
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Committee Room, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne Kent ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 29 January 2020 from 7.00pm - 8.45pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Mike Dendor, Alastair Gould (Chairman), Ann Hampshire, Angela Harrison (substitute for Councillor Ken Rowles), Ken Ingleton (substitute for Councillor Ken Pugh), Benjamin Martin, Julian Saunders, Ghlin Whelan (Vice-Chairman) and Corrie Woodford.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Simon Algar, David Clifford, Jo Millard, Lyn Newton and Bob Pullen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mike Baldock (Cabinet Member for Planning) and Steve Davey.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ken Pugh, Ken Rowles and Sarah Stephen.

486 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

487 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 November 2019 (Minute Nos. 368 – 371) were read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

488 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ken Ingleton declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 – Swale Heritage Strategy as he was a trustee of the following charities:

Sheppey Local History Society, Sheppey Heritage Trust Ltd, Bluetown Remembered Ltd and Historic Swale.

During the discussion, Councillor Mike Dendor declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 5 – Swale Heritage Strategy as he had previously been employed by Peel Ports.

During the discussion, visiting Councillor Steve Davey declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 5 – Swale Heritage Strategy as he managed The George Public House (Listed Building) in High Street, Sittingbourne.

489 SWALE HERITAGE STRATEGY 2020 - 2032

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Planning, the Conservation & Design Manager and the Economy and Community Services Manager to the meeting and invited the Cabinet Member for Planning, to introduce the report.

The Cabinet Member for Planning said that the strategy outlined the at-risk heritage in the Borough and was a positive step forward in promoting the heritage and visitor economy in Swale. He said that there had not been a review of the 50 Conservation Areas in the Borough for many years and the strategy would help to identify future development risks.

The Conservation & Design Manager said that the strategy was long-overdue and good progress was being made on it. He explained that the strategy was currently out for formal consultation and so far approximately 50 responses had been received with generally positive comments including suggestions of future sites to consider. The Conservation & Design Manager said that there had already been discussions with Historic England, liaison with officers about implementing the work programme and he welcomed community group involvement. He outlined the process for the strategy to be adopted.

Members of the Committee raised issues which included:

- Who would fund the works needed to salvage properties?;
- suggested help and support for voluntary and community groups to access funding;
- suggested adding the date of when each Conservation Area was last reviewed to the strategy document;
- suggested a priority list of buildings that needed attention;
- some information needed updating on the Appendix (p.98 Kemsley Arms);
- spoke of previous sites where pressure to carry out work was unsuccessful; and
- sought clarification on spending plan of £250k.

In response, the Conservation & Design Manager said that Swale Borough Council's (SBC) role was an enabling role and it only had the resource to tackle the worst issues. He said that there were limited heritage grants and funding from various sources. The Conservation & Design Manager said that SBC had powers to put buildings back into order and each case would be considered individually, but if more drastic action such as a compulsory purchase order was necessary, more funding would be required.

The Conservation & Design Manager advised that there would likely be additional entries to the At Risk register (Appendix II). He agreed that there had been issues on a difficult site and said that communication with owners on another site was being re-established.

The Cabinet Member for Planning clarified that £250k was the lifetime of the budget over three years. He referred Members to the alternative options at paragraphs 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 on page 9 of the report and said that the progress made would be considered after 3 years. The Conservation & Design Manager added that any further action after the initial 3 year Action Plan would have to be considered by Cabinet for further funding or managed within existing resource.

In the discussion that followed, Members gave examples of buildings and issues in the Borough that required attention including addressing the access issues to the

Faversham engine and carriage shed buildings and works to Radfield House, London Road, Teynham.

A Member suggested including timings, priorities and rationale in the Action Plan. The Conservation & Design Manager agreed but said that the rationale was set out in the body of the text. The Cabinet Member for Planning explained that there would be flexibility in the Action Plan when grant funding was received and items would then become a higher priority.

In response to a Member's question on the exclusion of the Ospringe/Syndale Conservation Area on page 89 of the report, the Conservation & Design Manager advised that the priority would be the Faversham and Faversham-next-Preston Conservation Areas, and Ospringe/Syndale would be considered later.

In response to a Member's question on reporting action required on buildings and land in Sittingbourne High Street, the Conservation & Design Manager explained that the process of reporting to Planning Enforcement or Development Management would be the same, once the strategy was adopted. He said that there were many freehold owners and different issues such as unauthorised works or signage and there would be cross-working within Council departments. The Cabinet Member for Planning added that Sittingbourne High Street was a priority.

A Member welcomed the strategy but said in order to protect buildings for the future and avoid further dis-repair, they should be highlighted as a building of importance by displaying a plaque or similar, explaining its importance. He suggested that information on how Conservation Areas were applied for should be added to the strategy and he sought clarification on the consideration of new development adjacent to Conservation Areas within planning applications. In the debate that followed, the Conservation and Design Manager explained that there were policies that gave consideration to development within or adjacent to a Conservation Area, and the Cabinet Member for Planning said that any development should not have a negative impact on a Conservation Area, but this was subjective, and he gave an example of a recent planning appeal. The Conservation & Design Manager added that there was a wide range of criteria to consider, it was a Local Authority's discretion to designate Conservation Areas, subject to public consultation and this could be challenged if not justified. He added that the range of Designated Conservation Areas was different for each Local Authority.

A Member said that heritage was about where people lived and residents needed to be educated about local history and their surroundings. He suggested that the Heritage Policy should give more assistance to local organisations and suggested visits to schools to educate children. In response, the Cabinet Member for Planning said that once the strategy was up and running, the next stage of informing residents would be considered. A Member suggested using 'Inside Swale' to publicise.

The Economy and Community Services Manager spoke about building stronger and better relationships with communities and voluntary organisations and said that support would be given to community ambassadors in the Borough. She highlighted the former Swale Museums Group, now an arms-length organisation with charitable objects, and Historic Swale, who were able to access funding not

available to the public sector and which had delivered its own projects. The Economy and Community Services Manager drew attention to a scheduled meeting being held on Saturday 21 March 2020 to bring groups together across the Borough to address community issues and she said there would be guest speakers in attendance.

The Economy and Community Services Manager confirmed that whilst Sittingbourne was no longer formally twinned with Ypres, there was still a relationship and projects could be worked on together.

A Member highlighted vacant Listed Buildings in a state of disrepair in Milton Regis and the Conservation & Design Manager said that as part of one of the Action Plan items, these would be looked at systematically unless there was any urgency.

A Member stressed the importance of outreaching to different organisations whilst another Member drew attention to the Heritage Plaque Trail and said that work was already being carried out on empty properties.

Resolved:

(1) That the draft Heritage Strategy and associated Action Plan and recommended changes arising out of the current public consultation be noted.

490 CORPORATE PLAN 2020 - 2023

The Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services gave apologies from the Leader.

The Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services said that the comments from the Committee's first discussion on the Corporate Plan in September 2019 had been incorporated into the document which was now open for public consultation until 1 March 2020.

Members were invited to ask questions and make comments.

Priority 1: Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all

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Members sought clarification on what was meant by 'brownfield land' in 'urban centres'. In the discussion that followed, the Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services explained that the focus was on town centres and priorities should not define or limit areas in a document of this level. He reminded Members that this was a high level document from which much more detailed pieces of work would subsequently flow. The Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services agreed to add 'suitable' to brownfield land.

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A Member highlighted the many commuters to London from the Borough and said there was nothing in the document to address how to attract roles in the Borough. In response, the Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services said that development of higher skilled employment opportunities was likely to encourage higher wages. A Member said that the Borough needed houses that residents could afford to live in near their place of work.

The Cabinet Member for Planning said that Gordon Henderson MP would be lobbying Central Government to expand the outer London weighting to Swale and encouraged Members to support the MP.

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A Member suggested including apprenticeships with further and higher education.

Priority 2: Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challengesPage 109 2.5

A Member said that it was unachievable to keep the Borough clean by SBC alone and he said that recycling should be a priority not a focus. Another Member suggested including '**Work with other agencies** to ensure that the borough is kept clean'. The Chairman drew attention that the priority was expanded on pages 114 – 115. A discussion ensued and the Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services explained that the current waste contract ran until the end of this Corporate Plan. The Cabinet Member for Planning said that recycling remained a priority.

Priority 4: Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future.

A Member said that there should be more forward thinking and consideration of what SBC were doing inwardly.

Resolved:

(1) That the comments on the consultation draft of the corporate plan 2020-2023 from the Policy Development and Review Committee be included and the draft plan be noted.

491 POLICIES, PLANS, STRATEGIES AND DECISIONS DUE FOR REVIEW IN 2019/20

The Policy and Performance Officer explained that the Overarching Enforcement policy would be considered at the next meeting on 4 March 2020. He advised that the first meeting of the next civic year would take place in June 2020.

The Chairman asked Members for suggestions of policies to review.

A Member suggested reviewing the policy on Borough-wide parking/residents permit parking. The Policy and Performance Officer said that there had been a previous Scrutiny review on this topic, and suggested a review on whether it was working efficiently. A Member said that roads were not designed for the amount of parking and more awareness of parking across the Borough was needed.

A Member spoke about the lack of a Biodiversity Enforcement Officer to advise on hedgerows within planning applications. The Cabinet Member for Planning agreed to discuss this with the Head of Planning Services.

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

Chairman

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