by a reduction in central Government grant,.

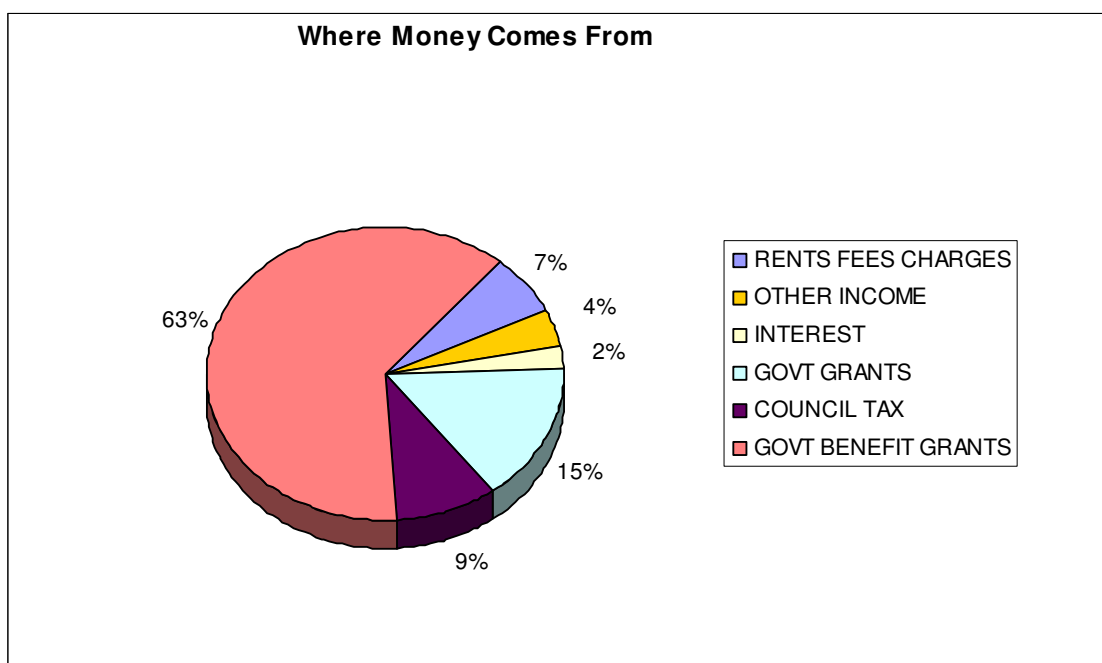


Figure 4: NEED TO UPDATE FIGURES _ ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY AT THIS POINT

These financial circumstances have driven a major programme of value for money initiatives, which have borne significant fruit for the council, significantly limiting the impact of grant reductions on front line services. These initiatives include:

- (i) Procurement
 - ✓ Intelligent commissioning and procurement of services
 - ✓ Renegotiation of existing contracts
 - ✓ Adopting a Category Management approach to smaller items of spend, e.g. ICT consumables, utilities, communications
- (ii) Shared services in areas such as

- ✓ Internal Audit
 - ✓ Human Resources
 - ✓ Legal
 - ✓ Building Control
 - ✓ Car parking
 - ✓ Finance
- (iii) Reviews of systems and processes
- ✓ 'value for money' Reviews in Revenues and Benefits services
 - ✓ Process reengineering in Planning services
 - ✓ Benchmarking services against other providers
 - ✓ Maximising self-service arrangements and the number of services that can be delivered via the Council's Call Centre
- (iv) Reviews of our own cost base
- ✓ Base budget reviews (as part of the budget process)
 - ✓ Spans and Layers management costs review
 - ✓ Invest to save approaches

The Council prepares a budget projection for a further three years in its Medium Term Financial Strategy which is available at <http://www.swale.gov.uk/medium-term-financial-strategy/> . The Budget projections form an essential part of the Council's medium term financial planning process. These projections give us a strong indication of what lies ahead, albeit the financial regime changes make for some uncertainty. We are confident that by continuing to adopt a robust approach to delivering value for money sufficient resources will be available to enable the delivery of this Plan in accordance with the Council's Policy and Budget Framework.

Capital Programme

The Council's priorities for the use of available capital funds are:

- projects which support the Council's Localism agenda;
- earmarked receipts related to specific projects e.g. Section 106 monies;
- minimum fulfilment of legal duties e.g. DFG;
- essential life and death maintenance work e.g. Health & Safety; and
- essential remedial expenditure on the Council's IT systems.

The Council on balance will remain free from external borrowing and not undertake borrowing to fund capital expenditure, apart from exceptional circumstances. Given this the capital programme is now minimal as the main funding streams from central Government have now ceased.

How We Manage and Measure Our Performance

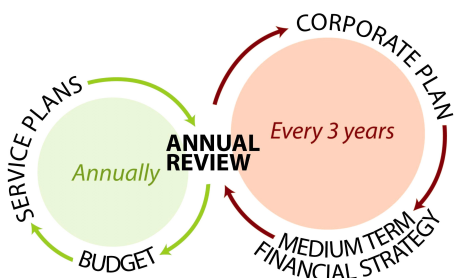
This Corporate Plan rewrite should be viewed as a tool for strategically positioning ourselves as an organisation, outlining for residents, staff and partners the Administration's priorities for improvement for the next three years.

The Council has a robust approach to how we monitor and review progress towards delivering the priorities set out in this Plan. These include:

- the **Corporate Priorities** set out in the corporate plan will direct what we do. All council policies will be framed by the corporate plan and key partnerships will be more clearly focused upon the priorities set;
- our **key actions** identified through annual service planning will align with and relate directly to the priorities, making clear our role and the activity upon which we will focus our attention and resources;
- our **resources**, both people and finance, are finite and so will be aligned to delivering our new priorities. Difficult choices about what services we deliver and how we deliver them will be informed by the corporate plan;
- we will continuously review of our effectiveness, through improved **Performance Management**. The Council, its services and staff will have clear objectives, targets and accountability for performance; and
- we will provide **visibility, transparency and accountability** to residents and partners through regular public reporting of progress against key priorities, activities and performance targets through report to Cabinet and Scrutiny, through updates on the performance management pages of our website, and most comprehensively through our Annual Report, which is produced in **September** of every year.

Whilst this Plan sets out our priorities for the medium-term through to 2015, it will be subject to an annual review, providing an opportunity to consider what we are doing and how effectively we are doing it. This will include building an evidence to ensure that our priorities continue to reflect the views of local people and business, for example through a regular residents survey.

This review process will, in turn, inform the annual budget setting process each autumn. This will also allow adjustments to be made to the corporate plan and service plans as appropriate. This is shown in the diagram below.



Updated version of Your Councillors to be added after Kemsley by-election.

Contacting Swale Borough Council

The **Customer Services Centre** deals with all enquiries across the Council; it should be your first stop when contacting us.

Copies of this Swale Borough Council plan are available on the Council website www.swale.gov.uk If you would like further hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact the Council at:

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