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## POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Committee Room, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 4 March 2020 from 7.00pm - 9.16pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Mike Dendor, Alastair Gould (Chairman), Ann Hampshire, Peter Marchington (Substitute for Councillor Ken Pugh), Benjamin Martin, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, Sarah Stephen, Ghlin Whelan (Vice-Chairman) and Corrie Woodford.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Zoe Callaway, Steph Curtis, Charlotte Hudson, Kellie MacKenzie, Sarah Porter, Bob Pullen and Roxanne Sheppard.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Steve Davey, Ben J Martin (Cabinet Member for Housing), Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Community), Hannah Perkin, Eddie Thomas and Tim Valentine (Cabinet Member for Environment).

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Ken Pugh.

### 606 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 607 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 January 2020 (Minute Nos. 486 – 491) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 608 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 609 CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman changed the order of business as minuted.

At this point a Member spoke about the Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) meeting held on 16 October 2019, when the Committee had been asked to consider Area Committees. He spoke about his disappointment that the report to Cabinet on 12 February 2020 did not reflect any of the suggestions put forward by the Committee. The Chairman noted the comments.

The Member also raised concern that he had only received the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan report a few minutes before the meeting. He stated that this was unacceptable and he would not be able to consider it.

Councillor Lloyd Bowen moved the following motion: "That agenda item No. 5 (Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan) be deferred for

consideration at a future PDRC meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Dendor.

The Policy and Performance Officer stated that the report had been emailed to Committee Members on Monday 2 March 2020.

The Cabinet Member for Environment apologised that it had not been possible to publish the report with the agenda. He explained that the officer working on the report had been off sick for a month and an external consultant had been asked to produce the report. He welcomed the input of the Committee.

On being put to the vote the motion to defer the item was lost.

## **610 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Housing to the meeting and invited him to introduce the report.

The Cabinet Member stated that in Swale the demand for social housing was greater than the number of homes available, and the Allocations Policy set-out how social housing in the Borough was allocated. The current policy needed to be updated following a number of changes in Government legislation. He drew attention to Table 2 on page 7 of the report, which set-out the review of qualification criteria and the proposed recommendations.

The Head of Housing, Economy and Community introduced the Housing Options Manager and Policy and Performance Officer, both of whom had worked hard to produce the report. She stressed the importance of ensuring the policy was right as there was not much housing coming forward.

Members considered the report and the following points were made:

- Excellent report;
- slight concern that the recommendations could leave it open for other Local Authorities (LA) to re-house people in Swale;
- welcomed the reduction of residency to 2 years; and
- 2 year residency fair and simple but what would the implications be?;

In response to questions from Members, the Policy and Performance Officer stated that they did not record residency numbers and would need to look at a years worth of applications to be able to quantify this. The Housing Options Manager stated that reducing the residency to 2 years would help to reduce their workload.

A Member referred to Table 3 (Residency and Local Connection Criteria) on page 8 of the report, and asked how a person fleeing domestic abuse and staying with family, rather than in a refuge would qualify? The Policy and Performance Officer explained that they would not, and would need to register as homeless and go through the correct process.

In response to a query from a Member, the Policy and Performance Officer reported that with regard to prison release cases, if they had been resident in Swale and

were located in a prison outside of the area, they would be considered for housing. The Head of Housing, Economy and Community explained that prison release was a complex issue and it was important that they were settled near family and friends to ensure they had a support network following release.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing, Head of Housing, Economy and Community, Housing Options Manager and Policy and Performance Officer for attending the meeting.

**Recommendations:**

**(1) That the residency in Swale be reduced to 2 years in-line with recommended guidance.**

**(2) That officers look at providing a suitable affordability taper for Faversham.**

**611 CCTV POLICY**

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Community and the Economy and Community Services Manager to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Community introduced the report and explained that the draft Public Space CCTV Policy, set-out at Appendix I to the report, complied with Government legislation and the Council's legal obligations. It would be considered by Cabinet on 22 April 2020.

In response to a query from a Member, the Head of Housing, Economy and Community Services stated that the Council was still contracted with Medway and they were reviewing the out-of-hours service separately.

A Member asked whether CCTV in town centres could be used in regard to illegal parking? The Economy and Community Services Manager stated that this could be considered but it was about whether the Police had the resources. Other partner agencies including parking control would be consulted.

Following a request from a Member, the Economy and Community Services Manager explained that it would be for officers to decide where the cameras were installed to ensure the relevant criteria was met.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Community and Economy and Community Services Manager for attending the meeting.

**612 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Interim Policy and Performance Manager to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report which provided an update on the Council's response to the declaration of a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency. He explained that an action plan was required to mitigate against a changing climate and this was set-out at Appendix I of the report.

The Cabinet Member explained that due to staff sickness it had been necessary to engage an external consultant to produce the action plan. He stressed that it was a 'living' document which would be considered by Full Council at their meeting on 1 April 2020 as specified in the declaration. He referred to the six main focus areas on page 9 of the action plan.

The Cabinet Member referred to the 10 possible actions. He also talked about some of the enabling tools and explained that of the potential actions some required changes in national and local legislation.

In response to concerns about the quality of the Action Plan, the Interim Policy and Performance Manager accepted there were issues with the report, and explained that this was due to the consultant not having a working knowledge of local authorities. It had been decided that it would be better for Members to have the long list of actions to consider and to actively give feedback.

