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## POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne on Thursday, 10 May 2018 from 7.00pm - 10.03pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart (substitute for Councillor Lloyd Bowen), Monique Bonney, Andy Booth (Vice-Chairman, in-the-Chair), Nicholas Hampshire, James Hunt, Peter Marchington, George Samuel, Ben Stokes and Tony Winckless.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Philippa Davies, Charlotte Hudson, Kieren Mansfield and Bob Pullen.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Mike Cosgrove (Cabinet Member for Regeneration) and Mike Henderson.

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Lloyd Bowen.

### 655 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Vice-Chairman in the Chair drew attention to the fire evacuation procedure.

### 656 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 April 2018 (Minute Nos. 602 – 610) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Vice-Chairman in-the-Chair as a correct record.

### 657 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### Part B Minutes for Information

### 658 REGENERATION STRATEGY

The Vice-Chairman in-the-Chair 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 which presented the consultative draft of the Council's new Economic Regeneration Framework (ERF) 2018-21. The Framework would be referred to by Council services and partner organisations in making their contribution to promoting growth, particularly within the local economy. The Cabinet Member explained that the draft ERF was out for an eight-week public consultation. Together with the comments received from the consultation, input, ideas and steers from the Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC), would be incorporated into the final document which would be submitted to Cabinet. The Cabinet Member welcomed comments from the

Committee, particularly on whether the balance was right, was it a clear document, was anything missing, and could anything be added or omitted?

The Economy and Community Services Manager outlined some of the comments received from the consultation, which included: the role of manufacturing in the Borough; increasing job opportunities in Faversham; issues on the A2; education; and reflection on what the Council had done to support economic growth up to this point.

The Vice-Chairman in-the-Chair invited the Committee to go through the document page-by-page. Members made comments and asked questions (bullet pointed below), and the Cabinet Member and officers responded.

### **Front cover**

A Member considered the picture on the front cover of the document was not very attractive, and not a good representative picture of the Borough.

### **Foreword – page 2**

- Emphasis needed to be made on the major transport needs in the Borough, with improved road networks;
- Questioned the ability to fulfil some aspects noted within the introductory paragraph;
- Kent Science Park, although mentioned in the document, was not in Swale's Local Plan;
- How was connectivity going to be improved? and
- In terms of improving local skills and choice, how was this going to be achieved through technical education, and to what stage?

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that improvements to Junction 5 of the M2, and the A249 junctions should commence within the next three years.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council was a partner to a Further Education piece of consultancy, and a business case was being worked on to provide this facility, alongside Canterbury and Mid-Kent Colleges.

A Member understood work on Junction 5 upgrade was not due to commence until 2020, i.e. not within three years. The Cabinet Member stated that work should start within three years.

- Welcomed businesses coming into the Borough, how many jobs would this create?

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that there was not a specific number, although the Local Plan provided the capacity of vacant sites. Indigenous growth was not included in the Local Plan, and so it was difficult to predict a figure.

- Not sure why this was called a 'Framework' when it was in fact a 'Strategy';
- Considered the 11-page document, 50% of which included pictures, was not enough to outline the entire regeneration strategy;
- There should be reference to targets, and comparisons with Kent and UK growth figures;
- Was this a sufficient document to explain the Strategy to residents?
- It was not worth having unless there were targets and objectives, for reviewing in the future; and
- Needed to look at what had happened in the last three years, and look at what had improved; quantitative information should be included.

The Cabinet Member explained that the document was part of a wider set of other Council documents, including the Corporate Plan and a Service Plan, as an example. He stated that although the aim was to increase skill levels, it was difficult to set a target. It was an ambition to get a Further Education College in Swale, and that skill levels were not within the Council's direct remit.

The Interim Head of Economy and Community Services explained that in terms of strategy versus framework, the document had a leadership role and outlined the priorities within the Borough in a succinct way. This was a call for action for other partners as a key framework, and was a barometer, rather than a target.

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that 'aims' was probably a preferred terminology to 'targets', i.e. it was an aim to secure improvements to Junction 5. By labelling it as a target, this was a difficult position, as the Council was often in the hands of other agencies to deliver, so was out of its control.

