

## AGENDA

### POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 14 January 2015  
Time: 7.00 pm  
Venue: Council Chamber - Swale House

Membership:

Councillors Monique Bonney, Andy Booth (Vice-Chairman), Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), Derek Conway, John Coulter, Peter Marchington, Gareth Randall and Ben Stokes.

Quorum = 3

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| 1. Apologies for Absence and Confirmation of Substitutes  |       |
| 2. Minutes  |       |
| To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 November 2014 (Minute Nos. 349 - 353) as a correct record.   |       |
| 3. Declarations of Interest   |       |
| Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves or their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they are living with as a spouse or civil partner. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.  |       |
| The Chairman will ask Members if they have any interests to declare in respect of items on this agenda, under the following headings:   |       |
| (a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DPI, the Member must leave the meeting and not take part in the discussion or vote. This applies even if there is provision for public speaking.  |       |
| (b) Disclosable Non Pecuniary (DNPI) under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2012. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DNPI interest, the Member may stay, speak and vote on the matter.   |       |
| <b>Advice to Members:</b> If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or DNPI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Director of Corporate Services as Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting. |       |

## Part One - Substantive Items

4. Community Safety Strategy 1 - 28

To consider the development of the next version of the Community Safety Strategy. A briefing note and the Swale Community Safety Plan 2014/15 and Community Safety Questionnaire 2014 are attached.

The Economy and Community Services Manager, the Safer and Stronger Communities Officer and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Health have been invited for this item.

5. (i) Draft Social Media Policy and Guidelines (ii) Draft Customer Use Policy 29 - 48

The Committee is asked to consider the Draft Social Media Policy & Guidelines and Draft Customer Use Policy (both attached).

The Head of Economy and Communities and the Web Officer have been invited to attend for this item.

6. Draft Tree Policy 49 - 60

The Committee is asked to consider the draft Tree Policy. Please note that the attached draft Tree Policy goes to Strategic Management Team on 13 January 2015 so there might be some minor comments/changes.

The Cabinet Member for Environmental and Rural Affairs, Commissioning and Open Spaces Manager and Greenspaces Manager have been invited to attend for this item.

## Part Two - Business Item

7. Committee Work Programme 61 - 62

The Committee is asked to review and discuss the Committee's Work Programme (attached) for the remainder of the year.

## Issued on Monday, 5 January 2015

The reports included in this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about this Committee please visit [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk)

## **Briefing Note for Policy Development and Review Committee**

### **Community Safety Plan Refresh 2015/16**

#### **Introduction**

Swale Community Safety Partnership annually refreshes its Partnership Plan following a Strategic Assessment process and agreement of priorities by Partners. The process has begun to refresh the plan for 2015/16 and this briefing note discusses progress to date and next steps.

#### **Background**

The Swale Community Safety Plan is refreshed annually following the completion of a community safety strategic assessment. This assessment aims to provide partners with a performance update against its current priorities and also uses intelligence analysis and community concerns to identify any emerging priorities for consideration.

The proposed priorities are discussed by the Partnership Executive at its annual Strategic Planning Session in January and once agreed, are used to form the basis of the Community Safety Plan and action plan for that year. The final Community Safety Plan is agreed by the end of March each year by the Partnership.

The community are involved throughout the process and feed in their views on local community safety concerns by completion of a questionnaire. Their views are gathered and fed into the strategic assessment. Additionally they are consulted on the final priorities for the Partnership ahead of adoption of the plan.

Given reduction in partnership analytical resources, it has been agreed by the Partnership that the views of front line practitioners should be sought on local and emerging issues to also complement the strategic assessment document.

#### **2015/16 Refresh Progress**

- The 2014 Strategic Assessment is currently being drafted and will be shared with the CSP Executive at their annual Strategic Planning Session on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015;
- An event for front line practitioners is being organised for the 12<sup>th</sup> January and their views will be discussed at the Strategic Planning Session;
- A Community Safety Issue questionnaire is currently being shared with the community and the results will also be fed into the strategic assessment and priority agreement process by the CSP Executive;
- The Partnership priorities, once agreed will be put out for consultation with the community between February and March 2015;
- The Community Safety Plan will be written between February and March and agreed by the Partnership by the end of March 2015.

## **Points for Consideration**

The Strategic Assessment is still being drafted and can be shared with this Committee following its completion. However the Community Safety Plan for 2014/15 is included as Appendix I and provides an overview of the current priorities for the partnership and actions to address them. These are not expected to change significantly for 2015/16 as they are broad ranging.

Also included with this note in Appendix II is the community safety issue questionnaire that has been shared with the public. The results of which will be fed into the priority selection process.

## **Appendices:**

Appendix I: Swale Community Safety Plan 2014/15

Appendix II: Community Safety Questionnaire 2014

**Swale Community  
Safety Partnership**



# **Swale Community Safety Plan 2014-17**

**DRAFT February 2014**

**Sign-Off Date:**

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### Contacting the CSP

Visit our website for more information on the Partnership, along with updates on our activities and key crime reduction advice – [www.swalecsp.co.uk](http://www.swalecsp.co.uk)

Alternately please email us at [csu@swale.gov.uk](mailto:csu@swale.gov.uk) or phone 01795 417193.

# Swale Community Safety Plan 2014-17

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Swale Community Safety Plan is a rolling three year document, which highlights how the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) plans to tackle community safety issues that matter to the local community. This plan is revised on an annual basis, through reviewing information provided from a wide range of organisations in a strategic assessment, to ensure that current issues can be taken into account into the activities undertaken by the CSP.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Swale CSP is a statutory body bringing together a number of public sector agencies to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and reducing re-offending. These agencies include Swale Borough Council, Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Kent Probation and Clinical Commissioning Groups working closely with the local housing associations such as AmicusHorizon, voluntary and community sector organisations, HM Prison Service and HM Court Service.
- 2.2 From April 2014 Kent Probation Trust will cease to exist and the responsibilities will be split between the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). NPS will remain the statutory partner but duties will be discharged through the contract of the CRCs to engage with CSPs.
- 2.3 Additionally the CSP will need to cooperate with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

### 3. Strategic Drivers

3.1 Key strategic drivers have been identified which will impact on the work of the CSP over the next 12 months include the following.

- (i) **Engagement with Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC):** The PCC continues to work closely with district CSPs and has recently refreshed the Police and Crime Plan. The priorities in the refreshed plan are:
- cut crime and catch criminals;
  - ensure visible community policing is at the heart of policing in Kent Police;
  - prevent crime, anti-social behaviour and reduce repeat victimisation and offending;
  - put victims and witnesses at the heart of processes;
  - protect the public from serious harm;
  - deliver value for money; and
  - meet national commitments for policing

Although the PCC is not a responsible authority on the CSP, there is a duty to co-operate to ensure effective joint working to address the common priorities. The PCC has also agreed the provision of the Community Safety Grant for the upcoming financial year but the CSP will need to continue to promote its services and achievements.

- (ii) **Welfare Reform:** A number of changes have already been introduced as part of welfare reform, with the introduction of universal credit still to be introduced in Swale. The scale of the impact of these changes is not yet known, but is likely to see an increase in homelessness (particularly of younger males); overcrowding and associated ASB; increase in Houses of Multiple Occupancies (HMOs) with associated increase in ASB if within a similar location; and possibly a migration of people into the borough
- (iii) **Troubled Families Programme:** The Troubled Families local delivery mechanism has now been created and agreed by partners, with engagement with families commenced. Partners are very supportive of this programme and new way of working, but there could be a resource pressure on those partners that have the best relationships with the target families, which are often schools or housing officers. As more families are engaged as part of the programme, further resource pressures may arise. Information sharing between partners is also positive to date, however there are operational issues that still require action to resolve to ensure the programme works properly.
- (iv) **Emerging communities:** As a result of migration into the borough over the past number of years, the community make-up of Swale has changed and is likely to continue changing following potential further migration as welfare reform continues to be introduced. This could result in a change in service need by local residents and also create community cohesion issues. Additionally through the placement of out of county looked after children in the borough, in particular from London, could lead to issues of gang culture or sexual exploitation which would need to be monitored.
- (v) **Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health Reform:** Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) became responsible authorities on Community Safety Partnerships from April 2013, replacing Primary Care Trusts. Additionally many public health functions transferred to Kent County



Council, on top of the substance misuse support services that they already manage. A relationship needs to be established with both the CCGs covering Swale in order to influence commissioning decisions, along with the public health function of KCC, which is where the most interaction is likely to be needed.

- (vi) **Transforming Rehabilitation:** From April 2014 Kent Probation Trust will cease to exist with offender management responsibilities split between the National Probation Services (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC). A relationship needs to be established with both the NPS and CRC to ensure the effective working continues and all partners are aware of the different functions performed by each service.

## 4. Summary of Progress

- 4.1 A Strategic Assessment is compiled annually to show progress for the CSP against its current priorities, identify emerging issues, and recommend priorities for the next 12 months. A summary of key trends are shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of progress of 2013/14 Community Safety Plan**

