

AGENDA

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday, 24 September 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, Benjamin 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 17 July 2019 (Minute Nos. 133 - 138) 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. Corporate Plan 2020-2023

5 - 8

The Committee is asked to consider an initial draft of new strategic priorities, providing input and challenge.

6. Constitution Review - Area Committees

9 - 20

The committee is asked to review progress made by the working group and agree a provisional recommendation on the geography of area committees.

7. Work Programme

To receive a verbal update.

Issued on Monday, 16 September 2019

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

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Corporate plan 2020-2023: Discussion paper for PDRC

Background to the corporate plan

1. The council's corporate plan is the overarching statement of the organisation's vision and objectives for a medium-term period, in practice generally the duration of a single administration. It is the document which sits at the 'pinnacle' of the council's strategies and plans, from which each of those documents should broadly take its cue. As such it represents the principal component of the statutory policy framework within which cabinet exercises its executive decision-making authority. It is cabinet's role to develop each new plan, but adoption is a matter for full council.
2. The plan establishes the political and managerial priorities on which the organisation will focus over the lifetime of the plan. Without attempting to cover in any detail all of the objectives to be pursued by every department, it sets the overall tone for resource allocation, establishing which activities and high-level objectives are priorities and, by implication, which are not.
3. Balanced against this, however, the plan also represents the strategic end of the 'golden thread' which runs down through departments' operational service plans to individual officers' annual performance appraisals as a means of ensuring that the council's efforts across the full range of its disparate activities are marshalled as coherently as possible.
4. In an ideal world the plan will thus square the circle of establishing clear political priorities while also providing a 'hook' for all teams – including those whose roles are essential but only indirectly related to the specific priorities of the administration – to link their work to the overall ambitions of the council.
5. The device in recent iterations of the plan of setting out a number of very specific objectives which are then organised under a smaller number of much broader priorities was an attempt at such circle-squaring, one which has worked fairly well and which we would probably want to carry over into the new plan.
6. It is worth emphasising that the corporate plan is primarily an internal document. Clearly it needs to take significant account of the political manifesto of the administration, but it does also need to be influenced by the type of general strategic analysis that all organisations, including those less overtly political than a local authority, need to conduct from time to time: this would include analyses of the macro environment (economic, fiscal, social, legal, and indeed political) within which the organisation has to achieve its ambitions.

7. As the key component of the council's overarching policy framework, the plan should also broadly reflect the priorities of the whole council rather than solely the administration.

Timetable for developing the new plan

8. The administration elected in May has moved quickly to agree its main priorities and ensure that these are communicated to staff. Action has begun on them, and the need to produce a revised corporate plan has therefore not been as urgent as might otherwise have been the case.
9. In the longer term, however, it is unlikely that any administration's list of purely political priorities would serve a council well as a substitute for a corporate plan, and even less so as the principal component of the statutory policy framework. It is therefore important that the council moves to develop a new corporate plan during this municipal year.
10. There are some constitutional requirements which have an impact on the duration of this work, including the need to ensure adequate consultation with members and with the public. The intention is for the final plan to come to annual council for adoption in May, which will require us to have a consultation draft completed by the end of the calendar year.
11. As the first stage in the consultation process with PDRC, a first draft of a set of possible priorities and objectives is attached at Appendix I. PDRC is asked to comment on the appropriateness of these and make suggestions for improvement. Once the priorities and objectives are broadly agreed, the rest of the plan can be written around these.
12. Between now and the start of the public consultation in the winter, there will be further consultation with cabinet members, group leaders and senior officers. A further PDRC discussion on the consultation draft will be scheduled for early in the new year.

David Clifford
Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services
September 2019

APPENDIX I: INITIAL DRAFT OF PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Priority 1:

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

- 1.1 Use the local plan review to ensure that future housing delivery is more closely aligned to the borough's housing needs in terms of location, type and tenure, and that opportunities to improve physical and social infrastructure through housing growth are fully exploited.
- 1.2 Work with registered providers and developers to pursue all viable opportunities for increasing the supply of affordable and social housing across the borough.
- 1.3 Develop a new economic improvement strategy to expand the range of employment opportunities in the borough, focusing on higher-skilled employment and considering the role of a living wage.
- 1.4 Support students, workers and businesses to improve the borough's vocational skill levels, and vigorously pursue all opportunities to enhance the provision and accessibility of further and higher education for Swale residents at all stages of their careers.
- 1.5 Implement the visitor economy framework to increase investment, address new visitor demands and grow the value of the sector to the Swale economy.
- 1.6 Encourage the development of high-quality housing with an appropriate range of tenure options on brownfield land in central Sittingbourne, improving both the appearance and the economic and environmental sustainability of the High Street.