The Cabinet Member asked Members for feedback and suggestions for actions.

Members raised points and asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Policy and Performance Manager. A summary is provided below:

- Some of the introduction needed rewriting to make it more meaningful;
- some of the graphs were not clear and were difficult to read;
- had a Special Projects Fund been established? The Cabinet Member for Environment stated that it had;
- concerned about the suggestion to increase the range of edible fruits etc. in Council owned parks, rooftops and open spaces;
- every action should outline the financial implications and needed to be pragmatic and accept that some might be too costly to action;
- alarmist to refer to 'mass extinction. The Cabinet Member explained that this referred across all animal species and not just humans;
  
- suggested the following action points:
  - How we share knowledge with parish and town councils;
  - how we resource;
  - enabling tools;
  - leading by example – where electric vehicle (EV) charging points should be provided;
  - supporting local residents;
  - Local Plan;
  - EVs as a borough and what was required from Kent County Council (KCC);
  - air quality;
  - recycling – want to increase blue bin waste and decrease green bin waste; and
  - green space – which fitted in with biodiversity and ecology.
  
- communication and education were key;

- the Council should be encouraging local businesses and schools to provide environmentally friendly lighting which was switched off when the site was not in use. Was there a way we could enforce this? The Cabinet Member for Environment stated that that would fall under the 'Education' category and be managed by Building Management Systems;
- could the actions be linked to their impacts and costs?;
- should include a carbon saving figure;
- important to ensure that schools, businesses etc. were aware of any funding that was available to help them ensure their premises were carbon neutral;
- noted that the two previous reports did not include the environmental and climate implications. The Interim Policy and Performance Manager reported that the implications table for reports had recently been updated to include 'Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency';
- the Department for Education restricted what schools could do in terms of making buildings carbon neutral. It was important to lobby Government to change this and ensure that they focused on where revenue was needed; and
- recommended that a grid be included showing the cost, carbon reduction, responsible person and timescales.

The Committee then went through the Action Plan page-by-page and raised the following questions and points:

#### **Scope – page 10**

- The three-point framework could detail the emissions more clearly and not sure the diagrams added anything;

#### **Communication and collaboration – page 11**

- Remove the diagrams, they add nothing;

#### **Enabling tools – cross cutting themes and actions pages 12 and 13**

- Needed to make it clear to builders etc. how to access relevant funding;
- need to ensure that contractors were up-to-date with the latest technology;
- 2,000 eco refits a year was not realistic;
- what was 'salix' funding? The Cabinet Member for Environment explained that this was interest free public sector funding; and
- relevant Kent-wide documents were missing which meant that some Swale and Kent context was missing.

#### **Buildings and energy efficiency – pages 14 to 18**

- What could be done to encourage developers to ensure new buildings were carbon neutral? The Cabinet Member for Environment said that it was important that the Council's planning officers were educated on this and they could support developers at the planning application stage. Unfortunately houses were still being built that would need to be retrofitted in the future.

This could be resolved through the Council's Local Plan but this would take time;

- needed to check that the Council and Parish and Town Councils updated street lights that they were responsible for with energy efficient bulbs;
- error on page 15, the word 'city' needed to be removed.

### **Transport and air quality – pages 19 to 24**

- The Council should provide more cycle parking to assist commuters;
- need to think more creatively about public transport and have more disincentives to drive;
- aware that a transport policy was being developed via the Local Plan;
- needed to consider other technology options such as hydrogen vehicles; and
- the Council should be more proactive in ensuring that the Borough had a decent bus provision.

### **Resource consumption and waste – pages 25 - 27**

- Welcomed the reduced plastic use and should not use reusable plastic;
- not sure paper straws were a good alternative as people often had to use more of them as they went pulpy;
- water leaks were currently a huge problem as many water pipes were old and needed to be replaced.

### **Ecology and biodiversity**

- Welcomed the tree planting strategy;
- the construction industry needed to improve the way they dealt with landscaping for new developments;
- the Council should encourage hedges instead of fencing on new developments. This would be good for biodiversity;
- needed to ensure that verges were cut during the correct season to protect pollination;
- were the Council doing enough to protect nesting birds? Planning officers needed to be aware of this; and
- allotments were classed as brownfield sites.

### **Energy generation and storage – pages 33 to 36**

- Should not consider establishing a Council-owned energy company – recommend this be removed; and
- welcome introduction of a viability survey at all council owned sites to accommodate further solar photovoltaic panels.

### **Resilience, adaptation and offsetting – pages 37 to 42**

- Queried whether poly-tunnels should be supported;
- Poly-tunnels increased the fruit yield by 40%; and
- would be useful if the use of fire works could be banned on Council land as it had an impact on air quality.

Councillor Mike Dendor asked that it be recorded that he did not consider two days to read and consider such an important document was acceptable, and did not feel that it should be considered by Full Council on 1 April 2020.

The Interim Policy and Performance Manager stated that Members could forward further comments to officers.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Policy and Performance Manager for attending the meeting.

**613 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the work programme. He advised that he would let Members know when other policies, plans and strategies were coming forward for consideration.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the Committee Work Programme be noted.***

Chairman

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