| Category   | Oct - Sept 13              | Volume Change | % Change | Per 1000 Pop (current period) | Most Similar Group/County Position (current Period per 1000) |
|--|----------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Priority 1 – Violence Against Women and Girls</b>                                   |                            |               |          |                               |  |
| Domestic Abuse - No. of incidents  | 1958                       | -65           | -3.3     | 14.21                         | 8th (Kent)   |
| Domestic Abuse - No. of repeat victims   | 485                        | 26            | 5.7      | 3.52                          | 9th (Kent)   |
| Domestic Abuse - % of repeat victims   | 24.7%                      | n/a           | 2.2      | n/a                           | 10th (Kent)  |
| <b>Priority 2 - Crime</b>  |                            |               |          |                               |  |
| Burglary Dwelling  | 495                        | 56            | 13       | 8.91                          | 11th (MSG)   |
| Burglary Other Than Dwelling   | 844                        | 10            | 15       | 6.19                          | 11th (MSG)   |
| Shoplifting  | 825                        | 111           | 16       | 6.05                          | 10th (MSG)   |
| Theft - Vehicle Offences   | 946                        | 135           | 17       | 6.94                          | 8th (MSG)  |
| Theft from the person  | 39                         | -8            | -17      | 0.29                          | 1st (MSG)  |
| Criminal Damage  | 1549                       | -42           | -3       | 11.36                         | 12th (MSG)   |
| All crime  | 8588                       | 533           | 7        | 62.99                         | 9th (MSG)  |
| <b>Priority 3 – Anti-social Behaviour</b>  |                            |               |          |                               |  |
| Total ASB (Kent Police)  | 4303                       | -633          | -14.7    | 31.25                         | 8th (Kent)   |
| % people saying vandalism, graffiti or damage is a big problem in their area           | 11.9% (12/13)              | n/a           | 1.90%    | n/a                           | 9th (Kent)   |
| % people saying rubbish or litter is a big problem in their local area                 | 21.1% (12/13)              | n/a           | -2.30%   | n/a                           | 9th (Kent)   |
| % people saying flytipping is a big problem in their local area                        | 7.1% (12/13)               | n/a           | -4.90%   | n/a                           | 4th (Kent)   |
| % Victims Overall ASB Satisfaction   | 81.10%                     | n/a           | -7.80%   | n/a                           | 5th (Kent)   |
| Total Deliberate Fires   | 176 (Apr-Oct 13)           | 36            | 25.70 %  | n/a                           | 12th (Kent) (Apr-Mar 13)                                     |
| Environmental ASB (includes graffiti, flytipping, littering and dog fouling)           | 3047                       | 815           | 36.50 %  | n/a                           | u/a  |
| Noise Incidents (Amplified noise and behavioural noise, including out of hours)        | 490                        | -58           | 10.60 %  | n/a                           | u/a  |
| Flytipping (Clean Kent)  | 1925 (12/13)               | 868           | 82.12    | n/a                           | 12th (Kent)  |
| ASB - Amicus   | 691                        | u/a           | u/a      | u/a                           | u/a  |
| Actual Re-Offending Rate   | 9.21% (Oct-Sept 12)        | n/a           | -0.48    | n/a                           | 6th (Kent)   |
| Number of Adult Offenders (Kent Probation)   | 370 (period ending Jun 13) | u/a           | u/a      | n/a                           | 8th (Kent)   |
| Drug Offences  | 262                        | 23            | 10       | 1.92                          | 3rd (MSG)  |
| % people saying people drunk or rowdy is big problem in their local area (KCVS)        | 7.0% (12/13)               | n/a           | -4.70%   | n/a                           | 3rd (Kent)   |
| % people saying people using/dealing drugs in a big problem in their local area (KCVS) | 7.1% (12/13)               | n/a           | 9.3      | n/a                           | 7th (Kent)   |

| Category   | Oct - Sept 13     | Volume Change | % Change | Per 1000 Pop (current period) | Most Similar Group/County Position (current Period per 1000) |
|--|-------------------|---------------|----------|-------------------------------|--|
| Permanent School Exclusions  | 33 (Jul-Jun13)    | -2            | -5.71    | u/a                           | 12th (Kent)  |
| Fixed Term School Exclusions   | 1019 (Jul-Jun13)  | -220          | -17.76   | u/a                           | 9th (Kent)   |
| Number of Young Offenders (aged 10-17)   | 144 (Jul-Jun13)   | -61           | -29.76   | n/a                           | 10th (Kent)  |
| Young Offenders as % of 10-17 population   | 1% (Jul-Jun13)    | n/a           | -0.40    | n/a                           | 7th (Kent)   |
| First Time Entrants to Youth Justice System  | 46 (Jul12-Mar 13) | u/a           | u/a      | u/a                           | 4th (Kent)   |
| Not in Education Training or Employment (NEET) (as % 16-18)  | 8.21% (Aug 13)    | n/a           | 0.38     | n/a                           | 11th (Kent)  |
| Referrals to Specialist Children's Services  | 1548 (Apr-Mar 13) | -223          | -12.59   | n/a                           | 11th (Kent)  |
| Looked after children  | 131 (at Mar 13)   | 10            | 8.26     | n/a                           | 11th (Kent)  |
| Completed Common Assessment Frameworks (CAFs)  | 267 (2012/13)     | 28            | 11.72    | n/a                           | 12th (Kent)  |
| Proportion of people who consider ASB to be a fairly or large problem (LAPS)   | 16% (Oct 13)      | n/a           | 1%       | n/a                           | n/a  |
| Proportion of people who have given unpaid help to a club, society or organisation at least once a month in past year (LAPS) | 21% (Oct 13)      | n/a           | 3%       | n/a                           | n/a  |
| Road Traffic Collisions - All casualties   | 443 (12/13)       | -61           | -12.1    | u/a                           | 6th (Kent)   |
| Road Traffic Collisions - Casualties Under 16  | 45 (12/13)        | -13           | -22.4    | u/a                           | 10th (Kent)  |
| Road Traffic Collisions - Killed or Seriously Injured  | 39 (12/13)        | -12           | -23.5    | u/a                           | 6th (Kent)   |
| Road Traffic Collisions - Killed or Seriously Injured Under 16   | 6 (12/13)         | 2             | 50%      | u/a                           | 10th (Kent)  |
| Sexual Offences  | 155               | 41            | 3.2      | 1.14                          | 11th (MSG)   |
| Violence Against The Person  | 1668              | 160           | 11       | 12.24                         | 13th (MSG)   |
| Robbery  | 67                | -2            | -3       | 0.49                          | 10th (MSG)   |

1<sup>st</sup> in Kent is best performing out of 12. 1<sup>st</sup> in Most Similar Group is best out of 15.

4.2 Key activities delivered by the CSP in the past 12 months have included the following:

- Violence Against Women and Girls Group: A strategic multi-agency group has been formed to ensure better communication of local services; identification of gaps in service; and to prioritise the development of additional services. The first meeting was held in September, with a number of areas of work identified including improvements to the One Stop Shop, increased coordination of Sanctuary schemes and local mapping.
- Freedom Programme: SATEDA have secured funding to recommence delivery of the Freedom Programme in Sittingbourne and Sheppey. This programme is suitable for standard risk victims and provides an additional layer of support that has been missing for 2 years.

- IDVA Contract: A countywide contract for the delivery of IDVA services was commissioned from April 2013 for which the Kent Domestic Abuse Consortium was the successful provider. This contract ensures a consistent level of support is in place across Kent for the highest risk domestic abuse victims, with potential funding secured for 3 years.
- Predictive Policing: Predictive Policing (or PredPol) has been introduced to utilise crime data to target Police resources to give them the best chance to prevent crime. Within Swale this approach has been developed to utilise partnership resources such as KCC Wardens and KFRS and expanding its scope to also include ASB.
- CSU Campaigns: The CSU has continued to deliver crime reduction campaigns aiming to reduce burglary dwelling through provision of Smartwater, timer switches and creeper break campaigns. Shed Alarms have also been provided, along with caravan break in campaigns, aiming to reduce burglary other than dwelling. There has been a change of focus on these campaigns this year, focusing on existing victims to reduce repeat victimisation, rather than directing advice at a general area. Operation Nonagon has also been run in the rural areas of the borough, in partnership with neighbourhood districts to tackle crimes such as burglary other than dwelling.
- Offender Management: The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) approach, along with Deter Young Offenders (DYO) programmes continue to run in Swale, focusing partnership resource on the most prolific offenders.
- SwaleSafe: Continues to operate as the Business Crime Reduction Partnership within Swale, linking CCTV and the Police with local retailers across the borough. Partnership contributions have enabled the service to continue to operate and also start to upgrade to a digital system which will involve clearer transmissions over a wider footprint, voice recording and an additional broadcasting channels. The SwaleSafe network is an excellent method in which to continue to tackle shoplifting and crime in the town centres.
- Community Safety Unit Case Management: The CSU continues to provide support to the highest risk ASB victims, whilst remaining with oversight of all repeat ASB victims within the borough. Operation Endeavour has been developed to allow CSU Officers to provide an extra level of support to victims through late night working and tackling issues in problematic locations. Additionally the provision of Guard Cams and home safety improvements has enabled victims to feel safer in their homes.
- Community Trigger: The CSP has implemented a Community Trigger pilot ahead of the formal implementation with the revised ASB tools and powers. The pilot has received several requests but none have met the trigger criteria.
- Mobile CCTV: Investment has been made in a number of new mobile CCTV cameras, with two specifically to tackle flytipping in the Marine Town area of Sheerness. The new cameras provide a direct link to the CCTV Control Room at Medway, enabling quicker identification of issues and provision of evidence.

- Fire Campaigns: KFRS have led a number of campaigns particularly through the summer months to tackle rubbish and grass fires throughout the borough, particularly in known hotspots such as the Isle of Sheppey.
- Troubled families: The programme continues to be delivered in Swale with 58.3% Year 1 families and 81.6% of Year 2 identified families engaged on the programme. Initial payment by results claims have been made for families that have achieved positive outcomes.
- Street Pastors: Street Pastors operate in Swale covering Sittingbourne weekly and Sheerness twice monthly. The pastors provide additional guardians to the high streets to tackle night time economy crime.
- Substance Misuse Support Provision: The substance misuse support provision for the borough is now undertaken by Turning Point and has started to become embedded across the area.

## 5. Priorities for 2014/15

- 5.1 The priorities for 2014/15 for the CSP were selected by members of the Partnership following a Strategic Planning Session in January 2014, taking into account the findings from the strategic assessment, along with feedback from the community about which issues matter most.
- 5.2 A series of enablers have also been identified which are key initiatives that will support the delivery of all of the priorities.

**Table 2: Swale CSP Priorities and Enablers 2014/15**

| <b>Priorities</b>  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Violence Against Women and Girls</b>  | <b>Crime</b>   | <b>Anti-Social Behaviour</b>  |
| Focus on high and standard risk victims, programmes for young people and addressing sustainability issues. | Continued focus on crime committed by most prolific offenders and top categories of burglary dwelling and other, along with shoplifting.<br><br>Focusing on the locations that have the highest volume of incidents. | Continued focus on high risk victims, whilst also tackling issues such as deliberate fires and environmental ASB.<br><br>Focusing on the locations that have the highest volume of incidents. |
| <b>Key Enablers</b>  |  |   |
| Troubled Families Programme  |  |   |
| Integrated Offender Management   |  |   |
| Community Engagement   |  |   |
| Preventative and educational programmes for Young People   |  |   |

- 5.3 Further details on how these priorities will be achieved are shown in table 3, including a summary of the issue; clear actions to be undertaken; and how performance will be measured. Details of the enablers are also discussed including what the CSP will do to achieve these.

**Table 3: Summary of Swale CSP Priorities**

### Priority – Violence Against Women and Girls

**Summary of issue:** The number of reported incidents of domestic abuse has decreased slightly in the reporting period, but the volume remains high. The repeat victimisation rate has shown a slight increase showing worsening performance. The scale of harm of domestic abuse remains high and a large amount of partnership work has been put into place to continue to address it, through the commissioning of County Services and development of increased local provision.

Local services, such as SATEDA are supported by partners both financially and in terms of advice and signposting, enabling it to grow and increase the services it delivers. A police officer has recently been seconded to SATEDA to increase collaborative working. However, sustainability of many local support services such as this continues to remain an issue, despite increasing referral levels and the need for these services to develop further to meet community needs. Joint commissioning of the Independent Domestic Violence Advise Service (IDVA) by partners across Kent is one step forward

to achieving this.