Priority 2:

Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges

- 2.1 Develop a coherent strategy to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies, aiming for carbon neutrality in the council's own operations by 2025 and in the whole borough by 2030.
- 2.2 Work with partners to develop measures to identify and address air quality issues throughout the borough.
- 2.3 Establish a special projects fund to provide much-needed capital investment in the borough's public realm and open spaces.
- 2.4 Recognise and support our local heritage to give people pride in where they live and boost the local tourism industry.
- 2.5 Keep the borough clean and well-maintained, and ensure that the council behaves as an exemplar environmental steward.

Priority 3:**Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone**

- 3.1 Take steps to help the most disadvantaged families and communities to embrace opportunities from economic growth, job creation and skills provision.
- 3.2 Reduce health inequality by developing more productive relationships with local health partners and making health implications a central consideration in all relevant council decision-making.
- 3.3 Develop a more communitarian approach to partnership working based on shared objectives with like-minded agencies in the voluntary and community sectors.
- 3.4 Ensure that the council plays a proactive role in community safety, including through the modernisation of CCTV provision and by working in partnership to improve opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities.
- 3.5 Promote improved wellbeing and enjoyment of life by facilitating and supporting a wide range of sporting, cultural and other leisure activities.

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

- 4.1 Review the council's constitution to diffuse decision-making power more widely among elected members and improve the transparency, responsiveness and public accountability of that decision-making.
- 4.2 Develop a cross-departmental corporate ethos focused on the priorities in this plan, and embed the Swale Manager programme to ensure a consistent understanding of the council's expectations of all managers.
- 4.3 Continue to reduce dependence on government-controlled funding sources and support staff to find innovative ways to ensure other objectives can be met in the context of diminished resources.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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| 24 September 2019 | Agenda Item 6 |
| Area Committees Working Group - Update | |
| Report author: | Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer |
| Recommendations | |
| That the Committee: | |
| (i) notes the consideration already undertaken by the Area Committees Working Group on the possible introduction of area committees | |

1 Purpose of report and executive summary

- 1.1 Policy Development and Review Committee established a working group to take forward consideration of whether the Council should introduce area committees as part of the constitutional review. This report updates the Committee on what the working group has considered to date.

2 Background

- 2.1 Improving public engagement in council decision-making is a major part of the constitutional review. At the last Policy Development and Review Committee a paper was presented which stimulated a discussion around the introduction of area committees.
- 2.2 Cabinet asked the Committee to investigate the reasons Swale might want to introduce area committees, what their purpose would be and what areas they would cover. The Committee resolved to establish a working group, consisting of Committee members and co-optees, to consider this further.

3 Discussion

- 3.1 The first meeting of the working group was held on 3 September and the members are as follows:

Councillor Benjamin Martin (Group Coordinator)
Councillor Mike Dendor
Councillor Alastair Gould
Councillor Ken Ingleton
Councillor Ken Rowles (sent apologies)
Councillor Julian Saunders.

- 3.2 The group considered what role area committees should have and what it was they were being established to achieve.

- 3.3 The group considered the questions in the proposed public consultation on area committees and suggested various changes which had been incorporated into the version which was published on 4 September with a deadline for responses by 2 November. The survey questions are at Appendix I.
- 3.4 The group discussed whether area committees should have delegated powers and resources in order to be able to make a difference on the ground. It was suggested that funding for public realm projects such as those envisaged for the Special Projects Fund could potentially be agreed by Area Committees. The prospect of available resources for local projects should also serve to boost interest, engagement and attendance. It was important to remember that whatever membership areas committee had, it would still be the responsibility of the Borough Council to take decisions on the allocation of its own resources.
- 3.5 The working group considered what other matters area committees might cover. It was noted that individual planning applications would not be suitable for discussion because of issues around predetermination and the likely frequency of meetings would not correspond. Spatial planning was also discussed and this would probably sit more appropriately with an area committee system.
- 3.6 It was noted that area committees could form a useful role in enabling the gathering of views for areas that were unparished.
- 3.7 The group also considered how many area committees there might be and which area should be covered by each committee. The two possible models put forward in the public consultation are:
- a three committee model with the wards based around the town centres and surrounding rural hinterland for Faversham, Sheppey and Sittingbourne; and
 - a four committee model, with the Faversham and Sheppey areas defined as above, but with two committees covering Sittingbourne, one urban and one rural.
- 3.8 One alternative to this, to reflect that the urban areas within Sittingbourne were unparished, would be to create a sub-committee for the Sittingbourne unparished wards under a main Sittingbourne area committee in the three committee model. However, it was noted that this might create disparity between a Sheppey area committee as some parts of the Queenborough and Halfway ward were unparished. The group also discussed the importance of the relationship between area committees and parish and town councils.
- 3.9 In terms of public participation and attendance, it was agreed it was important to provide the impetus for people to want to attend, and for all those who wanted to participate to be able to do so. In that respect, it would be important to adapt the format of the committees to provide a meeting in which the public felt comfortable to speak, while still following the legislative requirements under which all council committees operate.

