
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber - Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 12 September 2018 from 7.00 pm - 8.23 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth (Chairman), Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Nicholas Hampshire, James Hunt (Vice-Chairman), Peter Marchington (Substitute for Councillor Nigel Kay), Tony Winckless (Substitute for Councillor Roger Truelove) and Ted Wilcox.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Katherine Bescoby, Christopher Blandford, Lyn Newton and Bob Pullen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Alan Horton.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Baldock, Nigel Kay and Roger Truelove.

202 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the evacuation procedure.

203 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2018 (Minute Nos. 126 – 132) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

204 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Monique Bonney declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was a member of Produced in Kent.

205 CONSULTATION TO DEVELOP A DRAFT SWALE CYCLING AND WALKING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2018 - 2022

The Chairman welcomed the Economy and Community Services Manager, the Economic Development Support Officer and the Vice-Chairman to the meeting.

The Vice-Chairman introduced the report, in his capacity as Deputy Cabinet Member for the project, explaining why the Policy Framework was necessary and that it would form part of the Visitor Economy Framework. The Economic Development Support Officer and the Economy and Community Services Manager explained the purpose of the consultation, and the importance of having the Framework which would help to secure external funding for routes for a variety of reasons, including for commuting, travel to school, leisure and tourism. Work was being undertaken with the Kent County Council (KCC) to bring forward promotional material to focus on the borough, and there was an opportunity for some 'quick-wins' prior to the full Strategy being in place.

In response to a question about the consultation, the Economic Development Support Officer advised that electronic methods had been used, including social media, as well as more traditional methods such as paper copies in libraries. Emails had also been sent to KCC, Parish and Town Councils and a variety of cycling and walking groups. During the debate, Members suggested other outlets/groups that could be contacted and encouraged to respond to the consultation. This included cycle shops, Rodmersham Café; rural pubs such as the Ship at Conyer, the cycle café at Graveney; and Milton Country Park.

Members then considered the draft Framework page by page.

Page 2 – correction of spelling of ‘Introduction’.

Page 5 – clarification was sought regarding funding and the funding streams referred to in the Local Plan regarding Section 106 (s106) obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Page 6 – Members referred to problems with maintenance of dedicated cycling and walking routes, which resulted in people choosing to use roads instead such as the Sheppey Way. Some cycle lanes on roads were also unusable due to having cars parked on them. Members asked whether it was possible to make it difficult for quadbikes to access cycleways/footpaths, but acknowledged that there was a growing trend in electric bikes for those who were less mobile. A suggestion was also made to standardise the colour scheme for footpaths and cycleways.

In response to a question regarding the Explore Kent Map, the Economy and Community Services Manager confirmed that the intention was for hard copies to be available (which would be free), and that she would follow up on the availability of PDF versions, and the possibility of interactive versions to be available on-line as on the KCC website. In addition, there would be opportunities to have additional leaflets produced at cost beyond the initial pilot.

A Member suggested that the document could include weblinks, and that options for providing cycle routes could be explored rather than just assuming ‘split pavements’. Another Member suggested that there was a need to consider safety issues, in particular where there were problems with phone signal or internet access.

Page 7 – Faversham map

Members asked for clarification of the key for the maps, and made the following comments:

- There were difficulties for cyclists when cycling through the town due to kerbs/pavements, and
- the map did not contain ‘Faversham walks’ or the ‘Food Trails’.

The following points were clarified:

- Sustrans would be carrying out a national audit of routes, and this would be reflected in the Framework, and

- that the maps were taken from those promoted by 'Explore Kent'.

Page 8 – Isle of Sheppey map:

Members considered that some routes were missing, such as along Sheerness Promenade and the Kingsferry Bridge, and Elmley and the Marshes. A Member referred to the cycle path between Cowstead Corner and Thistle Hill, Minster, and suggested that proposed routes should be included on the maps, shown in a different colour.

Following further discussion, it was agreed that there was a need for a definitive map to set out all of the routes in one place.

Page 9 – Sittingbourne map:

Members considered that some routes were missing, such as at Borden, Fulston Manor; Snipes Hill and Bapchild; and made the following comments:

- The need to join up routes;
- the tourism benefits of walking/cycling, and reference was made to the Borden Heritage Walks and village walks such as at Rodmersham;
- the need for a footpath along Highstead Road, Fulston Manor, and Swanstree Avenue, to encourage walking to school and work, and
- the need to acknowledge the threat to public rights of way from development and the need to ensure they were protected.

Page 11 - Members made the following comments:

- The need to make sure that existing paths were attractive otherwise they were not used;
- there were routes missing, such as linking to Neats Court and Thistle Hill to Minster Village, and
- there was no link from east to west of the Island, and there was a need to connect up existing routes.

Consultation Questionnaire

Members considered that more space could have been given for responses to questions 8 and 9, and the Economic Development Support Officer clarified that additional text could be submitted if not enough space was available on the paper form or online survey.

Members also discussed the General Data Protection Regulation requirements in particular the tick box for 'over 18' and considered that too much space was being taken up by the privacy statement.

A Member suggested it may have been useful to consult on what the Council would like to do.

The Vice-Chairman clarified that the consultation document had previously been considered by the Cabinet and approved for consultation purposes, so Members would have had an opportunity to comment at that time.

In response to a question regarding responses to the survey, the Economic Development Support Officer advised that 53 responses had been received so far. The responses suggested:

- new route;
- the need to link to routes at neighbouring authorities to make a more joined up network, including the North Kent Downs and Pilgrims Way;
- support for a Sheppey coastal route and Lower Road, and
- upgrading the A2 between Sittingbourne and Faversham.

Responses had also been received from the Kent Community Rail Partnership and Parish Councils. Where feedback was received, such as maintenance issues, these would be followed up with the relevant organisations. The Youth Forum would also be asked to give its views on the framework.

The Economic Development Support Officer also confirmed that the Natural England route was a separate project but would be taken into consideration. A Member also suggested that there should be consideration of contours.

In summing up, the Vice-Chairman advised that comments could also be taken up in the review of the Local Plan. Funding opportunities in respect of walking and cycle routes was being looked at, and through CIL and S106 funding there would be opportunity to introduce walking and cycle routes on new developments. There may also be funding opportunities from the Department of Transport, and via sponsorship from local companies.

The Chairman thanked the Economy and Community Services Manager, the Economic Development Support Officer and the Vice-Chairman for attending the meeting. He encouraged joined up promotion with schools to encourage walking/cycling and to reduce traffic congestion at schools, rather than just promotion for leisure purposes.

206 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman drew attention to the work programme.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities outlined a proposal for the Committee to consider the role of CCTV and asked the Committee if it could be included in the work programme. Members agreed with this proposal.

Another Member suggested that GDPR should be looked at as a policy in the future.

In respect of the Homelessness and Housing Strategy, the Cabinet Member referred to the award of the contract and that the Strategy was fundamentally about homelessness and not rough sleeping. The Chairman advised that they were looking to link in with work that KCC were undertaking regarding loneliness.

In response to feedback, the Policy and Performance Officer agreed to update the schedule and to put in date order.

Chairman

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