Domestic abuse/violence against women and girls is an issue that affects many partners, but there is no one clear partner that takes strategic ownership of this issue. The creation of the Violence Against Women and Girls Group is developing to provide strategic overview, assess needs and look at continuous service improvement.

Due to the continued level of harm the Partnership has agreed that Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) will continue to feature as a high priority, with the current level of work being maintained. This priority has been mainly focusing on domestic abuse and the partnership needs to understand the prevalence of the wider VAWG agenda.

- Activities to tackle issue:** Activities that will be undertaken by the Partnership to tackle this priority include:
- Manage the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Group to provide strategic overview and co-ordinate services in Swale.
  - Provide support to SATEDA to meet local community needs through effective provision of services to victims of domestic abuse
  - Support KDAC providing the IDVA contract as commissioned by Kent Criminal Justice Board
  - Support the Community Domestic Abuse Programme and evaluate its effectiveness in supporting perpetrator work in the borough.
- Performance measures:**
- % repeat victims of domestic abuse
  - Number of incidents of domestic abuse
  - Number of incidents of stalking

## Priority – Crime

**Summary of issue:** Tackling crime is a long standing priority for the Partnership with an increase in All Crime of 7%. Burglary dwelling, burglary other than dwelling, and shoplifting has also seen increases.

A recent HMIC review into Crime Recording within Kent Police found a recording error of 10%. Correcting the error has inflated crime numbers and makes it difficult to assess current performance.

Tackling behaviour of those most prolific offenders through Integrated Offender Management (IOM) and breaking the cycle of repeat offenders will be a focus for the partnership. Utilising the IOM approach will be a key enabler in ensuring that the CSP effectively tackles crime. Additionally action will focus on those repeat young offenders.

The CSP will work to tackle those crime issues that have the highest impact on the borough. These are:

- burglary dwelling;
- burglary other than dwelling; and
- shoplifting.

The CSP will also identify through its tasking processes the geographical locations that are crime hotspots and carry out targeted operations to tackle the problem.

- Activities to tackle issue:** Activities that will be undertaken by the Partnership to tackle this priority include:
- Continue to develop and use Restorative Justice approaches
  - Delivery of crime reduction campaigns by the Community Safety Unit for those crime issues that have the highest impact and of greatest community concern (Burglary dwelling, burglary other and shoplifting)
  - Further develop a partnership input into the Predictive Policing model
  - Support the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) model and Deter Young Offenders Programme (DYO).
  - To identify crime hotspots and carry out targeted operations to tackle the problem.

- Performance measures:**
- Number of incidents of all crime
  - Number of incidents of burglary dwelling
  - Number of incidents of burglary other than dwelling
  - Number of incidents of shoplifting
  - % rate of adult reoffending
  - % rate of youth offending

### Priority – Anti-Social Behaviour

**Summary of issue:** ASB is a long standing priority for the Partnership, with the number of incidents reported to Kent Police through the non-emergency number having decreased by 14.7%.

Environmental ASB has seen an increase of 36.5%; this is fly tipping, graffiti, littering etc. Noise incidents reported to Swale Borough Council has decreased by 10%.

Deliberate fires across the borough remains a concern, with an increase of 25.7%. Despite a large increase further analysis shows the levels are in-line with the three year average and the 2012/13 is considered to be an abnormal year due to the weather.

Satisfaction of ASB victims with services received has reduced overall by 7.8% from a high level of satisfaction in previous years; the CSU continues to focus on victims with the greatest need.

Repeat offenders (adults and young people) will also be a focus for the CSP, in a similar manner to crime, working to tackle the cycle of



offending. The partnership should also focus on locations that have a high level of incidents.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Bill are currently passing through Parliament. This will see the introduction of revised ASB Tools and Powers, which will require a review of current policies and procedures and a training need for partners on how to effectively use them; the current implementation is unknown but is expected to be Autumn 2014. One new tool will be the Community Trigger, which will give the community a right to request action to tackle an on going issue. Swale is currently piloting a Community Trigger initiative which will run to March 2014.

**Activities to tackle issue:**

Activities that will be undertaken by the Partnership to tackle this priority include:

- Continue risk based case management of ASB victims by CSU and seek to establish across all partners working to tackle ASB.
- Continue delivery of a mobile CCTV system and other evidential capture mechanisms
- To review ASB policies and procedures to ensure compliance o new legislation and ensure all ASB practitioners are aware of revised tools and powers once introduced and participate in training.
- Evaluate the Community Trigger Pilot and ensure local procedures match needs of communities and partners ahead of formal introduction.
- Undertake intelligence led operations to tackle ASB issues in areas with high level of incidents.
- Continue to support KFRS projects to reduce deliberate fires in the borough.

**Performance measures:**

- Number of incidents of ASB
- ASB Victim Satisfaction
- Number of incidents of deliberate fires.
- Proportion of residents that perceive ASB is a problem

**Enabler – Troubled Families Programme**

**Summary of activity:**

The Troubled Families Programme continues to progress and is now entering into its final year. A local co-ordinator is now in post who is working with all partners to ensure that the correct families are engaged and that partners have capacity to effectively support them.

The main activities as part of the programme for the next year includes:

- To continue to work with Year 1 and 2 cohorts until achieved progress as defined by the financial framework.
- Utilising a referral mechanism identify families for the Year 3 cohort.
- Support local practitioners involved with the programme, building

skills and knowledge to enable them to effectively support families.

- Identify best practice and current issues to inform future commissioning or service design.

**Performance measures:** ▪ Number of families engaged with Troubled Families Programme in Swale

### **Enabler – Integrated Offender Management**

**Summary of activity:** Integrated Offender Management processes are now embedded locally through Community Safety Units. IOM focusses on providing an enhanced service and pooling of partnership resources for those most problematic offenders (crime and ASB), along with young offenders through the Deter Young Offenders scheme. A framework has now been developed to provide guidance on the process to all partners, with performance monitoring processes also now in place.

The focus of the CSP will be to ensure that this mechanism continues to work effectively within Swale, with the correct partners engaged as required. Recognising that through reducing reoffending of these most prolific offenders that the greatest reduction in crime and ASB can be achieved.

Additionally the CSP will work to ensure that support services needed by these offenders are in place or where gaps are identified that these are raised through the correct mechanisms.

**Performance measures:** ▪ Number of offenders committing re-offences within offender management unit cohort

### **Enabler – Community Engagement – Emerging Communities**

**Summary of activity:** Engaging the local community (residents, voluntary and community organisations and businesses) in decision making and delivery of services is a step required for delivering effective community safety services and public services in general. A number of mechanisms are already in place to support this which will need to be maintained and developed such as Local Engagement Forums.

The local population is constantly changing and in order to provide appropriate service delivery partners agencies need to better understand the new and emerging communities that have formed due to a migration and immigration. It has been agreed as a priority by the Partnership for its community engagement work for the upcoming year. Actions to be undertaken to achieve this will be agreed by partners, including appropriate research and analysis, training and engagement work.

**Performance measures:** ▪ Proportion of residents that agree the Swale is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

### **Enabler – Preventative and educational programmes for Young People**

**Summary of activity:** There are a wide variety of educational and engagement carried out with young people both in a school setting and in the community. However, there are often inconsistent approaches across the borough with key groups not always receiving the relevant

preventative input.

The partnership have identified a number of key themes where preventative inputs on domestic abuse, healthy relationships, road safety, ASB and e-safety advice would assist in reducing incidents and the vulnerability of individuals.

The partnership have also piloted initiatives with those on the edge of offending to hear about experiences of prison but also provide positive activities to divert away from offending behaviour.

**Performance measures:**     ■ Number of young people engaged in preventative inputs.

- 5.4 Alongside addressing the identified priorities, the CSP will need to ensure that legislative changes and requirements are adhered to. This will include work to incorporate the 'Prevent' agenda into the role of the Partnership.
- 5.5 Additionally, there will be a need to support the delivery of priorities identified in the Kent Community Safety Agreement which impact upon Swale and the Kent Police and Crime Plan.

## 6. Action Plan 2014/15

| No.  | Action   | Desired Outcome  | Key Milestones  | Timescales                                    | Lead agency                                     |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Priority 1: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)</b> |  |  |   |   |   |
| 1.1  | Manage the Violence Against Women and Girls group to provide strategic overview and co-ordinate services in Swale.   | Strategic oversight of VAWG issues in Swale achieved including gaps or issues with services                        | Mapping exercise reviewed on quarterly basis.<br>Monitor commissioned services on quarterly basis.                              | Ongoing – quarterly meetings.                 | Swale Borough Council                           |
| 1.2  | Provide support to SATEDA to meet local community needs through effective provision of services to victims of domestic abuse   | Local support service in place for victims of domestic abuse, meeting needs of local community in relation to VAWG | Monitor outcomes from grant agreement on quarterly basis.<br>Provide Capacity Building support and signposting to SATEDA Board. | Ongoing – quarterly reviews                   | Swale Borough Council/<br>AmicusHorizon         |
| 1.3  | Support KDAC providing the IDVA contract as commissioned by Kent Criminal Justice Board  | Sustainable support service in place for highest risk victims of domestic abuse                                    | Monitor outcomes from grant agreement on quarterly.   | Ongoing – quarterly reviews                   | Kent Probation                                  |
| 1.4  | Support the Community Domestic Abuse Programme and evaluate its effectiveness in supporting perpetrator work in the borough.   | Support provided for perpetrators of domestic abuse not subject to a IDAP requirement.                             | Agreement in place.<br>Promote the scheme.<br>Quarterly monitoring of agreement.  | April 2014<br>April 2014<br>Quarterly         | Swale Borough Council.                          |
| <b>Priority 2: Crime</b>                                   |  |  |   |   |   |
| 2.1  | Continue to develop and use Restorative Justice approaches.  | Further developed and embedded RJ approaches to reduce reoffending and improve victim satisfaction                 | Post-conviction, Pre-sentence RJ<br>Restorative Justice Capacity Building programme<br>Continued local RJ Clinics               | April - March 15<br>May – March 15<br>Ongoing | Kent Probation<br>Kent Probation<br>Kent Police |
| 2.2  | Delivery of Crime reduction campaigns by the Community Safety Unit for those crime issues that have the highest impact and of greatest community concern (Burglary dwelling, burglary other and shoplifting) | Reduction in number of incidents of burglary dwelling, burglary other and shoplifting.                             | Schedule created for campaigns based upon analysis<br>Campaigns undertaken as required for each of three crime types            | By May 2014<br><br>Ongoing                    | Kent Police                                     |
| 2.3  | Further develop a partnership input into   | Reduction of all crime   | PredPol model continued and   | By March 15                                   | Kent Police                                     |

