
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 19 November 2014 from 7.00 - 9.19 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney, Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), Derek Conway, John Coulter, Peter Marchington and Ben Stokes.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Russell Fairman, Joanne Hammond, Bob Pullen, Debbie Townrow and Lorna Wyrill.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mike Henderson and Mike Whiting (Cabinet Member for Localism, Culture, Heritage and Sport).

APOLOGY: Councillor Andy Booth.

349 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 October 2014 (Minute Nos. 287 – 291) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

350 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

351 LOCAL FIRST POLICY

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Localism, Culture, Heritage and Sport, the Business and Skills Officer and the Economic Development Officer to the meeting to discuss the Local First Policy.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report which set out details of progress made to-date to implement the Council's Local First Policy Action Plan.

The Business and Skills Officer explained that the Policy was being actively promoted both externally to businesses, and internally within the Council, to ensure that officers were aware of the importance of the Policy when procuring items or contracts. She provided an explanation of the meaning of social value and the Cabinet Member explained that social value accounted for 20% of the score in a tender process.

A Member referred to a Parish Council issue as an example of the need to audit contracts; the importance of the Council being pro-active with tendering for work where they can offer a service to Parish Councils; and being more supportive to Parish Councils in explaining the options available to them with contracts.

The Cabinet Member undertook to follow up the issue with officers.

A Member referred to the possibility of two tenders scoring similar for price and quality, and asked if it was possible to include a section within tender documents that explained that preference would be given to local businesses?

The Cabinet Member advised that there were legal implications but he undertook to follow this up and to request that officers explore examples of other Local Authorities who had pursued this approach.

- Cabinet Member for Localism, Culture, Heritage and Sport

The Business and Skills Officer undertook to arrange a Member Briefing on the Local First Policy and Social Value for all Councillors.

- Business and Skills Officer

The Business and Skills Officer outlined the purpose of the Business Plan Guidance and undertook to ensure that it was signposted to all officers. She explained that the Economic Development Team maintain a database of businesses, and currently 500 local businesses were signed-up to receive regular Business Bulletins and information from the Business Support Programme. She welcomed suggestions on how the Team could extend their reach to more businesses.

A Member suggested that a leaflet advertising the database and Business Support Programme could be included within the Business Rates Bill sent out by the Council.

The Cabinet Member considered this was a good suggestion and undertook to explore whether it would be feasible and affordable with officers.

- Cabinet Member for Localism, Culture, Heritage and Sport

A Member suggested that Councillors could be asked to distribute leaflets to local businesses within their Wards.

The Business and Skills Officer explained that the Economic Development Team recognised the importance of increasing the amount of face-to-face contact with local businesses, to build relationships and create contacts.

A Member referred to the training and briefing sessions set out in Action Point Six and asked what the response had been to these sessions?

The Business and Skills Officer explained that the feedback from the sessions had been positive and it was an encouraging start, but unfortunately the attendance had been low. She explained that these sessions were still at an early stage and it was expected that the take-up would improve over time. She also considered that there may be some reticence amongst local businesses to accept or request support.

The Cabinet Member explained that the tender documents needed to be reviewed to simplify the process and encourage Small and Medium Enterprises, Town and Parish Councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector to tender.

The Business and Skills Officer advised that the 'Swale Means Business' website would be live by the end of the month and it would have links to organisations in Faversham, Isle of Sheppey and Sittingbourne who work to support local businesses.

The Business and Skills Officer agreed to request that a copy of the capacity building toolkit be circulated to Members once it was finalised.

- Business and Skills Officer

A Member referred to the work of the Kent Association of Training Organisations (KATO), based in Swale, and suggested that officers liaise with KATO to assist with some of the actions in the Local First Policy Action Plan.

In response to a question, the Business and Skills Officer advised that the purpose of the £23k grant funding from Airvolution Energy Ltd was to assist young people wishing to enter an apprenticeship with travel costs. With regard to apprenticeships, she outlined some of the work being undertaken by the Council to encourage businesses to consider apprentices, and confirmed that there was some grant funding available to help businesses with part of the apprenticeship costs.