- 3.10 In terms of frequency of meetings, the group felt that two or three per year would be a good starting point.
- 3.11 The groups initial considerations will need to take into account responses to the public consultation which closes on 2 November. A summary of initial responses to the consultation will be tabled at the Committee for members' consideration.
- 3.12 The working group is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday 8 October.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the consideration already undertaken by the Area Committees Working Group on the possible introduction of area committees.

5 Appendices and background papers

Appendix I: Public consultation survey on area committees

6 Officer contacts

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

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What is this survey about?

As part of a review of our constitution, a working group of the Council's Policy Development and Review Committee is investigating whether the council should set up three or more area committees.

We want to ask for your views on whether we should set up area committees, and, if we do, what form they should take, and what powers they should have.

Responses to this survey will let the working group know what residents think, and will help them come up with options for their report.

What Area Committees can do

Area committees can take many forms. For example, their membership can be made up of:

- **borough councillors**
- **representatives from other bodies in the area, including parish and town councils**
- **members of the public**

They can undertake a variety of roles, they can act as:

- **an engagement mechanism**
- **advisory and consultative committees**
- **decision-making committees that allocate money to certain projects**

Why we're asking about introducing them

Devolving power making and decisions to local areas is one of the priorities of the new administration, along with improving public engagement in decision-making. Area committees can give local residents an opportunity to observe and take part in our decision-making arrangements.

Other information

A special projects fund of up to £1m per year is being made available to spend on public realm and open spaces. This fund will be spent on local projects which benefit residents. It is predicted that projects would include real improvements on a meaningful scale to play areas, improving the public realm and funding new initiatives to promote social inclusion.

We would also like to understand whether you think area committees could decide how some of these funds could be allocated.

These would be non-political committees that would not be politically balanced but would be made up of Councillors representing their areas.

1. Do you think we should have area committees and what difference do you think they could make to you and your area?

What should they do?

2. What do you think area committees should do? (you can choose more than one)

- area based meetings where Councillors take decisions on local matters
- engagement (for example listening to presentations and giving feedback)
- make decisions on what projects get funding from the special projects fund
- a combination of engagement and consultative
- consultative (for example actively responding to consultations as part of a deliberative process)

Other (please specify)

Membership

* 3. Who should be invited to attend?

Note: Area committees are likely to be fully constituted committees with published agendas, reports and minutes, and with meetings held in public and minuted to record decisions and actions, therefore only borough Councillors could vote on decisions. Other members would be unable to vote in decisions, but would be able to contribute their opinions and views

You can choose more than one

- Swale borough Councillors
- local Kent county council Councillors
- representatives from local parish and town councils
- local service delivery partners (such as Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, Optivo, Swale Community and Voluntary Services etc)
- Other (please specify)

Areas covered

4. How many committees should there be and which areas should they cover?[click here to view ward map of Swale](#)

- Three** covering:
- **Faversham** (Abbey; Boughton and Courtenay; East Downs; Priory; St Ann's; Teynham and Lynsted; and Watling)
 - **Sittingbourne** (Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Chalkwell; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; The Meads; West Downs; and Woodstock)
 - **Sheppey** (Minster Cliffs; Queenborough and Halfway; Sheerness; Sheppey Central; and Sheppey East)
- Four** covering
- **Faversham** (as above)
 - **Sittingbourne urban** (Chalkwell; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; The Meads; and Woodstock)
 - **Sittingbourne rural** (Bobbing, Iwade and lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; West Downs)
 - **Sheppey** (as above)
- Other (please specify)

Public participation

5. What role would the public have?

- Speaking about an item
- Nominating particular project for funding
- Advocating for a particular project for funding
- Other (please specify)

Frequency

6. How often would you be willing to attend an area committee?

- Quarterly (4 times a year)
- Six monthly (2 times a year)
- Bi-monthly (6 times a year)

Other (please specify)

7. Any other comments, thoughts or suggestions?

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