|                        |   |   |  |   |  |
|------------------------|---|---|--|---|--|
|                        | the Predictive Policing model   | across borough  | increased partners involved, with scope widened to include ASB   |   |  |
| 2.4                    | Support the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) model and Deter Young Offenders Programme (DYO).   | Reduced offending of identified cohort.   | Continued delivery of IOM including DYO and engagement by partners   | On-going                                | Kent Police / Kent Probation / KCC YOS |
| 2.5                    | To identify crime hotspots and carry out targeted operations to tackle the problem.   | Reduce incidents of crime in targeted locations.  | Identification of hotspot locations.<br>4 operations carried out in identified locations.                                      | April 2014<br>By March 2015             | Swale CSU                              |
| <b>Priority 3: ASB</b> |   |   |  |   |  |
| 3.1                    | Continue risk based case management of ASB victims by CSU and seek to establish across all partners working to tackle ASB.  | Reduction in ASB Incidents and increased satisfaction of ASB victims                        | Continued ASB Case Management by CSU   | Ongoing                                 | Swale CSU                              |
| 3.2                    | Continue delivery of a mobile CCTV system and other evidential capture mechanisms   | Reduction in ASB and Crime. Increased satisfaction with service by partners.                | Monitoring of service<br>Continuation of other evidential capture as needed  | Apr 14 -Mar 15                          | Swale CSU                              |
| 3.3                    | To review ASB policies and procedures to ensure compliance of new legislation and ensure all ASB practitioners are aware of revised tools and powers once introduced and participate in training. | Compliance with new legislation.<br>Staff are confident to use new powers.                  | Implementation plan for ASB legislation created.<br>Training delivered to ASB practitioners.<br>Implementation plan delivered. | By Jun 14<br><br>By Oct 14<br>By Oct 14 | Swale CSU                              |
| 3.4                    | Evaluate the Community Trigger Pilot and ensure local procedures match needs of communities and partners ahead of formal introduction.  | Effective Community Trigger procedure in place prior to formal introduction of legislation. | Evaluation completed.<br>Final Community Trigger procedures agreed and implemented.  | By Apr 14<br>By Oct 14                  | Swale CSU                              |
| 3.5                    | Undertake intelligence led operations to tackle ASB issues in areas with high level of incidents.   | Reduction of ASB incidents in targeted wards.   | Identification of hotspot locations.<br>4 operations carried out in identified locations.                                      | Ongoing<br><br>By March 2015            | Swale CSU                              |
| 3.6                    | Continue to support KFRS projects to  | Reduction of deliberate   | Monthly engagement with  | Ongoing                                 | KFRS                                   |

|  |  |   |  |                                       |                            |
|--|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
|  | reduce deliberate fires in the borough.  | fires.  | KFRS to identify appropriate projects.   |                                       |                            |
| <b>Enabler 1: Troubled Families</b>  |  |   |  |                                       |                            |
| 4.1  | Ensure effective implementation of Troubled Families Programme in Swale  | Reduction in offending behaviour, exclusions and worklessness of families involved with programme | Engagement with those families referred onto Year 2 of scheme.<br>Identification of Year 3 cohort<br>Engagement of Year 3 cohort | By Mar 15                             | Kent County Council        |
| <b>Enabler 2: Integrated Offender Management</b>                           |  |   |  |                                       |                            |
| 5.1  | Continued implementation of effective IOM mechanism  | Reduced offending by those engaged on IOM   | Continued delivery of IOM including DYO and engagement by partners   | Ongoing                               | Kent Probation/Kent Police |
| <b>Enabler 3: Community Engagement – Emerging Communities</b>              |  |   |  |                                       |                            |
| 6.1  | Establish mechanisms to better understand the emerging communities within the borough.   | Increased understanding of our community and their service needs.                                 | Project identified to undertake assessment.<br>Resources identified to undertake project.<br>Project delivered.                  | April 2014<br>June 2014<br>March 2015 | Swale CSU                  |
| <b>Enabler 4: Preventative and educational programmes for Young People</b> |  |   |  |                                       |                            |
| 7.1  | To work with schools and youth clubs to ensure a co-ordinated response to preventative and educational inputs regarding healthy relationships, e-safety, drug and alcohol awareness and anti-social behaviour. | Young People do not engage in risky behaviour.  | Project Plan developed and agreed by Partners<br>Project implemented   | By May 14<br>By Mar 15                | Swale CSU                  |
| 7.2  | To work with identified young people to provide positive activities to prevent offending.  | Reduction in offending by identified cohort.  | Project Plan developed and agreed by Partners<br>Project implemented   | By May 14<br>By Mar 15                | Swale CSU                  |

## 7. Priority Champions

Lead officers have been assigned to each of the priorities and enablers within this Community Safety Plan. These officers will take the strategic lead for that priority or enabler. The table below identifies these lead officers for 2014/15.

| <b>Priority/Enabler</b>                                  | <b>Lead Officer</b>   |
|--|---|
| Violence Against Women and Girls                         | Regional Director – Kent, AmicusHorizon                       |
| Crime  | CSU Inspector, Kent Police                                    |
| ASB  | CSU Inspector, Kent Police                                    |
| Troubled Families Programme                              | Economy and Community Services Manager, Swale Borough Council |
| Integrated Offender Management Unit                      | NP / CRC Lead TBC   |
| Community Engagement – Emerging Communities              | Economy and Community Services Manager, Swale Borough Council |
| Preventative and educational programmes for Young People | CSU Sergeant, Kent Police                                     |

## 8. Target Selection Process 2014/15

8.1 Key Performance Indicators and management data have been selected with agreement by the Partnership, based upon those set by individual partners but identifying where the CSP can best add value. Performance against these indicators will be reported quarterly to the CSP Executive. Population and Household figures should be calculated using the latest ONS estimates. Target setting will take place when final outturn of 2013/14 has been received.

### Performance Indicators

| Priority             | Performance Indicator   | Agency         | Baseline 2013/14 |                |              | Target 2014/15 |         |
|----------------------|---|----------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|---------|
|                      |   |                | Baseline (13/14) | Target (13/14) | Target Met ? | Target 2014/15 | Comment |
| VAWG                 | Repeat % Victims of Domestic Abuse  | Kent Police    | TBC              | TBC            | TBC          | TBC            | TBC     |
| Crime                | Number of incidents of all crime per 1000 population  | Kent Police    | TBC              | TBC            | TBC          | TBC            | TBC     |
| Crime/IOM            | Adult rate of re-offending  | Kent Probation | TBC              | TBC            | TBC          | TBC            | TBC     |
| Crime /IOM           | Youth rate of re-offending  | KCC YOS        | TBC              | TBC            | TBC          | TBC            | TBC     |
| ASB                  | ASB Victim Satisfaction Levels  | Kent Police    | TBC              | TBC            | TBC          | TBC            | TBC     |
| ASB                  | Proportion of residents that perceive ASB is a problem.   | Swale BC       | TBC              | TBC            | TBC          | TBC            | TBC     |
| Community Engagement | Proportion of residents that agree Swale is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. | Swale BC       | TBC              | TBC            | TBC          | TBC            | TBC     |



## Management Data Indicators

| Priority/Enabler                 | Indicator Details   | Agency              | Baseline<br>End March 2014 |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Violence Against Women and Girls | Number of Incidents of Stalking   | Kent Police         | TBC                        |
| Violence Against Women and Girls | Number of Incidents of Domestic Abuse   | Kent Police         | TBC                        |
| Crime                            | Number of incidents of burglary dwelling per 1000 households                                  | Kent Police         | TBC                        |
| Crime                            | Number of incidents of burglary other than dwelling per 1000 population                       | Kent Police         | TBC                        |
| Crime                            | Number of incidents of shoplifting per 1000 population  | Kent Police         | TBC                        |
| ASB                              | Number of incidents of ASB per 1000 population  | Kent Police         | TBC                        |
| ASB                              | Number of incidents of deliberate fires   | KFRS                | TBC                        |
| Troubled Families                | Number of families engaged with programme   | KCC                 | TBC                        |
| Troubled Families                | Payment by results outcomes – level of school attendance; youth offending and ASB; employment | Kent County Council | TBC                        |
| Integrated Offender Management   | Number of offenders committing re-offences by OMU   | Kent Probation      | TBC                        |
| Young People                     | Number of young people engaged in preventative inputs   | Swale CSU           | TBC                        |

## 9. Risk Assessment 2014/15

9.1 The creation and monitoring of the risks associated with the Safer and Stronger Plan will be undertaken inline with Swale Borough Council's Risk Management Procedures.

| Ref | Risk  | Score  | Implications  | Controls  | Score Post control | Risk Mitigated |
|-----|---|--------|---|---|--------------------|----------------|
| 1   | Increased creation of unlicensed Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) as result of welfare reform | 4*2=8  | Increased ASB and other issues such as substance misuse in areas where created. May not be aware in existence until issues emerge.  | Promote vigilance by partners to identify HMOs; work with SBC Housing on identification and management to reduce community safety issues  | 3*1=6              | Reduced        |
| 2   | Inability to effectively use revised ASB New Tools and Powers once introduced                     | 4*2=8  | Training need for ASB officers to use new powers along with legal teams. Expectation of public may be raised as to what can actually be achieved.                                     | Monitor when new powers will officially be in place; raise awareness of training need and cost; communications plan for residents   | 2*1=2              | Mitigated      |
| 3   | Sustainability of local domestic abuse support services   | 5*3=12 | Lack of sustainable funding of local domestic abuse services could result in a loss or reduction of service.  | Support IDVA commissioning by KCJB; continue to support SATEDA locally to develop and seek suitable funding   | 3*2=6              | Reduced        |
| 4   | Transfer of victim services funding to Police and Crime Commissioner from 14/15                   | 3*2=6  | Could result in loss of local victim services following any commissioning exercises. However also opportunity to shape commissioning specifications to address local need of victims. | Identify local victim services and gaps; capacity build local victim services as required to become commissioning ready; develop new mechanisms to support victims locally                    | 2*2=4              | Reduced        |
| 5   | Organisational change due to legislative change or CSR impacting on delivery of CSP priorities    | 4*4=16 | Could result in loss/reduction of partnership working. Lack of knowledge and understanding of changes within individual organisations and the impact on the partnership.              | Standing item on organisational change and legislative impacts on CSP Executive.<br>Monitor of attendance at meetings and ensure new organisations/members are inducted into the partnership. | 3*3=9              | Reduced        |

|   |  |       |  |   |       |         |
|---|--|-------|--|---|-------|---------|
| 6 | Limited data analytical capability and provision of relevant data. | 3*3=9 | Lack of data and analysis could lead to poor use of resources or limited identification of longer-term problems. | Revised monthly meeting to monitor both data and contextual information.<br>Work with commissioners to request appropriate and usable information from providers. | 2*2=4 | Reduced |
|---|--|-------|--|---|-------|---------|

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## Tell us what matters to you!