- The document did not explain a coherent strategy, there needed to be some targets, so that the Council could be held to account and in three years time, see what progress had been made;
- The Foreword was not as effective as it could be, and the bullet points were not detailed enough;
- Recognised that infrastructure was not necessarily in the Council's remit, but more was needed to be done with developers and Central Government to improve the infrastructure;
- With the expansion of Eurolink, there was no mention of the Northern Relief Road (NRR); and
- Needed to consider Brexit, with issues such as customs and workforce, and the potential challenges ahead.

The Cabinet Member explained that a recent survey had been carried out which indicated that a small percentage of businesses on the Eurolink exported their products. It was very difficult for the Borough to undertake significant work on the affects of Brexit, e.g. when European grants would come to an end, and advice would need to be sought from Central Government. The Cabinet Member explained that he would like to see more exports.

- The Foreword needed to 'set the scene' for Swale, and should be an introduction to the positives of Swale: connections to the coast and London, three main towns and the rural areas;
- The text should be more aspirational;
- Questioned if this could all be done in three years; and
- How could the KSP expand?

The Cabinet Member explained that there were 1800 jobs at the KSP at the moment, and there were still opportunities to expand further on its current footprint.

### **Our Economy – page 3**

- This was clearly laid out, but did not explain the full picture, there needed to be more information on the different sized businesses with their different requirements;
- It would be beneficial to know the make-up of the jobs, i.e. permanent/temporary; and
- Comparisons with Kent and nationally were required.

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that more detailed data was available and this could be looked into further.

- The document was for 'the outside world' and needed to be explained in more detail, and needed to consider if each page was easily understood;
- The infrastructure was not in-line with current needs, roads in the Borough were a barrier to growth;
- With regard to expansion of leisure and retail opportunities, the Council had no control on who chose to locate in the Borough;
- Out of the 49,000 jobs, how many of them were jobs for people who lived in Swale? and
- Needed to show how the Council was assisting new businesses in their first year, and how many new businesses survived?

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that the Office of National Statistics (ONS) collected the data, and that new business survival to three years in Swale was circa 67%, Kent as a whole was 62%.

- There should be data on skillsets of the workforce in Swale, to attract businesses into the Borough;
- Needed to recognise that some skilled workforce lived in the Borough, but worked outside of the Borough;
- The 'Our Economy' page needed to be more encouraging, and engaging to attract people to the Borough;
- This was a marketing document; better quality pictures needed to be included;
- This did not reflect the Borough's true economy;
- There needed to be a main title, with sub-titles underneath to set it out more clearly and provide the detail; and
- Rise in new homes meant there was demand for more jobs and pressure on the road infrastructure.

**Sectors – page 4**

- The data excluded farm-based agricultural jobs, which was quite a large figure in Swale; and
- Suggest separating into three, public administration, education and health categories to see more clearly the situation with education and health jobs.

The Cabinet Member explained that the comparison in this case indicated that where a hospital was located, there would be more health jobs, and so this highlighted geographical differences.

- What was within the Primary industry category?

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that this was largely agricultural jobs. The nature of this employment, and the way in which ONS collected data, made it difficult to breakdown further.

- Within the document, there needed to be more encouragement for people to live and work in Swale, such as good schools and beautiful countryside, so that people want to live here as well as work here.

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that farm-based agricultural jobs would still be excluded from the data even though agriculture was a primary industry.

- Was Swale vulnerable to further decrease in manufacturing jobs?

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that the manufacturing sector was diverse and specialised, and was now expanding. However, there were still a very small number of large scale manufacturing industries, where decisions were taken remotely. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were more common in Swale, and provided resilience.

- Suggested re-ordering the categories from highest to lowest instead to give a 'snapshot';
- Provide more detail on the nature of the work, skilled or non-skilled; those employed in the Borough and those living and employed in the Borough; and
- Needed to indicate if the Council was happy with the mix of employment, whether it wanted to see more employment in certain categories, and the way that it would make any changes.

The Cabinet Member explained that there were constraints as people could not be forced to work in Swale. He considered it to be healthy to have a wide range of jobs in the Borough.

- Concerned that there was a low-wage economy in Swale, versus a high price of housing;
- Suggest keep the same order, as people might only look at the high figures; and
- Swale needed to be marketed as a prime location.

The Cabinet Member advised that businesses had stated that an advantage of Swale was that land was relatively cheaper than other local authorities, that the workforce on a whole was flexible and reliable, it was in a good location, and Eurolink provided flexible space for companies.

- The text needed to reflect the message depicted in the larger bar charts.

### **Growth highlights – page 5**

- Suggested that the wording ‘and is currently being expanded’ be added to the Shepherd Neame text box;
- Was there proof that KSP had the largest cluster of life sciences in Kent?
- Should include a picture of the Maritime Naval Heritage, and get rid of the oast house, and include more broader and recognisable pictures;
- How many people were employed at Swale’s Industrial Hub?
- Needed to mention Sittingbourne Town Centre as an example of partnership working;
- The pictures needed to be more representative of Swale, suggest an aerial shot of Eurolink to give a sense of scale; and
- There should also be mention of offices as well at the Queenborough and Rushenden site.

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that there were around 15,000 people employed in the industrial sectors, and that the main body of life sciences was on the KSP, but not exclusively.

### **Aims and priorities – page 6**

- Happy that this section included rural areas;
- Questioned the relevance of beach huts as a picture;
- Would prefer a picture of local businesses; and
- Did not like the word ‘relevant’ (skills), preferred ‘improve/enhance/provide enhanced’ skills.

The Cabinet Member explained that the picture of beach huts gave the perception of an attractive coastal location to live.

### **Promote Swale – page 7**

- More detail was needed on the ‘positive’ perceptions;
- A better picture should be included; and
- The use of the word ‘facet’ needed to be reviewed.

### **Secure investment – page 8**

- Was it really certain that improvements to the strategic road network were secured? This was aspirational;
- The pictures needed to relate to the text;
- There was nothing relating to the Isle of Sheppey in this section;
- It was fanciful looking at new road schemes, needed to look at Junction 5;

- Should push for projects that were most likely to happen;
- Suggested removing reference to Junction 7 being improved;
- There was no mention of the NRR;
- Scope to improve air quality;
- Supported an integrated infrastructure, but not confident it would be achieved;
- Needed to also think about brownfield sites;
- Homeworking should be included;
- There was a shortage of small industrial units; and
- Free schools could attract families to the Borough.

### **Support business – page 9**

- Supported the aspiration, but could it be delivered?
- Suggest there were more indoor markets;
- Support for businesses should be in more detail;
- Needed to include start-up hubs; and
- Include details of support services that were already being carried out;

The Cabinet Member stated that he was confident, with messages from the Highways Agency, that progress against the road improvements would be made.

The Economy and Community Services Manager advised that the Council did not offer financial advice, but could direct, and refer people through networking.

### **Provide relevant skills – page 10**

- The word ‘relevant’ was not the correct terminology;
- It was important to promote that apprenticeships were work-based, not college-based opportunities for under-24 year olds;
- Replace ‘basic’ with ‘functional’ skills;
- A further education facility was needed in Sittingbourne;
- Currently we did not have the skills training that was needed to go forward;
- It was important to have good and outstanding schools in the Borough, plus career talks;
- Needed to focus on higher levels of education in Swale, so that people could go further in their careers e.g. brick laying;
- Should celebrate what we had in the Borough, i.e. three grammar schools, and some good schools; and
- Could work with the prisons to focus on future jobs in local areas.

The Cabinet Member explained that there had been progress on achieving a further education facility in Swale. He added that he had been working with a local MP to look at the education gaps in Swale.

The Interim Head of Economy and Community Services agreed to provide a breakdown of the budgets for the Economic Development Team, via Democratic Services, to Members.

The Vice-Chairman in-the-Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, the Interim Head of Economy and Community Services and the Economy and Community Services Manager for attending the meeting for this item.

***Recommendation for consideration by the Cabinet Member:***

***(1) That the comments made by the Committee be considered by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration for the final version of the Swale Economic Regeneration Framework.***

**659 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

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

Chairman

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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