
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 17 January 2018 from 7.00pm - 10.04pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth (Vice-Chairman), Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), Nicholas Hampshire, James Hunt and Ben Stokes and Mike Whiting (substitute for George Samuel).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Russell Fairman, Charlotte Hudson, Jo Millard, Lyn Newton and Bob Pullen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mike Cosgrove, Alan Horton, Nigel Kay and Ken Pugh.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Peter Marchington and George Samuel.

438 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the fire evacuation procedure.

439 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 October 2017 (Minute Nos. 295 – 302) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

440 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

441 VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, the Interim Head of Economy and Community Services and the Economy and Community Services Manager to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration introduced the report and referred to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee's Leisure and Tourism Task and Finish Group. He explained that producing the document had been a complicated exercise and a number of officers across the Council had been involved. He added that the document was a framework, not a strategy, and highlighted the small tourism budget. Lastly, he explained that the pattern of tourism was changing and Swale Borough Council (SBC) wanted to lead rather than react and improved marketing and intelligence was needed. The Interim Head of Economy and Community Services said that SBC were working with a number of external partners.

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that the framework reflected the three distinctive geographical areas in Swale; that the estuary and

coastline were the main theme; and that the five year action plan would respond to the six themes within the framework as outlined on page 5 of the document.

A Member welcomed the document, which he considered had potential and included many positive aspects of the Borough, but highlighted that rural villages were not included. He asked about the Council's current heritage strategy and how Members could become involved in encouraging tourism? In response, the Economy and Community Services Manager explained that heritage was a significant part of the economy and work was on going with Planning Services. She added that the Cambridge Model was a useful tool to monitor success and the Visit Kent website also looked at measuring specific areas.

A Member welcomed the initiative and spoke of the diverse areas in Swale. He said that marketing the area was very important and that visitors might visit Swale for a variety of reasons so more lateral thinking was required. Another Member agreed that there should be a more clear identification as many people did not know where Swale was. She added that more investment in tourism was required; suggested that cycle routes should be encouraged; and added her support that rural villages should be marketed.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration advised that whilst there were some issues with the Visit Kent website, it provided good networks and links for only a small fee.

A Member said that the document was heading in the right direction but commented that it lacked detail and gave examples of some rural tourist attractions that could be included such as Oad Street Craft Centre, Borden. He warned that some proposed actions might require infrastructure improvements which were out of SBC's control and asked if there had been benchmarking against other Kent districts? In response, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration advised that more work was required and there was regular monitoring of 'hits' on the website. The Economy and Community Services Manager advised that there had been one to one meetings with other Kent districts and the document was high level but would include action plans, priorities and timescales.

There was a discussion amongst Members and the following points were raised:

- The document is what the public wanted, different audiences required different documents;
- funding should be used as a launch pad for match funding;
- photographs in the document should contain place names;
- coastal paths should be included;
- 'Swale' needed to be more identifiable and
- more 'fun' activities and events should be included to help attract returning visitors.

Members suggested removing the word "widely" from the first line under Our Visitor Economy on page 4 of the document and to delete reference to 'a limited knowledge of our consumers' in the final paragraph on page 5 of the document.

Our priorities

A Member agreed with the six priorities on page 5 of the document and asked how SBC would deliver the priorities and was it in control of its ambitions? In response, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration said that liaison with other departments and keeping a tight grip would help pull everyone together but some issues were out of their control.

In response to a suggestion from a Member that SBC needed to identify where their market was and how far people would travel to visit, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration agreed and spoke of attracting visitors interested in film locations in the Borough.

A Member suggested assisting local businesses to encourage visitors to stay in local hotels and bed and breakfasts.

There was a discussion around the usefulness of maps for visitors and the following suggestions were made:

- specific maps to be produced for specific events or interests, for example railways, estuaries, boatyards and film locations in the Borough;
- maps/directories to plan visits and include cycling/walking routes in addition to public transport;
- maps to be added to website and updated regularly and
- the use of the SBC app to suggest themed walks with maps.

A Member spoke of attracting visitors to the ferry scheme from the Isle of Sheppey to Southend whilst another suggested boat connectivity between Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey. A Member warned that, due to tidal issues, Harty Ferry was not viable and also pointed out that some residents might object to developing some areas for tourists as this may lead to demand for improvements in infrastructure if traffic increased.

Other ideas from Members to encourage tourism included:

- the use of coastal and other paths;
- providing facilities such as play equipment and changing rooms and more facilities for the disabled;
- improved signage including information boards with maps; and
- encouragement of private businesses to set up like those on the seafront at Whitstable.

A Member said that the priorities were right and he looked forward to the outcomes.

Outcomes

The Chairman suggested that the wording in the last bullet point under Public Realm and Place Shaping on page 8 of the document should be clarified.

In response to a question from a member, the Economies and Community Services Manager clarified that the Welcome Programme included training opportunities and information businesses needed to develop and sustain.

A Member suggested changes to the wording on page 9 of the Framework, 2nd bullet point under the heading Developing the cultural offer, to take out Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey and replace with 'the Borough', and add 'and villages' to bullet point 4. Another Member suggested including 'Heritage' in the heading and the Economies and Communities Manager agreed to look at the wording.

A Member said that there were lots of community groups in Swale that didn't know where to go for support or where to advertise their activities.

There was a brief discussion around incorporating historical legendry culture and the promotion of local dialect.

In response to a question from a Member on Sittingbourne's relationship with its twin town Ypres, the Economies and Community Services Manager said that the relationship had flourished through the Centenary years and would be maintained post 2018.

A Member said that Swale was not as seasonal as some other areas as there were opportunities for activities such as walking or birdwatching all year round.

There was a discussion on the measuring of performance and the Interim Head of Economies and Communities advised that there were monthly updates to Cabinet, and welcomed input from the Policy Development and Review Committee at significant points in the future.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration thanked Members for their input.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, the Interim Head of Economies and Communities and the Economies and Community Services Manager.

Recommendations to Cabinet:

- (1) That greater prominence be given to rural areas in the Framework;***
- (2) That further consideration be given to how businesses are assisted to help promote Swale as a place to stay;***
- (3) That the maritime theme be developed and promoted;***
- (4) That the current and future relationship with Sittingbourne's twinned town of Ypres be included in the Framework;***
- (5) That updates on performance measuring of the Framework be provided to Members and further input from the Policy Development and Review Committee be considered at significant points of the process;***

(6) That the current budget of £250,000 be increased to £500,000;

(7) That further consideration be given to the implications of food and food networks and how Swale Borough Council could work more effectively with Kent food providers.

442 ACTIVE LIVES FRAMEWORK

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing and the Community Sport and Physical Activity Officer to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing introduced the report and explained that the Active Lives Framework built on the previous Sport and Physical Activity Framework (SPAF) for Swale which had expired in 2017. He added that the document was coming to the end of an 8 week consultation and highlighted the 6 objectives from the SPAF on page 4 of the document.

The Interim Head of Economics and Communities said that this was the opportunity to address some of the stark health inequalities by using assets in the Borough such as sports centres and open spaces. She added that they would be working with a variety of people, from those that did no activity at all to top athletes.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Community Sport and Physical Activity Officer confirmed that over 200 partners linked with the Active Swale network had the opportunity to be involved in the consultation, from national governing bodies of sports and local leisure trusts to community clubs and charities. He added that there were consultation days in March 2017 and partners were invited to submit online surveys.

A Member drew attention to the out-of-date information on page 13 of the document and the Community Sport and Physical Activity Officer agreed to update the information.

A Member feared that the obesity message was getting lost as there was duplication from other organisations and said that SBC had not done enough to support sports facilities. He added that SBC should have its own initiatives and cycle paths should be included in planning applications for development. In response, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing said that tackling obesity was a priority for many organisations and the framework was linked to the National Health Service (NHS) and Clinical Commissioning Groups to allow SBC to improve.

A Member welcomed the discussions with other organisations and highlighted the work carried out by Swale Community Leisure.

There was a discussion around the lack of budget and the Community Sport and Physical Activity Officer confirmed that funding was not being sought; the costs were only officer time and a £20k sports grant had been received. He said that the framework was looking to continue the work already being carried out and advise how to engage and get people active. In response, a Member highlighted the savings that could be made as a more active lifestyle could be less of a strain on the NHS. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing advised that they were

working closely with the NHS and monitoring referrals that should save money in the long term.

The Interim Head of Economies and Communities clarified that funding to improve the Active Lives website was from an underspend.

In response to a question from a Member on why there was no mention of disabled sports and activities, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing agreed to look at this. Another Member said that mental health and sports activity were linked and spoke of the new Government Social Mobility document that had recently been released. She suggested that SBC could produce a disabled friendly walks and parks leaflet.

The Community Sport and Activity Officer clarified that 731 new individuals that were inactive were now active, as highlighted in Health Trainer Project on page 13 of the document, and agreed to make the information clearer and include 'per week' in the activity levels on page 15 of the document.

A Member referred to the last bullet point under Active You on page 10 of the document and asked what action would be taken and what changes would be made? He added that the priorities were too general. A discussion ensued and the Interim Head of Economies and Communities advised that the target audience for the framework was community groups and all had different priorities. Several Members said that it was not clear who the document was for. The Community Sport and Activity Officer clarified that groups could use the document to assist in gaining funding. The Interim Head of Economies and Communities added that the framework could be used to focus on health and activity generally and elements of the document could be used for clubs. She added that the document also assisted and linked in with smarter working with Planning Services colleagues when considering the requirements of Section 106 Agreements.

There was a discussion around the benefits of a good diet with activity, and a Member suggested there should be more education from Central Government and Kent County Council and SBC should become involved in any initiatives when they could. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing advised that there was a community chef in Swale that gave advice on cooking healthy meals.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing thanked Members for their input.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, the Interim Head of Economies and Communities and the Community Sport and Activity Officer.

Recommendation to Cabinet

(1) That consideration be given to what suitable budget funding would be required to push the initiative forward to help promote physical activity.

443 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Policy and Performance Officer drew attention to the updated work programme and advised that an additional Policy Development and Review Committee meeting might be required.

444 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 9.04pm and reconvened at 9.10pm.

445 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

At 10pm Members agreed to the suspension of Standing Orders in order that the Committee could complete its business.

Chairman

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