Swale Community Safety Partnership brings together the police, councils and local authorities to more effectively and efficiently deal with crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) here in Swale.

To help us establish where you would like us to focus our efforts; and where to target police, council and community safety partnership resources – we would like to hear what is important to you.

### 1. How much of a problem do you feel the following are in your local area?

|  | High | Medium | Low | Not a problem |
|--|------|--------|-----|---------------|
| Abandoned Vehicles                       |      |        |     |               |
| Alcohol related crime                    |      |        |     |               |
| Anti-Social Behaviour                    |      |        |     |               |
| Burglary (Dwelling)                      |      |        |     |               |
| Burglary (Other than dwelling e.g. shed) |      |        |     |               |
| Car/Vehicle Theft                        |      |        |     |               |
| Community Cohesion                       |      |        |     |               |
| Drugs (dealing/use)                      |      |        |     |               |
| Deliberate Fires                         |      |        |     |               |
| Dog Fouling                              |      |        |     |               |
| Domestic Abuse                           |      |        |     |               |
| Fly Posting                              |      |        |     |               |
| Fly tipping                              |      |        |     |               |
| Fraud                                    |      |        |     |               |
| Graffiti                                 |      |        |     |               |
| Harassment/Bullying                      |      |        |     |               |
| Homophobia                               |      |        |     |               |
| Internet Safety                          |      |        |     |               |
| Litter                                   |      |        |     |               |
| Noise                                    |      |        |     |               |
| Noisy Neighbours                         |      |        |     |               |
| Pedal Cycle Theft                        |      |        |     |               |
| Racism                                   |      |        |     |               |
| Speeding Vehicles                        |      |        |     |               |
| Stray Dogs                               |      |        |     |               |
| Underage Drinking                        |      |        |     |               |
| Vandalism/Criminal Damage                |      |        |     |               |
| Youth Nuisance                           |      |        |     |               |
| Other (please specify)                   |      |        |     |               |

**What do you feel are the top three community safety issues that should be dealt with in Swale?**

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Priority 1 |  |
| Priority 2 |  |
| Priority 3 |  |

**For Monitoring Purposes:**



Please complete these questions which will help us to see if there are differences between the views of different residents.

All the information you give will be kept confidential.

- What age group are you?
- Under 18
  - 18-24
  - 25-44
  - 45-54
  - 45 and over
  - Prefer not to say

- Are you?
- Male
  - Female
  - Prefer not to say

- What is your ethnicity?
- White British
  - White Other
  - African
  - Bangladeshi
  - Caribbean
  - Chinese
  - English Gypsy
  - European Roma
  - Indian
  - Irish Traveller
  - Mixed Race African
  - Mixed Race Caribbean
  - Pakistani
  - Prefer not to say

What is your postcode?

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Thank you for your time. If you would like to contact the Community Safety Unit to discuss a specific issue please contact us on 01795 417193 or email [csu@swale.gov.uk](mailto:csu@swale.gov.uk) or write to use at Community Safety Unit, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT.



## **Social Media Policy and Guidelines**

DRAFT

## 1. Introduction

Social media has become a way of life for the British public and is increasingly making its presence felt in the public sector. In the last few years technology has changed the way we pursue and share information, how communities work, and how information is disseminated.

According to the Ofcom Adults Media Use and Attitudes report, published in August 2014:

- 54% of UK adults now use social media;
- 82% of UK households have an internet connection;
- 57% of UK adults use their mobile phone to access the internet;
- 2% of time UK adults spend consuming the media is spent consuming print;
- 18% of time UK adults spend consuming the media is spent using social media;
- 50% of adults over 65 have access to the internet;
- 75% of 16 to 24-year-olds use social media; and
- use of social media by adults over 65 has increased by over 50 per cent between 2013 and 2014.

These figures demonstrate the extent to which the internet and social media have become part of our everyday lives.

The Council is increasingly using social media as a key communications tool to raise awareness of our services and shape policy development through communicating updates, photos, videos, latest news, events, supported campaigns, and information about our Council services and from other local authorities and partners. As such it has delivered many benefits to the Council, delivered at no cost beyond the cost of officer time to manage it.

It also provides an environment to encourage conversation online and gain feedback on what people think about particular topics. No posts are automated, so all posts and responses to queries are added by officers. As a result it has proved very popular with our local residents as a communications channel, encouraging conversations with our residents, businesses, and visitors.

Interest in social media has grown as follows:

|                     | April 2014 | November 2014 | Growth |
|---------------------|------------|---------------|--------|
| Facebook 'likes'    | 1,100      | 1,812         | 65%    |
| Twitter 'followers' | 2,716      | 3,392         | 25%    |

The Council Facebook page as of November 2014 gets an average of 16 'likes' per week, and a weekly reach of up to 27,000 people. The Council Twitter page gets an average of 22 new 'followers' per week. With increasing numbers every month, it clearly shows the engagement with users continues to grow.



As such, a Social Media Policy is required to set out how the Council, its officers and Members will approach the use of social media. The Policy defines what the Council wants to achieve from this channel of communication, and the service standards our residents can expect as a result.

## **2. What is social media and networking?**

The idea behind the act of social networking is building social networks, interacting with other people, communities, partners, voluntary services, and businesses to exchange information. Social media, on the other hand, is the actual medium through which all this “networking” takes place. It isn’t an action like networking; it is more of a canvas upon which we paint our content.

The best way to define social media is to break it down. Media is an instrument of communication, like a newspaper or a radio, so social media would be a social instrument of communication.

Because social media is such a broad term, it covers a large range of websites, with new ones appearing all the time. But the common link between them is that you are able to interact with others.

These online services, platforms, and websites focus on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people and communities, so allowing users to engage, discuss, debate, share ideas, photos, activities, events and interests.

## **3. Benefits of using social media**

The benefits of using social media include better:

- **digital engagement:** which leads to better explanation and discussion of what the Council is trying to achieve and, by listening, a better understanding of what people need;
- **transparency:** which allows information to be shared openly on decision-making, showing how and why decisions are made;
- **insight:** greater engagement through social media can aid in residents’ needs giving insight to help inform the decision-making process;
- **communications:** greater engagement can also help an organisation to communicate decisions and, by doing so, help shape the discussion and debate that arises;
- **leadership:** which enables Council services to use social media promoting understanding and contributing to conversations; and
- **decisions:** meaningful engagement through understanding and transparent and concise communications leads to better decisions.

## **4. Risks of using social media**

Using social media is not without risks. Appendix A outlines these risks and how this Policy will mitigate against them.

## **5. Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives of the Council's use of social media are to:

- act as the informal / human voice of Swale Borough Council and promote understanding of key messages in a new way;
- create an effective and positive presence for the Council in the social media sphere;
- reflect our overarching purpose to 'making Swale a better place,' by adhering to our priorities, competencies and values as set out in our Corporate Plan;
- extend the reach in the online sphere of the Council's priorities for effective communication, as set out in our Communication First Strategy;
- encourage and facilitate channel shift, as set out in our Customer Access Strategy, encouraging people to do business with us online rather than face-to-face;
- increase opportunities for the Council to interact and consult with the public generally;
- provide timely updates in cases of emergency, disrupted service, or other unusual events;
- heighten public interaction with us about where there are issues and to help us provide assistance where it is most needed;
- build on existing and create new relationships with key audiences including the public, journalists, key stakeholders, partners and businesses;
- respond to messages of dissatisfaction and promote positive responses; and
- correct factual inaccuracies about the Council and its services in a speedier way.

## **6. What social media channels do the Council currently use?**

### **6.1 Facebook**

This social networking site allows people to post updates about what they are doing along with photos and videos. People are able to 'like', share, and comment on these updates.

Users 'like' our profile (opt-in to get our posts) and our news will be posted to their 'wall.' The Facebook interface makes it easy for people who 'like' or share our posts; and when they do, their friends (the average user has 130 friends) will see this activity, therefore putting Swale in front of an audience we may not normally have access to.

### **6.2 Instagram**

Instagram is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them simultaneously to Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms.

### **6.3 Twitter**

Twitter is a micro-blogging social media site. Posts come in at 140 characters or fewer and can be organised via 'trends' – identified via hashtags (#). Twitter can be described as SMS (short message service) of the internet, because posts are short, sweet, and to-the-point.

Twitter differs from Facebook in that users 'follow' each other. Therefore it is easier to gain a following, connecting with people and/or other businesses.

### **6.4 Flickr**

Flickr is a photo-sharing and hosting service with advanced and powerful features. It supports an active and engaged community where people share and explore each other's photos. You can share and host hundreds of your own pictures on Flickr.

### **6.5 YouTube**

YouTube is a video sharing social media site. People are also able to leave comments on the videos posted.

### **6.6 LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social network that helps professionals to build and maintain a list of connections. These connections can then be used to find a job and find out more about potential employers.

A more in-depth list of social media sites that are used worldwide can be found on [Wikipedia](#).

Our social media presence will not just be limited to what we currently use - we will continue to evolve as social media itself continues to go to grow. With this aim in mind, more channels of social media will always be considered within our Policy.

Converting social media followers/users into engaged customers will remain a continual objective of this Policy.

## **7. Social media monitoring**

Evaluation is key for social media use. Tools are used to monitor the Councils' level of influence and impacts on target audiences. A list of the current tools used, are set out in Appendix B.

## **8. Corporate social media accounts**

### **8.1 Which departments have corporate accounts?**

A list of all existing social media accounts within the Council are referenced in Appendix C. This document will be updated as required.

### **8.2 Setting up social media accounts**

Officers must not set up accounts, groups, pages, profiles, or take part in any social media activity on behalf of their service area without first consulting the Communications Team and the relevant Head of Service.

Prior to the creation of a new Council-affiliated social media account, a business case will need to be produced outlining the purpose of the account. This should then be discussed with the Communications Team. A business case template is set out in Appendix D.

### **8.3 Policy for social media accounts**

All accounts approved by the Communications Team will need to adhere to the following Policy.

#### **Setting up an account**

- All accounts which will be used to conduct business on behalf of the Council must be approved by the Communications Team.
- The Communications Team manages the Council's social media channels, including setting up of any additional accounts. The Communications Team are able to assist and support where required.
- Accounts can be in the name of Swale Borough Council, a particular department, or a campaign, but not in the name of an individual. All account names must be approved by the Communications Team.
- All accounts will make it clear that they are an account run on behalf of the Council.
- Officers cannot use any social media tool for Council business unless they have received appropriate training. The Communications Team will provide this training.
- Administrators/editors for all social media accounts will need to be in politically-restricted roles.
- The email address used must be the generic department address. ICT will need to be advised if a departmental email address is needed.

#### **Managing an account**

- Information/biography pages should include an alternative contact method (website or email address) and information on what times the account will be monitored so that people know when they can expect a reply.
- Usernames and passwords must be provided to the Communications Team, along with any changes to administration roles. Passwords are to be changed periodically and be supplied to the Communications Team. In the case of a Facebook page, the Digital Communications Officer will be added as a 'Page Admin' role.
- Settings regarding the use of bad language need to be set as 'high'.
- Accounts must be updated and monitored regularly. Twitter should be updated at least once a day. Facebook should be updated at least three times per week.

#### **Closing an account down**

- The Communications Team has the authority to close down any associated accounts which are considered to be inappropriate, are being abused, or have the potential to cause damage to the Council's reputation.

- If an associated account is seen to remain inactive for six months, the Communications Team will ask for it to be deactivated.

## **9. Using social media for work purposes**

### **9.1 Councillor-specific responsibilities**

The responsibilities of Members in using social media are covered in the Members' Code of Conduct, as outlined in section 5 of the Swale Borough Council Constitution. These equally apply to the use of social media.

### **9.2 Officer-specific responsibilities**

- The Officer's Code of Conduct and the ICT Security and Acceptable Use Policy must be adhered to when using social media.
- In particular, all Council officers must not post on social media any inappropriate, abusive, bullying, racist, or defamatory messages to members of the public, councillors or colleagues either in or outside the work environment. This may result in disciplinary action.
- Safeguarding issues are paramount because social media sites are often misused. Safeguarding is everyone's business, and all officers have a responsibility to report any concerns about other site users. The Council's Safeguarding Policy sets out responsibilities under the Children Act 2004 to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe from harm.
- Council policies relating to confidentiality, impartiality, and conflicts of interest also may apply.
- Officers, who in the course of their employment are posting content on behalf of Swale Borough Council, are personally responsible for any content published on any form of social media.
- Follow copyright and data protection laws: for the Council's protection as well as your own, it is critical that you stay within the legal framework and be aware that the laws relating to defamation, copyright, data protection laws and Freedom of Information apply.
- You must advise the Communications Team where you have identified information that is inaccurate or could damage the reputation of the organisation.

## **10. Guidelines for using social media for work purposes**

### **Types of content**

- Ensure messages reflect what is contained within Communications First, the Council's Communications Strategy.
- Wherever possible, use links to relevant websites including our corporate website. Mentioning other profile pages with Facebook and Twitter that relate to the message being posted helps target audiences. This can ensure messages are getting to the right people.
- Text for posts should be clear and simple, and when appropriate a picture to complement the post - photos get twice the engagement as posts without

photos. Remember, Twitter uses up characters whenever an image is uploaded.

- For Twitter hashtags can be used to categorise Tweets by keyword. People use the hashtag symbol # before a relevant keyword or phrase (no spaces). Clicking on a hashtagged word in any message shows you all other Tweets marked with that keyword.
- If using social media for investigation purposes, advice should be taken from the Legal Team as to whether a RIPA authorisation should be obtained.

### **Tone of content**

- Our aim is to develop a single 'tone of voice' which will be recognisable in our digital presence. Therefore, our main Swale Borough Council social media pages and the associated accounts will be anonymous (i.e. they will not be in the name of any single officer).
- The content used should be friendly, factual and polite. Council jargon should not be used - there is merit in keeping things simple and to the point. Use plain English.
- If you see inaccuracies published about the Council, do not be defensive. Instead, be prepared for a two-way conversation, and be aware that people are entitled to their views.
- When you do respond do so politely and sensitively respond - making sure that what you say is factual and avoids unnecessary arguments.
- If you have made a mistake be the first to correct your own mistakes and do not alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.
- Be aware of the importance of spelling and grammar as poor spelling and/or grammar will negatively affect the Council's reputation.

### **Liking, following, sharing and re-tweeting**

- As a Council we should 'like' or 'follow' organisation profiles who provide information that is pertinent to our work as a local authority (for example central government accounts, local press, partners and voluntary groups) or those whose information we can pass on for the benefit of our residents.
- There will also be times the Council will need to 'like' or 'follow' an account, individual, or business in order to take part in conversations (via direct messages).
- Share or re-tweet information that will be of interest or of use to the residents of Swale, for example; KCC Highways information regarding traffic incidents within Swale.

### **Blocking, unfollowing and removal**

- The Council reserves the right to unfollow an individual. This may simply be as a result of a review or rationalisation.
- However, if a user account needs to be blocked, this will probably be because the rules have been contravened on a particular social media site, for example

because of use of harmful, illegal or offensive content within comments. Such posts will need to be reported via the site's internal link.

- Inappropriate, political and libellous statements will need to be removed. Abbreviations of bad language will also need to be removed. Where possible, rely on the measures of protection and intervention which the social networking site already has in place.
- A record of any offensive post will need to be recorded and kept as a screenshot.

### **When to use accounts**

- All Council social media accounts are to be monitored daily and will be active Monday - Thursday 9am to 5pm, Friday 9am to 4.30pm (except Bank holidays and public holidays). They are not expected to be monitored twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
- Messages can be posted during non-office hours, for example, in cases of emergencies, bad weather, traffic incidents, stray dogs, and at events that the Council has an interest in.

### **Responding and replying**

- Direct questions in comments to posts will, when necessary, need to be given to Customer Services or to the relevant departments to find out information for the user. This means that it might sometimes take a while before an answer can be given to users. When required, every effort to answer questions should be made within two working days.
- If the answer to a query is not known and cannot be found out within two working days, let the person know as soon as possible. State as soon as possible that the query is being looked into and an update will be given accordingly. Pass on the information to the relevant team who need to answer the query and the time scale for a response.
- If many comments / suggestions are made on any one post with a similar theme in the chain of comments, a generic answer will be provided.
- If a query is posted and the answer is too detailed for a response, this should be explained to the user and an alternative way to contact us is suggested (direct message for example). A response to the query still needs to be given, stating that the answer has been dealt with offline. This way it does not look as if the query has been ignored.
- For complaints and compliments the user will need to be directed with a link to those particular sections on [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk). This enables our Customer Service Team to log the request officially.
- Information from the Commissioner's Office has confirmed that requests for information via social media should be treated as official Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests under certain circumstances. On these occasions the requester will be responded to and further details obtained before all the relevant information is forwarded to [foi@swale.gov.uk](mailto:foi@swale.gov.uk) or a link to <http://www.swale.gov.uk/freedom-of-information/> for the requester to obtain the relevant information on making an FOI request in the standard way.

- Only departmental email addresses and contact telephone numbers should be given in a response to a query.

### **Using images and video**

- It is illegal to use graphics or photographs from the internet without permission. Ensure that anyone giving permission to use an image is the original copyright owner. The licensing agreement of photographs in any existing archives will need to be checked before use.
- No images of children who appear to be under the age of 18 are to be used without the written permission from their parent or guardian.
- Video content required to be uploaded to social media will need to be discussed with the Communications Team.

### **Pre-election period**

- In the six-week run up to an election - local, general or European - all councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate.
- The Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media, but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party political during this period.

## **11. Personal Use**

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred when it comes to using social media. It is your own personal choice whether you choose to participate in any kind of social media activity in your own time – the views and opinions that you express are your own.

However, the Council's reputation is made up in a large part by the behaviour of employees and everything published reflects on how the Council is perceived. Therefore, if you do use social media in a personal capacity, it is expected that officers behave appropriately and in line with the Council's Values.

Officers using social media personally must adhere to the following:

- officers must not imply they are speaking for the Council when posting messages personally;
- a work e-mail address should not be used when registering on social media sites for personal use. Council logos or other Council identification should be avoided; and
- the Council can be held legally responsible for online content published/posted by officers on social media in a private capacity if closely connected to the work environment.

Officers using social media personally should also consider the following:

- what you publish will be around for a long time so consider the content carefully and also be sensible about disclosing personal details;
- be mindful of online privacy settings, understanding who can see the information you publish and who can view your personal information; and



- background information you choose to share about yourself, such as information about your family or personal interests, is your decision. However, by revealing certain details you might be more vulnerable to identity theft.

## Risk assessment of using social media

| Risk   | Mitigation   |
|--|--|
| Criticism from the general public (time, resources, usefulness etc.)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use holding replies where answers need investigation</li> <li>▪ Thank users for comments and questions</li> <li>▪ Manage expectations with published social media service standards</li> </ul>  |
| Technical security of the accounts and potential for hacking   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Only the Communications Team can create new accounts</li> <li>▪ Account details and passwords will not be shared with unauthorised users.</li> <li>▪ Passwords will be controlled and regularly changed by the Communications Team and monitored</li> <li>▪ Limited users in each team</li> </ul> |
| Publishing confidential information  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Officer Code of Conduct</li> <li>▪ Training</li> </ul>  |
| Officers contacting residents/customers directly (using personal social media accounts)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training</li> </ul>   |
| Legal issues (libel, breach of copyright)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training</li> <li>▪ Being mindful when sharing posts/ retweeting/ writing content</li> <li>▪ Ensure the Council is allowed to use images posted</li> </ul>  |
| Inappropriate and unsuitable content being posted by the public, such as unsavoury comments on Facebook.                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unsuitable posts and comments will be removed</li> </ul>  |
| Inappropriate content being posted in error by officers (inc. politically sensitive information or news release under embargo) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All users of social media on behalf of the Council will have a copy of the policy and guidelines</li> <li>▪ Training and support will be provided by the Communications Team</li> </ul>   |
| Inappropriate comments posted about the Council on officers personal social media accounts                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social Media Policy - personal use to be included in Personal Portfolio (HR)</li> <li>▪ Making officers aware of this policy periodically via the intranet</li> <li>▪ Officer Code of Conduct.</li> </ul>   |

## Social media tools that we currently use

| Tool  | Function   |
|---|--|
| <a href="http://tiny.cc/">http://tiny.cc/</a> | Changes a big internet link (URL) into <b>tiny</b> URL. Allows you to monitor traffic statistics from the shortened link, custom tiny links. A free tool.  |
| Hootsuite                                     | Social Media Management System or tool. It helps you keep track and manage your many social network channels. It can enable you to monitor what people are saying about your brand and help you respond instantly. A free tool.  |
| <u><a href="#">TweetDeck</a></u>              | Part of Twitter. Having trouble with the 140-character limit? Then this allows you to compose longer tweets that include a link for people to read the rest. A free tool.  |
| Twitter Analytics                             | Part of Twitter. Allows us to measure engagement and learn how to make your Tweets more successful. Followers. Explore the interests, locations, and demographics of your followers.   |
| Facebook Insights                             | Help you track the number of active users to better understand page performance, including; telling us information about our users, by age, gender and location, and also how many 'liked' your page, how many unsubscribed from your page, and how many commented on your page in a given time period. A free tool.       |
| Meltwater Buzz                                | Allows us to discover the most meaningful conversations for us by topic, social media channel, language, and geography. We can understand social conversation volume, sentiment, and trends and track ongoing conversations for immediate engagement, and research historical discussions going back six months. Low cost. |

## Social media accounts within Swale Borough Council

| Account / social media channels   | Department, Managers and administrators  | Purpose  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>@SwaleCouncil</b> - Twitter<br><b>Swale Borough Council</b> - Facebook<br><b>swaleboroughcouncil</b> - Instagram<br><b>Swale Borough Council</b> - LinkedIn<br><b>Swale Council</b> - Flickr<br><b>Swale Borough Council</b> - YouTube | Communications and CSC:<br>Mike McGann<br>Carole Sargeant<br>Lindsay Oldfield<br>Tim Oxley<br>Nigel Revell<br>Ashden Montella<br>Amanda Hatch<br>Sophia Ramm | Our main corporate account, key council messages, news, service updates. |
| <b>@VisitSwale</b> - Twitter<br><b>Visit Swale</b> - Facebook   | Communications and Economy and Community Services:<br>Lindsay Oldfield<br>Martin Goodhew<br>Christopher Blandford  | Promoting Swale as a place to visit.                                     |
| <b>@activeswale</b> - Twitter   | Communications and Economy and Community Services:<br>Lindsay Oldfield<br>Russell Fairman  | Encouraging fitness and wellbeing within Swale.                          |
| <b>@sus_sheppey</b> - Twitter<br><b>Sustainable Sheppey</b> - Facebook  | Communications and Policy:<br>Lindsay Oldfield   | A lottery funded programme of projects tackling future climate           |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | Sarah Porter   | challenges  |
| <b>@Talk2Gateway</b> - Twitter   | KCC and CSC:<br>Sarah Jane Radley  | KCC run social media channel.   |
| <b>@SwaleMeans</b> - Twitter<br><b>Swale Means Business</b> - Facebook   | Communications and Economy and Community Services:<br>Lindsay Oldfield<br>Christopher Blandford<br>Lorna Wyrill<br>Jill Read | Helping businesses looking to start, invest or expand in Swale.           |
| <b>@VolunteerSwale</b> - Twitter   | Communications and Economy and Community Services:<br>Lindsay Oldfield<br>Sophia Ramm  | Promotion of Volunteer Awards, and affiliated volunteering opportunities. |
| <b>Swale CSP</b> - Facebook  | Economy and Community Services:<br>Steph Curtis<br>Tim Hill - Police Sargeant  | <i>Facebook page will need to be changed to an 'organisation page'.</i>   |
| <b>@SwaleYouthForum</b> - Twitter<br><b>Swale Youth Forum</b> - Facebook | Economy and Community Services:<br>Lindsay Oldfield<br>Russell Fairman   | <i>Facebook not in use</i>  |

## Request for a social media account

To apply for a social media account, please fill this in this form and give it to the Communications Team. If you have any questions or are not sure how to answer any of the sections, contact [mediaservices@swale.gov.uk](mailto:mediaservices@swale.gov.uk)

### Business case

|   |
|---|
| The defined purpose of the account:   |
|   |
| Target audiences:   |
|   |
| Why you think social networking is the right platform to communicate your message:  |
|   |
| Have you already identified a specific solution that you want to use? (For example do you already know that you want a Twitter or Facebook account?)        |
|   |
| What resources exist to maintain and monitor the account on a daily basis? Please include the names of officers responsible for maintaining the account(s): |
|   |
| How do you intend to keep records of data that you post on to the social media channels?  |
|   |
| Do you have a deadline for implementing this project? If so what?   |
|   |

## **Apendix II**

### **Draft Social media – Customer Use Policy**

#### **Introduction**

The Council's social media accounts are managed by officers of the Council who will abide by these service standards at all times.

#### **Service standards**

Residents/users can expect regular updates from our Facebook and Twitter pages, covering some or all of the following:

- service information and updates;
- news and events;
- invitations to take get involved in consultations; and
- re-tweets and shares from our partners and additional accounts.

All Council social media accounts are to be monitored daily and will be active Monday - Thursday 9am to 5pm, Friday 9am to 4.30pm (except Bank holidays and public holidays). They are not expected to be monitored twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Occasionally information will be posted during non-office hours, for example, in cases of emergencies, bad weather, traffic incidents, stray dogs, and at events that the Council has an interest in.

We welcome feedback and ideas from all our followers, and endeavour to join the conversation where possible. However, we may not be able to reply individually to all the messages we receive.

We will aim to respond to comments that include misinformation, but will not respond to any communication that breaks the rules in the 'blocking and unfollowing' section of this Policy.

If you have a query that needs a detailed response it is best to contact us by email at [mediaservices@swale.gov.uk](mailto:mediaservices@swale.gov.uk) , or if your query is urgent, serious or involves personal details please contact us via our website Contact Us page or call our Customer Service Centre 01795 417 850.

#### **Responding and replying**

Direct questions in comments to posts will, when necessary, be given to Customer Services or to the relevant departments to find out information for the user. This means that it might sometimes take a while before an answer can be given.

We will endeavour to provide full answers to specific queries within two working days. However, if your request amounts to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, or Subject Access Request, they will be acknowledged within 2 working days and responses will be provided within the statutory time frames.

If many comments / suggestions are made on any one post with a similar theme in the chain of comments, a generic answer will be provided.

If a query is posted and the answer is too detailed for a response, this will be explained to the user and an alternative way to contact us will be suggested (direct message for example). A response to the query will still be given, as soon as possible.

For complaints and compliments the user will be directed with a link to those particular sections on [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk).

Only departmental email addresses and contact telephone numbers will be given in a response to a query.

### **Moderation**

We will follow the rules and guidance put in place by the social media sites that we use, and rely on the measures of protection and intervention that they have in place, e.g. against illegal, harmful or offensive content.

We expect contributions to be civil, tasteful and relevant, and reserve the right to remove any contributions that break the rules of the site or any of the following:

- posting messages that are unlawful, defamatory or libellous, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive, including abbreviations of any such word;
- bullying, harassment or intimidation of any individual or organisation;
- content copied from elsewhere, for which the contributor does not own the copyright;
- the contributor's, or anyone else's, personal information, such as contact details;
- impersonating someone else; and
- advertisement of products in a commercial fashion.

### **Liking, following, sharing and re-tweeting**

The Council 'like' or 'follow' organisation profiles who provide information that is pertinent to our work as a local authority (for example central government accounts, local press, partners and voluntary groups) or those whose information we can pass on for the benefit of our residents.

There will also be times the Council will need to 'like' or 'follow' an account, individual, or business in order to take part in conversations (via direct messages).

Just because the Council likes or follow someone, retweets or share their information, does not necessarily mean that we endorse them or their activities.

The Council aims to share or re-tweet information that we think will be of interest or of use to the residents of Swale, for example; KCC Highways information regarding traffic incidents within Swale.



## **Blocking and unfollowing**

The Council reserves the right to unfollow an individual. This may simply be as a result of a review or rationalisation of contacts.

However, if an account is blocked, this will probably be because the rules have been contravened on a particular social media site, for example because of use of harmful, illegal or offensive content within comments. Such posts will be reported via the site's internal link.

## **Pre-election period**

In the six-week run up to an election - local, general or European - all councils have to very careful not to do or say anything that could seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. This will apply to all of our social media communications.

The Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media, but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party-political during this period.

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Draft Tree Policy



*"Three hundred years growing. Three hundred years standing. Three hundred years decaying."*  
Lifecycle of English oak & sweet chestnut - Peter Collinson 1776

December 2014

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# 1. Introduction

Trees are an important asset throughout Swale playing a vital role in contributing to the visual amenity and ecological value of both rural and urban landscapes.

Kent is often referred to as “The Garden of England” and Swale while having the three main urban towns of Faversham, Sheerness and Sittingbourne, is predominantly a rural borough. The borough is characterised by the North Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the south, North Kent Marshes along the north coast with a central mainland plain of orchards and arable land. Significant areas of the borough have nature conservation designations and trees are present along our mosaic of highways, in public open space and within private land. Important areas of woodland can be found to the south and west of the borough including the fringes of The Blean ancient woodland at Dunkirk.

Against these positives and benefits are problems and risk associated with root damage, obstruction of lighting and danger of falling limbs or whole trees. There is a recent background of increased claims for structural damage so the defence of claims in addition to pure health and safety is increasingly an issue.

This policy sets out Swale Borough Council’s responsibility for trees on its land including open space, woodland, country parks, allotments, car parks, closed churchyards and cemeteries. Swale has a role in managing, maintaining and enhancing the environment and aims to sustain a balanced and healthy tree population while recognising the constraints of budget and prioritising safety first.





## **2. Scope**

This policy relates to trees within Swale Borough Council ownership or responsibility, which can predominantly be identified within the boundaries of the following areas:

- Parks and open spaces
- Country parks
- Woodlands
- Amenity land
- Allotments
- Cemeteries
- Closed churchyards (not all)
- Car parks
- Retained development land

As well as the urban area the Council is responsible for approximately 120ha of woodland across 7 sites, including Perry Wood, Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park and Milton Creek Country Park.

## **3. The Value of Trees**

Trees and woodlands bring many benefits to the local environment especially in the urban area. They soften and enhance the landscape by providing form, colour and diversity that change with the seasons. They help improve air quality, provide shade, screening, shelter and cooling, play a part in water management and offer valuable habitats for a wide range of wildlife.

Trees are complex living organisms that are one of the longest lasting assets of the natural environment. However they are subject to pests and disease, climatic and site changes that can seriously affect their health. Incidence of Dutch Elm Disease and Bleeding Canker of Horse Chestnut has had a dramatic effect on the landscape of local parks and Ash Dieback Disease has the potential to be as devastating. In addition some species have characteristics that are undesirable or are difficult to manage as they mature. Development, changes to the location and well intentioned, but ultimately inappropriate planting in the past has also left a legacy of problems.

## **4. Legal Obligations and Risk**

Under both civil law and criminal law, an owner of land on which a tree stands has responsibilities for the health and safety of those on or near the land and has potential liabilities arising from the falling of a tree or branch.

The duty holder who has control over the trees management whether as owner, lessee, licensee or occupier of the land has in general terms a duty to take reasonable care as a reasonable and prudent landowner for the safety of those who may come within the vicinity of a tree and to consider the risks posed by the tree.

Relevant legislation includes:

- The Occupiers Liability Act 1957 & 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Highways Act 1980
- The Compensation Act 2006

The Health and Safety Executive has in its Sector Information Minute 01/2007.5 *Management of the risk from falling trees*, identified the risk as “broadly acceptable”.

Each year between 5 and 6 people in the UK are killed when trees fall on them. Thus the risk of being struck and killed by a tree falling is extremely low and as almost the entire population of the UK is exposed, the risk per person is about 1 in 10 million. However the low level of overall risks may not be perceived in this way by the public, given attitudes in a risk-averse society.

Exposure to an element of risk is an unavoidable consequence of trees being in the environment, but in considering management policy, it is necessary to strike a balance between risk and benefit.

Trees can also damage property either directly from the action of roots or from the desiccation of susceptible soils (clay). Exposure to a risk of increasing insurance claims needs to be managed through proactive inspection and maintenance; and with adequate and timely intervention when necessary.

## **5. Tree Risk Management**

Defendable management is consistent with a duty of care based on reasonable care, reasonable likelihood and reasonable practicality. Being reasonable involves taking actions proportionate to the risk, both proactive and reactive. It is an approach based on achieving a balance between the benefits trees provide to the environment and people and on the other hand, risks posed to public safety.

A key objective is to maintain a defendable position at the lowest cost while avoiding the loss of valued trees.

Tree management has both reactive and proactive elements that plan and guide management decisions and practice. Three essential elements:

- Zoning: understanding trees in relation to people or property
- Tree inspection: assessing obvious faults
- Managing risk: identifying, prioritising and undertaking safety work

## 6. Inspection Regime

### Which Trees - Zoning

The first step in tree risk management is understanding the location in context of levels of use. It considers all the trees on the property and determines which are in areas of high public access or close to property that could be damaged. As such an assessment of prioritisation is made of three zones, high, medium and low.

- High Risk zones – used by many people every day, busy roads, railways, car parks, private dwellings, buildings and children’s play areas.
- Medium Risk zones – moderate use by people and road users, adjacent to private dwelling gardens, parks and gardens.
- Low Risk zones – deep woodland, rarely used open space.

### Frequency of Inspections

Trees in the High Risk Zone will be inspected every 12 to 18 months. This will facilitate one inspection in the summer months, followed by the next inspection in the winter months and vice-versa.

Trees in the Medium Risk Zones will be inspected every 3 to 4 years.

Trees in the Low Risk Zones will receive no, or only informal inspections.

### Inspections

Following Zoning, tree inspection requirements and level will be identified by reference to their size, condition and level of use within its fall distance.

- Informal Observations – people with good local knowledge of the site and its trees. Typically this will not be a tree specialist but a member of staff or the public who understands the way the site is used and the implications/danger should a tree be found falling apart or uprooting.
- Formal Inspections – require general tree knowledge and the ability to recognise normal and abnormal appearance and growth of trees for the locality. They will be able to recognise obvious visual signs of ill health and significant structural problems. Staff carrying out these inspections will have undertaken a Tree Inspection course and have experience of working with trees.
- Detailed Inspections – Will be carried out by a competent person, experienced in the field of investigation to be carried out, having attained the Certificate of Advanced Tree Inspection and/or qualified to the level of Diploma/Technical Certificate in Arboriculture.

Trees will be assessed by means of scheduled systematic visual assessment from ground level.

- Consideration of the trees location allied to other structures in the landscape/proximity.



- Visual inspection of the tree for symptoms and overall vitality and health.
- If a defect is suspected on the basis of the symptoms, the presence or absence of the defect must be confirmed by thorough examination
- If the defect is confirmed, it must be quantified, remedial action identified and a priority of works recorded.

### **Prioritisation**

Where defects are confirmed as posing unacceptable risk, appropriate remedial action should be identified and timescale specified.

Category 1 – Immediate action

Category 2 – high priority within 6-12 months

Category 3 – medium priority within 12-24 months

Category 4 – no action required until next scheduled inspection

The Council will prioritise actions based on risk and works that are deemed to be necessary for safety reasons will override any other priorities that exist within tree works schedules.

### **Records**

Full and readily accessible records will be made, whether as part of the routine inspection regime, response to a complaint or in connection to maintenance work. The Council currently use Confirm as its asset management system for grounds maintenance. Data recorded will vary depending upon the level of inspection but will be a positive record, i.e. a report even in the event there is no defect. Records will be kept for an adequate length of time given that they can aid in the defence of liability claims.

A specimen inspection record is shown in Appendix 1.

### **Objective 1**

To ensure the safety of the users of the Councils land

#### **Action:**

- SBC will arrange for the inspection of trees on SBC owned land using suitably qualified staff. Safety works will be prioritised and subject to budgetary constraints will be undertaken within the timescale recommend by the inspector. The felling of trees will only be undertaken when other maintenance techniques have failed or are impractical.
- This document and the process of guiding the inspection and maintenance of trees will be reviewed annually to ensure they meet the current legal duty of care standards.

## 7. Works

Trees can be damaged as a result of poor workmanship, resulting in a reduction in the health of the tree, increased risk and increased future maintenance costs.

Arboriculture contractors require specialist knowledge and skill to adequately undertake maintenance operations. Contractors will as a minimum have appropriate trained staff, the correct equipment with maintenance records, a suitably trained person to undertake risk assessments, a staff training programme and a Health and Safety Policy. This is in addition to any normal contractor requirements of working for the Council.

Contractor working and office practices will be subject to regular monitoring and review by the Council.

### **Objective 2**

To maintain and enhance the stock of SBC trees

#### **Action:**

- SBC will use qualified arboricultural contractors when undertaking tree maintenance.
- SBC will monitor preferred contractors on a regular basis and ensure that their workmanship, competency, qualifications, and equipment meets required standards.

## 8. Communication

The Council has a duty to maintain its trees in a safe condition. It also has a responsibility to respond to queries and provide information where its actions impact on the local amenity. Often, concerns can be raised due to a lack understanding or knowledge of proposed or necessary tree works. The Council, where appropriate will keep interested parties such Ward Members, Parish Councils, Tree Wardens and colleagues (Planning) informed of any works.

Where significant programmed works are proposed, a letter drop at least a week in advance to local residents will also be implemented and contractors will display information boards with the Council contact details.

### **Objective 3**

To communicate tree management and maintenance information

#### **Action:**

- SBC will provide information on surveys and tree works to organisations and individuals as requested.
- SBC will carry out letter drops to local residents at least one week in advance of undertaking significant programmed tree works.

## **9. Nuisance**

Nuisance is often difficult to define, screening by trees may be acceptable and welcomed by one person, but cause shading and interference with TV signals for a neighbour.

Trees can be viewed as a nuisance because of leaf fall, seed dropping, shading, branch overhang, TV interference or honeydew deposition. Solutions to these problems are difficult if not impossible short of removal of the tree and maintenance can often worsen the original issue by promoting strong regrowth. There is no legal requirement for an owner of a tree to carry out works to abate this type of nuisance.

Certain types of nuisance fall into the category of legal nuisance and the owner of a tree must take steps to abate the nuisance. Problems associated with root damage fall into this category.

Works over and above the need to maintain a tree in a safe or healthy condition will be considered on an individual tree basis and will only be undertaken in the severest cases. Works will not normally be undertaken on a tree to reduce shading, leaf or fruit fall, or to improve TV signal reception.

### **Objective 4**

To minimise the likelihood of insurance or other claims against SBC

#### **Action:**

- SBC will seek appropriate advice from qualified advisors, legal advisors and insurers in respect of action required to mitigate any claim or future claim that may arise.

## 10. Replanting

With concern at the loss of trees and particularly mature specimens, there is often a desire for replacement planting. However it does not necessarily follow that it is suitable to replant on a site utilised originally some years ago. Factors can change, such as increased utility service provision, increased vehicular or pedestrian access and the presence of diseases.

The Council is committed to the replanting of trees to ensure that the amenity of the area is maintained or enhanced. However this will only be undertaken following consideration of all the constraints that may make a site unsuitable.

Any planting will be undertaken during the correct planting season (November – March) and with an appropriate species for the particular site.

### **Objective 5**

To maintain and enhance the Public Open Spaces tree stock and ensure that tree species are appropriate to the specific site and where possible enhance biodiversity

#### **Action:**

- Where appropriate SBC will undertake the replanting of trees removed for safety reasons.
- SBC will seek appropriate alternative sites and funding opportunities where site constraints and budgets prevent replanting.

## 11. Resource

The Council will regularly review the resource requirement to manage its trees both in terms of inspections and works arising from both proactive and reactive responses. Currently one Officer is responsible for managing the Council's tree stock using an allocated revenue budget of £26,800. The Council also employs a Tree Preservation Officer who is available to offer specialist advice.

## 12. Review

The Council will review this policy every 2 years to ensure its compliance with recognised guidance and best practice, and to ensure that it meets its legal duty of care.

This document was written with reference to “Common Sense Risk Management of Trees – Guidance on trees and public safety in the UK for owners, managers and advisers” by the National Tree Safety Group (ISBN 978-0885538-840-9).

**Appendix 1**

**Tree Inspection Form**

|           |                      |           |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| Site..... | Inspectors Name..... | Date..... |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------|

| Tree No. | Species | Size | Zone | Comments | Recommendations | Priority | Action Taken |
|----------|---------|------|------|----------|-----------------|----------|--------------|
|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |
|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |
|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |
|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |
|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |
|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |
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|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |
|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |
|          |         |      |      |          |                 |          |              |

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Size S Small Diameter at breast height of under 250mm  
M Medium Diameter at breast height of between 250-500mm  
L Large Diameter at breast height of over 500mm

Risk Zone L Low  
M Medium  
H High

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE - FORWARD LOOK

| Policy, plan or strategy   | 14 Jan | 25 Feb | 18-Mar | 27-May |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Communications Strategy (reviewed 8 July 2014)                   |        |        |        |        |
| Corporate plan (reviewed 8 July 2014)                            |        |        |        |        |
| Community Asset Transfer Policy (reviewed 3 September 2014)      |        |        |        |        |
| Volunteering Strategy (reviewed 3 September 2014)                |        |        |        |        |
| Planning Enforcement Strategy and Service Charter                |        | √      |        |        |
| Local First (reviewed 19 November 2014)                          |        |        |        |        |
| Sports Development Framework (reviewed 19 November 2014)         |        |        |        |        |
| Social Media Policy and Guidelines and draft Customer Use Policy | √      |        |        |        |
| Corporate Equalities Strategy                                    |        |        | √      |        |
| Community Safety Strategy  | √      |        |        |        |
| Tree policy  | √      |        |        |        |
| Play and cemetery policies                                       |        |        | ?      | ?      |

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