A Member considered that it would be useful to provide practical examples of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to businesses, to improve their understanding of CSR and how broad it can be. She also referred to the Green Tourism website and suggested that it may contain useful information for officers.

A Member referred to the success of the Community Action Day at Oare Gunpowder Works and recommended that Council teams be encouraged to participate.

The Cabinet Member considered that Actions 14 and 15 were measured through the Volunteering Strategy and to avoid duplication it may be appropriate to merge Actions 13, 14 and 15 together, and create one Action more directly related to the Local First Policy. The Committee agreed with this approach.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the current volunteering rate of 21% referred to the Swale area and the national average was 24%.

The Chairman thanked the Business and Skills Officer and the Economic Development Officer for attending the meeting.

352 SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FRAMEWORK FOR SWALE

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Localism, Culture, Heritage and Sport and the Community (Sport and Physical Activity) Officer to the meeting to consider the Sport and Physical Activity Framework for Swale (SPAFS).

The Cabinet Member introduced the report which identified the key elements of the work undertaken as a result of the SPAFS and its flexible approach to ensure that Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) is embedded in the localism agenda. He explained that the Council had moved from direct delivery to an enabling role, working with local organisations to deliver services.

The Community (Sport and Physical Activity) Officer explained that he had previously worked for Kent County Council (KCC) who were seen as a good example for the delivery of SPA. He considered that the priorities within the SPAFS were still relevant and there had been some good achievements.

The Committee welcomed the £76k secured from Sport England's Community Sport Activation Fund to employ a Health Trainer for Swale. The Chairman asked how this had been communicated to residents to encourage participation?

The Community (Sport and Physical Activity) Officer explained that the funding was for a three-year pilot project working with the Kent Community Health NHS Trust (KCHT) to engage local people who do not otherwise participate in any form of SPA. The Health Trainer started in October 2014 on low intensity activities targeting the inactive and long-term unemployed through the KCHT and new partners for SPA including the JobCentre Plus. He explained that initially participants would come through referrals either from the JobCentre or GPs and it was planned that volunteers would be trained to run sessions which would enable the project to be advertised more widely.

A Member raised concern at the lack of communication with Ward Members and a potential duplication of activities with other organisations; as an example he referred to a project being run in Davington Priory Ward involving AmicusHorizon.

In response to a question, the Community (Sport and Physical Activity) Officer explained that the funding covered salary costs for the Heath Trainer, a budget for hire of premises, training sessions required by the Health Trainer and training for additional volunteers. Additional funding has been provided by Swale Borough Council and KCHT to support the project.

The Chairman requested that further information regarding the Health Trainer including where and when they would be running activities be included within a Members' despatch.

- Community (Sport and Physical Activity) Officer

The Cabinet Member referred to the launch of a new Sports Grant scheme to help voluntary clubs and organisations with grants of between £200 and £1,000 to provide opportunities and increase participation.

A Member requested further information regarding the appointment of an Executive Officer for Swale Community Leisure Ltd. The Cabinet Member explained that Swale Community Leisure Ltd Trust required dedicated officer support and currently SBC officers were managing both sides of the contract which created conflicts of interest. The post was being funded by SBC for two years and it was expected that the role would generate enough income to sustain the post in the future.

A Member considered that reference should be made to the cost of maintaining and investing in capital refurbishments for leisure centres owned by SBC. The Cabinet Member considered that this was part of a separate discussion regarding the Council's assets and priorities for expenditure.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Community (Sport and Physical Activity) Officer for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

(1) That an update report be provided to the Committee on the progress of the Sport and Activity Framework for Swale towards the end of 2015.

353 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman referred Members to the Work Programme. Councillor Derek Conway, Lead Member of the review on Economic Development, advised that this review was on-going and a report would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee.

A Member referred to the review of the Planning Enforcement Strategy and Service Charter and requested that a copy of the Service Level Agreement between the Planning Department and Legal Services be made available as part of that review.

- Policy and Performance Officer

The Chairman advised that he would liaise with the Policy and Performance Officer to decide on the appropriate reports to bring forward to the next meeting.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel