

AGENDA

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 19 June 2019

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

Membership:

Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Mike Dendor, Alastair Gould (Chairman), Ann Hampshire, Ben A Martin, Ken Pugh, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, Sarah Stephen, Ghlin Whelan (Vice-Chairman) and Corrie Woodford.

Quorum = 3

Pages

1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Chairman will advise the meeting of the evacuation procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. This is particularly important for visitors and members of the public who will be unfamiliar with the building and procedures.

The Chairman will inform the meeting whether there is a planned evacuation drill due to take place, what the alarm sounds like (i.e. ringing bells), where the closest emergency exit route is, and where the second closest emergency exit route is, in the event that the closest exit or route is blocked.

The Chairman will inform the meeting that:

(a) in the event of the alarm sounding, everybody must leave the building via the nearest safe available exit and gather at the Assembly points at the far side of the Car Park; and

(b) the lifts must not be used in the event of an evacuation.

Any officers present at the meeting will aid with the evacuation.

It is important that the Chairman is informed of any person attending who is disabled or unable to use the stairs, so that suitable arrangements may be made in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for Absence and Confirmation of Substitutes

3. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting held on 12 February 2019 (Minute Nos. 490 - 496) as a correct record.

4. 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.

(c) Where it is possible that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Member might be predetermined or biased the Member should declare their predetermination or bias and then leave the room while that item is considered.

Advice to Members: 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 Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

Part B reports for the Committee to decide

5. Annual Report for 2018/19 5 - 18

The Committee is asked to consider the Annual Report for 2018/19.

6. Future Work Programme 19 - 26

The Committee is asked to consider the Future Work Programme.

Issued on Tuesday, 11 June 2019

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**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

19 June 2019	Agenda Item 5
<i>Draft 2018/19 Annual Report to Council</i>	
Report author:	Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer
Recommendations That the Committee: (i) considers and agrees the draft Annual Report to Council (Appendix i).	

1 Purpose of report and executive summary

1.1 This report is concerned with the Committee's 2018/19 Annual Report to Council.

2 Background

2.1.1 The Committee's Terms of Reference require it to report annually to Council on its work and to make recommendations for amended working methods where appropriate.

2 Discussion

3.1 The attached draft report to Council incorporates a draft Annual Report on the Committee's work for the 2018/19 Municipal Year. The Committee are invited to consider and agree the report for submission to Council.

4 Conclusion

4.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

(i) considers and agrees the draft Annual Report to Council (Appendix i).

5 Appendices and background papers

Appendix i: Policy Development and Review Committee – Annual Report 2018/19.

6 Officer contacts

Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer
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Policy Development and Review Committee Annual Report 2018/19

Swale Borough Council

Policy Development and Review Committee Annual Report 2018/19

1. The Committee was established five years ago and held its inaugural meeting on 28 May 2014.

2. The report covering the Committee's programme of work for the year sought to summarise its purpose as follows:

“to assist the Cabinet in developing or reviewing either new or existing policies, strategies or plans. Its workload is expected to be driven by the natural cycle of considering existing policies, strategies or plans of the council as they come up for review or providing advice to Cabinet on proposals for new council policy referred by Cabinet, Council or the Scrutiny Committee”.

3. The table at Appendix I summarises attendance at all of the Policy Development and Review Committee meetings during 2018/19. Members appointed to serve on the Committee for 2018/19 were:

- Councillor Andy Booth (Chairman)
- Councillor James Hunt (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Mike Baldock
- Councillor Cameron Beart
- Councillor Monique Bonney
- Councillor Tina Booth
- Councillor Lloyd Bowen
- Councillor Nicholas Hampshire
- Councillor Nigel Kay
- Councillor Roger Truelove
- Councillor Ted Wilcox.

4. A schedule of meetings and the policies, plans and strategies considered by the Committee during 2018/19 is at Appendix II. This also provides a summary of what the Committee considered.

5. From the outset, as agendas were compiled, and policies, plans and strategies were identified for the Committee's consideration, the relevant Cabinet Member and Lead Officer(s) were invited to attend the meetings. This worked well and the minutes show that, except for one or two occasions when they were unavailable, Cabinet Members attended all meetings to which they had been invited.

6. One aspect which continued throughout 2018/19, was that while the relevant Heads of Service were attending the meetings, they were being accompanied by relatively junior members of staff and that these staff were being given the opportunity to present reports. This continued to have several benefits:

- it enabled staff who can often bring a local rather than a corporate view of how a policy might work in practice to meet and discuss emerging policy with members other than the Cabinet;
- it provided staff with an opportunity to develop their presentation skills;
- non-executive members actually got to hear from officers who had led on the development of policies; and
- this all took place in a forum which was less adversarial than overview and scrutiny can sometimes be.

7. The Committee also agreed to a proposal made by Cabinet to try and ensure they had greater emphasis placed on PDRC making an input at a much earlier stage, particularly where brand new policies, plans or strategies are being developed. A note setting out this change of emphasis is at Appendix III.

8. A trawl of the Cabinet and Council agendas for the year shows that all major policies, plans, and strategies had been considered by the Committee prior to their approval. The exceptions were the Local Plan, which is in any case the preserve of the Local Plan Panel. This reinforces the need to maintain a robust register of policies and to liaise with Heads of Services regularly to ensure that the information held on the Policy Register is up to date.

Policy Development and Review Committee membership and attendance – 2018/19

Name	Role	18 Jul	12 Sep	6 Nov	27 Nov	16 Jan	12 Feb
Committee members							
Cllr Andy Booth	Chairman	x	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr James Hunt	Vice-Chairman	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr Mike Baldock	Committee member	√	X	x	√	X	x
Cllr Cameron Beart	Committee member	√	√	√	x	√	√
Cllr Monique Bonney	Committee member	x	√	x	√	√	√
Cllr Tina Booth	Committee Member	√	√	x	x	√	√
Cllr Lloyd Bowen	Committee Member	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr Nicholas Hampshire	Committee member	√	√	√	X	√	√
Cllr Nigel Kay	Committee member	√	x	√	√	√	√
Cllr Roger Truelove	Committee member	√	x	√	X	√	x
Cllr Ted Wilcox	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√	√
Visiting members and *substitutes							
Cllr Andrew Bowles	Leader				√		
Cllr Roger Clark	Member			√			
Cllr Mike Cosgrove	Cabinet Member for Regeneration			√			
Cllr Angela Harrison	Member					√	
Cllr Mike Henderson	Member	√*					
Cllr Alan Horton	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities		√	√		√	√
Cllr James Hall	Member			√*			
Cllr Gerry Lewin	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning	√					
Cllr Peter Marchington	Member		√	√*	√*		
Cllr David Simmons	Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs				√		√

Name	Role	18 Jul	12 Sep	6 Nov	27 Nov	16 Jan	12 Feb
Cllr Tony Winkless	Member		√*	√		√	
Swale Borough Council officers							
Katherine Bescoby	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager		√		√		
Christopher Blandford	Economic Development Support Officer		√				
Brooke Buttfield	Economy and Community Services Project Officer						√
Martyn Cassell	Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure			√			√
Steph Curtis	Economy and Community Services Manager			√		√	√
David Clifford	Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services	√			√		
Della Fackrell	Resilience and Licensing Manager	√					
Chris Hills	Licensing Officer	√					
Charlotte Hudson	Head of Economy and Community Services			√		√	
Kellie MacKenzie	Democratic Services Officer					√	
Mike Marsh	Leisure and Technical Services Manager			√	√		√
Jo Millard	Senior Democratic Services Officer	√		√			√
Lyn Newton	Economy and Community Services Manager		√				
Bob Pullen	Policy and Performance Officer	√	√	√	√	√	√
Roxanne Sheppard	Housing Options Manager					√	
Graeme Tuff	Greenspaces Manager				√		√
Rebecca Walker	Strategic Housing and Health Manager					√	

Policies considered by the Policy Development and Review Committee during 2018/19

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
18 July 2018	Gambling Policy	<p>The Gambling Act 2005 requires the Council as licensing authority to prepare and publish a Statement of Principles for Gambling Act policy. The Council had previously published a Statement of Principles in January 2016 and this was due for renewal by January 2019. The Committee were invited to consider and comment of the draft, which had been based on a model template recommended by the Gambling Commission.</p> <p>The Committee considered issues around enforcement of the policy, gambling by those underage or with mental health problems, self-exclusion, proximity of betting shops to schools and density of betting shops.</p> <p>The policy was amended in response to the Committee's comments and adopted by Council on 14 November 2018 following further consideration by the Licensing Committee on 2 October 2018.</p>
18 July 2018	Corporate Plan 2019-2022	<p>The Committee considered a discussion paper on the new Corporate Plan covering the period 2019-2022. The Committee considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more explicit reference to rural areas; • infrastructure improvements; • better communication with residents and parish and town councils; • greater emphasis on environmental issues including recycling; • better assistance for voluntary sector to assist those with mental health conditions; • promotion of local employment opportunities; • planning for an aging population; and • financial self-sufficiency.

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<p>The Deputy Cabinet Member welcomed the Committee's comments and indicated they would be fed into further iterations of the draft. The draft plan was considered by the Committee again on 27 November 2018 before being adopted by Council on 20 February 2019.</p>
12 September 2018	Swale Cycling and Walking Policy Framework	<p>The Committee considered the draft Swale Cycling and Walking Strategy which would form part of the Visitor Economy Strategy. The draft strategy was out for public consultation when the Committee considered it.</p> <p>The Committee considered the draft and made the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities for funding including Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy monies; • mapping of dedicated cycle and walking routes; • national audit of routes; and • promoting walking and cycling to schools. <p>The draft strategy was updated to take on board comments received from the Committee and the public consultation and adopted by Cabinet on 12 December 2018.</p>
6 November 2018	Public Space CCTV Strategy for Swale	<p>The Committee considered a briefing note on Public Space Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in Swale. This set out Cabinet's initial thinking in respect of a proposed strategy and the Committee were invited to give their early thoughts in the process of the strategy's development.</p> <p>The Committee considered the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partnerships arrangements with Medway Council; • compliance with regulations; • quality of footage and effectiveness of system; • costs of operating and maintaining system;

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private property and business premises monitoring; • use of smart phones for recording footage; • lack of funding from Kent Police; • recently decommissioned cameras; • options for how monitoring could be carried out in future; and • technological advancement and the use of Town Centre WiFi. <p>Cabinet took the Committees comments into account in drawing up the Public Space CCTV Strategy which was considered again by the Committee on 16 January 2019.</p>
6 November 2018	Beach Huts provision	<p>The Committee considered a discussion paper which had been produced to focus work towards the development of a policy on beach huts provision in Swale.</p> <p>The Committee considered the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the enhancing effect beach huts had on the seafront; • further provision of beach huts; • ancillary services such as toilets where necessary if more beach huts were built; • consideration of new areas for siting (e.g. Sheerness); • commercial and business use as well as leisure; and • clarifying sub-letting rules. <p>Cabinet will take the Committee's comments into consideration in drawing up a beach huts policy.</p>
27 November 2018	Updated Tree Policy	<p>The Committee considered a discussion paper which had been produced to focus work towards the development of a policy on maintenance of trees owned by the Council.</p>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<p>The Committee considered the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need for more comprehensive information provided on the Council's website for the public; • better signposting to how the public can inform the Council of problems with trees; • frequency of inspections; • trees interfering with TV signals; • replanting two trees for every one that had been felled; and • ancient hedgerows. <p>Cabinet considered the Committee's comments and a further draft of the policy was considered by the Committee on 12 February 2019.</p>
16 January 2019	Homelessness Strategy	<p>The Committee were invited to consider an overview report on the work that was commissioned to develop a housing, homelessness and rough sleeping strategy for Swale.</p> <p>The Committee considered the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further explore reasons why people have become homeless; • Swale should consider developing its own social housing and not outsource to third parties; • lack of bungalows being built; • need to address the two-month a year homelessness issue caused by the ten-month occupancy rule on holiday camps and the problem it creates every year for the Council's Housing Options team; • ensure that social housing properties were not sub-let; • include provision for those leaving prison; • sign-posting to additional means of support;

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • role of the Housing Needs Assessment in relation to the new strategy; and • need for a more holistic approach to reducing homelessness. <p>Cabinet took account of the Committee's comments before publishing the draft strategy for consultation in April 2019.</p>
12 February 2019	Swale Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment	<p>The Committee considered the 2017/18 Swale Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment in the context of setting the priorities for the 2019/20 Community Safety Plan.</p> <p>The Committee considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeding back on incidents reported; • community triggers; • community engagement; • multi-agency risk assessment conferences; • organised crime groups and Kent Police Gang Liaison Officers; • reducing crime in tourist areas during the holiday season; • increased night time visitors to Sittingbourne once the regeneration scheme is complete; • alley gates in Sheerness; and • integrated offender management and the positive work undertaken by prisoners in the Borough as part of their rehabilitation. <p>The Cabinet Member and officers indicated that the Committee's comments would be fed into the development of the 2019/20 Community Safety Plan which was a document that the Community Partnership would be approving as a multi-agency body rather than the Council itself.</p>

New focus for Policy Development and Review Committee (agreed by PDRC on 18/07/18)

1. The purpose of this discussion paper is to seek the views of the Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) in refocussing its work to bring further value to Council in developing new policies.
2. The focus of PDRC since it was established four years ago has been to provide an input to the review of existing policies, plans and strategies or the development of new ones.
3. Typically, PDRC has considered policies, plans and strategies during the latter stages of development or review, although there have been some exceptions. However, it is envisaged that going forward there should be more emphasis placed on PDRC making an input at a much earlier stage, particularly where brand new policies, plans or strategies are being developed. The stages at which PDRC involvement in a policy's development or review could be sought by the Cabinet Member include one or more of the following:

Stage	Description
Conceptual	The reason for introducing a new policy has been identified and several possible solutions may have been identified, but the policy is still in an embryonic stage with no firm decisions taken on the way forward.
Pre-consultation	A policy has been developed, but it needs to be tested through public consultation before it is adopted.
Pre-Cabinet decision	A policy has been subjected to public consultation and amended to e.g. remove proposals which would have adverse consequences.

4. Any such refocussing would also place greater emphasis on the Committee acting in an advisory role, with the value of the Committee's input being in ideas coming forward through discussion with the Cabinet Member(s) and Lead Officer(s) rather than formal recommendations (n.b. any recommendations the Committee currently make do **not** result in a formal response from Cabinet). A new template and guidance for Council Committee reports has been developed to ensure that points made by PDRC will be captured and incorporated into reports to Cabinet so that the role and input of PDRC is clearly shown in the decision-making process.
5. Informal Cabinet will consider a standing item on their agenda every two months listing all of the policies, plans and strategies, whether new or due for renewal, which are 'in the pipeline'. Not all of these will be items which are expected to come to PDRC for review (e.g. inward-facing policies which apply only to the Council or its staff such as Human Resources, Health and Safety or ICT). But any outward-facing policy, plan or strategy which will have a bearing on either residents, businesses, visitors to Swale or the Borough itself will be expected to come before PDRC.

6. At what stage a policy, plan or strategy might come before the PDRC will vary depending on its state of development. Some might come before PDRC up to once, twice or three times as in the following examples:

Name	Type	New/revised ?	Cabinet Member/Service area	Stage of development	PDRC meeting date
Unauthorised grazing of horses on council open spaces	Policy	New	Cllrs Lewin and Simmons; Planning Enforcement and Commission and Customer Contact	(i) Conceptual; (ii) Pre-consultation; (iii) Pre-Cabinet decision	12/09/18; 27/11/18; 12/02/19.
Homelessness and Housing Strategy	Strategy	Revision to existing policy to reflect changes in national legislation	Cllr Horton; Resident Services	(i) Pre-consultation; (ii) Pre-Cabinet decision	16/01/19; 12/02/19
Housing Allocations Policy	Policy	Minor changes to existing policy	Cllr Horton; Resident Services	(i) Pre-Cabinet decision	12/02/19

7. It is hoped that the above proposals will result in PDRC having the opportunity, particularly for policies etc. which are in the very early stages of their development, to shape the Council's policies, plans and strategies for the better.

Cllr Andy Booth, Chairman PDRC
Cllr James Hunt, Vice-Chairman PDRC

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POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

19 June 2019	Agenda Item 6
<i>Future work programme</i>	
Report author:	Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer
Recommendations That the Committee: (i) considers its initial work programme for 2019/20.	

1 Purpose of report and executive summary

- 1.1 This report is concerned with the Committee's work programme for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Committee's Terms of Reference (Appendix I) set out the purpose of the Committee. These Terms of Reference were set by the previous administration back in 2014 when the Committee was first established.

- 2.2 In essence, the purpose of the Committee as currently constituted is:

“to assist the Cabinet in developing or reviewing either new or existing policies, strategies or plans. Its workload is expected to be driven by the annual cycle of considering existing policies, strategies or plans of the council as they come up for review or providing advice to Cabinet on proposals for new council policy referred by Cabinet, Council or the Scrutiny Committee.”

- 2.3 Unlike the Scrutiny Committee, the Committee's role is not to hold Cabinet to account and the Committee has no formal scrutiny powers available to it. Instead, the purpose of the Committee is essentially to act as a sounding board for Cabinet, considering and commenting on proposals, and helping to shape its thinking, before they reach the decision stage. The Committee is politically balanced, but does include four of the seven Deputy Cabinet members.

3 Discussion

- 3.1 The new administration have indicated that they want to involve the Committee in helping develop several major pieces of work as described in a report to Cabinet on 12 June (Appendix II). These include the following with indicative timescales on when the work is to be undertaken. The dates of future PDRC meetings are also included:

Item	Indicative timescale	Scheduled PDRC meetings
Constitution review	Initial reports coming forward to PDRC on 17 July 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 17 June 2019
Climate emergency	Review to be completed by March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 11 September 2019
Housing	Initial work on revising housing, homelessness and rough sleeping strategy due to reported to Cabinet on 10 July 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 16 October 2019 • Wednesday 20 November 2019 • Wednesday 11 September 2019
Community inclusion and safety	The Committee were previously involved twice in helping to develop the CCTV strategy which is due to be considered by Cabinet on 10 July 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 16 October 2019 • Wednesday 20 November 2019
Health	Initial priority is on recruiting a health and wellbeing officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 29 January 2020 • Wednesday 4 March 2020
Economy and skills	Vision and priorities for economy and skills being developed, including on town centres, tourism and the council's portfolio of property assets. Report to Cabinet 10 July 2019 on living wage.	
Public realm and open spaces	Budget update being considered by Cabinet on 12 June 2019. Following this, proposals will be considered at Cabinet on 10 July 2019 to establish a special projects fund with £1m per annum of reserves	

Item	Indicative timescale	Scheduled PDRC meetings
	committed to it for four years to fund community projects and improvements to the public realm. It is envisaged that PDRC will be heavily involved in the selection of projects.	

3.2 The above points to the Committee having a substantially different role to what it had in previous years, particularly so in respect of the anticipated role public realm and open spaces projects.

4 Conclusion

4.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

(i) notes the current position on its work programme for the year.

5 Appendices and background papers

Appendix i: Policy Development and Review Committee Terms of Reference

Appendix II: Cabinet report on coalition priorities

6 Officer contacts

Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer
BobPullen@swale.gov.uk ☎ 01795 417187

Policy Development and Review Committee – Terms of Reference (3.2 – Responsibility for Council Functions)

Within their terms of reference, the Committees will:

- (i) consider any built-in review of any existing policies, strategies or plans of the Council;
- (ii) consider existing policies in the light of changes to legislation or national guidance;
- (iii) consider other reviews of existing council policy referred by a Cabinet Member or by resolution of Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee or Full Council;
- (iv) consider proposals for new council policy referred by a Cabinet Member, Cabinet or Full Council;
- (v) provide pre-decision comment on policy decisions. A policy shall not be re-considered by the committee within two years or before its built in review period, unless by resolution of the full Council or Cabinet, or as required by a change in legislation or national guidance.

The chairman may invite Cabinet Members and officers of the council or other persons to attend committee meetings to answer questions pertinent to the business of the committee. Having considered an item, the committee may make recommendations to the person or body that referred the item to it; Cabinet, Cabinet Member, Officer of the Council or the Full Council. The Policy Development and Review Committee shall exercise overall responsibility for any finances made available to it.

Annual Report – the Policy Development and Review Committee must report annually to the Full Council on their work and make recommendations for amended working methods if appropriate.

Cabinet Meeting	
Meeting Date	12 June 2019
Report Title	Coalition priorities: update and next steps
Cabinet Member	Cllr Roger Truelove – Council Leader
SMT Lead	David Clifford
Head of Service	Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services
Lead Officer	
Key Decision	Discussion paper only, not for decision
Classification	Open
Recommendations	Cabinet is asked to note progress towards the coalition’s priorities to date, and to review and discuss next steps. This report is not for formal decision.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1.1 This report updates cabinet on progress towards the coalition’s priorities to date, and invites members to review and discuss the most appropriate next steps.

2 Background

2.1 Following the election of the new council leader on 22 May, the five-group coalition administration has set out its political priorities, and officers have begun to work through these with a view to producing a revised corporate plan (or equivalent) to cover the period to 2023.

2.2 This discussion paper sets out progress made to date on these political priorities, together with a sense of the likely next steps. It also draws members’ attention to any potential issues which officers have identified under each of the priorities in terms of the need to make rapid progress on them, and invites members’ views on these.

3 Discussion

Constitution review

3.1 The deputy leader has met with the monitoring officer to set out the aims of the review, and the immediate next step is for an ‘objectives and options’ paper to go to policy development and review committee in July to inform a discussion there. Several councils around the country have taken advantage of the flexibility in the

Localism Act 2011 to move away from the leader-and-cabinet model, so the paper will draw on their experiences to help members develop their ideas. In order formally to effect a return to the committee system, council will need to pass a resolution to that end, probably in October, and the new constitution would then be adopted and come into force at the next annual council meeting in May.

3.2 Members are keen that the new arrangements should strengthen residents' opportunities to participate in council decision-making, and this is one factor which the review will need to accommodate. However, there will also be a need for strong public consultation as part of the review process itself, so the July PDRC paper will invite discussion of this.

3.3 Other factors which the review will need to consider carefully include the extent to which the council is willing to increase the cost of transacting its business by having more individuals and more meetings involved in decision-making, and how the council can strengthen the coherence of its decision-making (for example on cross-cutting issues such as health and sustainability) while diffusing power more widely. None of these issues needs to be insurmountable, but they do require careful thought. It is likely that some additional temporary resource will be required to conduct the review with sufficient rigour, consultation and attention to detail.

Local plan

3.4 Members and officers have met to discuss the vision and approach to local plan-making going forwards. It has been agreed that the local plan panel meeting on 6 June will be an opportunity for members to have an unconstrained and in-principle discussion of strategic options, in order both to help planning officers better to understand members' preferences and to enable panel members to gain a better sense of each other's perspectives. The s106 agreement on the Wises Lane application has been deferred until July.

3.5 All political groups represented in the chamber seem to be agreed that issues around spatial planning were a key concern of residents at the recent election, and the coalition has a very clear local mandate for change. The challenge now will be for members and officers to work together either to interpret that mandate within the constraints imposed by central government and/or to determine the extent to which those constraints can be challenged without undue risk to the council and the borough.

Climate emergency

3.6 The cabinet member for the environment met with relevant officers to begin to draw up a future work programme on 28 May, and will be able to update members verbally at the cabinet meeting.

Housing

3.7 The leader, the cabinet member and the deputy cabinet member have all met with the head of housing, economy and community services to begin to set out the vision for the council's role in housing over the next few years. Much of the analytical work which was recently completed to inform the development of the housing, homelessness and rough sleeping strategy remains valid and useful, but work has now begun to review the interpretation of this in order for an updated version of the strategy to come to cabinet in July. This analytical work also resulted in recommendations to reconfigure the way the housing options service is delivered, and this is also due to be progressed.

3.8 Following preliminary discussions with members, officers have begun to consider residential options for Sittingbourne High Street and how these could be brought forward through the master-planning process, as well as options for key sites in the borough. Officers are also arranging for preliminary meetings to be held between relevant members and the borough's housing providers.

Community inclusion and safety

3.9 The cabinet member and deputy cabinet member have met with the head of housing, economy and community services to develop priorities for the years ahead. The CCTV strategy is due to come to cabinet in July.

Health

3.10 The cabinet member for health and wellbeing met with relevant officers to discuss priorities on 28 May, and will be able to update members verbally at the cabinet meeting. Officers have drawn up a draft job description for a health and wellbeing officer post, based on the brief discussion held with cabinet members on 14 May.

3.11 Officers are keen to move quickly on this recruitment, as the recruitment is more likely to be successful if it can be completed before the summer period. Pending the cabinet member's approval of the job description, the intention is to take this to the council's job evaluation panel for a grading decision in early June so that the job can be advertised shortly afterwards.

Economy and skills

3.12 The cabinet member for economy and property has met with the head of housing, economy and community services to begin to establish vision and priorities for the years ahead, including on town centres, tourism and the council's portfolio of property assets.

3.13 Officers have begun to undertake research into the costs and feasibility of becoming a living wage employer. Initial findings are that this would affect only a small number of the council's own employees and could thus probably be implemented quickly.

- 3.14 The matter is more complex in respect of the council's contractors, not only because of the costs involved but also because employment risk in council contracts is generally with the contractor, which means that the council often has no contractual right to determine wage levels. It is however very unlikely that this will turn out to be an insuperable issue, and a report will come to cabinet in July setting out more detail on options and timescales for implementation, as well as likely costs.

Public realm and open spaces

- 3.15 The leader and cabinet member for the environment have met with the head of commissioning, environment and leisure services to ascertain priorities and discuss the constraints on capital spend. The intention for the initial stages is for the policy development and review committee to be heavily involved in the selection of projects, and a preliminary discussion will be had with the committee very shortly. Depending on the outcome of the constitution review, it is expected at this stage that this role will be taken over by area committees or equivalent in future years.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 This report makes no recommendation to agree a specific proposal, so there are no alternative options at this stage.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 As this is a discussion paper only, there has been no public consultation on it. As part of the constitution review, the coalition aims to improve transparency and accountability by enhancing public participation in council decision-making. It is expected that this will require improved and/or more extensive mechanisms for public consultation.

6 Implications

- 6.1 Cross-cutting implications have not been fully analysed at this stage because the report is for discussion only and does not contain any recommendations for decision.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 There are no appendices.

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 There are no background papers.