



## AGENDA

### POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 9 September 2020

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting Via Skype\*

Membership:

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

Quorum = 3

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Pages

#### Information for the Public

\*Members of the press and public can listen to this meeting live. Details of how to join the meeting will be added to the website after 4pm on Tuesday 8 September 2020.

#### Privacy Statement

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1. Apologies for Absence and Confirmation of Substitutes
2. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting held on 4 March 2020 (Minute Nos. 606 - 613) as a correct record.

### 3. 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 consider**

#### 4. Swale Economic Improvement Plan 2020-2023 5 - 16

The Committee is asked to consider the draft Economic Improvement Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property and the Community Services Manager have been invited to attend for this item.

#### 5. Draft 2019/20 Annual Report to Council 17 - 30

The Committee is asked to consider and agree the draft annual report for 2019/20 to Council.

**Issued on 1 September, 2020**

The reports included in this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about this Committee please visit [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk)

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

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<b>PDRC Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
<b>Report Title</b>	Economic Improvement Plan
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Monique Bonney, Cabinet Member for Economy and Property
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Economy, Communities and Housing
<b>Head of Service</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Economy, Communities and Housing
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Kieren Mansfield, Economy and Community Services Manger
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. PDRC are asked to consider, discuss and make comment on the document to inform the final document to be presented to Cabinet.

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report presents the Draft Economic Improvement Plan 2020-2023, which sets out the priorities for the Council and the headline actions it intends to take in respect of the future development of the local economy. This document is being used to consult with the public, local businesses, and a wider set of partner organisations, which alongside discussion and comment from PDRC , will inform the final document to be presented to Cabinet.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The Council currently has an Economic Regeneration Framework 2018-21, adopted in July 2018. Produced under the previous Conservative administration, this document set out four priority areas, under which there are a number of ‘areas of focus’, providing some further detail under each priority.
- 2.2 Whilst the four ‘headline’ priorities in the Economic Regeneration Framework remain relevant to the Borough, the detail beneath this has been considered in light of the new coalition administration’s priorities and approach, resulting in the appended, new draft document. This is acknowledged in the Draft Economic Improvement Plan as a change in emphasis, with *“more focus on indigenous growth, focused around start-up and small and medium enterprises (SME’s); an intent to ‘up the ante’ in supporting and developing the visitor economy and makes clear our wish to pursue economic improvement, but not at any cost.”*

2.3 The Economic Improvement Plan was originally drafted prior to the COVID-19 crisis but was reviewed in light of current circumstances. This includes the identification of short-term (within a year) actions which are focused on immediate recovery, with more medium-term actions identified as work to be undertaken towards the administrations established ambitions.

### 3 Proposals

3.1 The Draft Economic Improvement Plan sets out the coalition administration’s priorities for the local economy and intended to replace the existing Economic Regeneration Framework. PDRC are asked to consider, discuss and make comment on the document to inform the final document to be presented to Cabinet.

### 4 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

4.1 The draft Economic Improvement Plan has been consulted upon from the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020, for a period of 8 weeks. In addition to 2000+ local business contacts comments have also been invited from KCC, Parish Councils, business representative organisations and other key partners. At the time of writing the response has been muted, with 10 responses received via the online questionnaire.

4.2 Broadly speaking the responses indicate agreement with content of the economic improvement plan with comments reflecting the following points: -

- Agreement with the four headline priorities for the most part, but with some dissent in respect of the skills agenda and its value for inclusion within a strategy for a district authority.
- A question of whether the time horizon is too short and the need for longer-term thinking and ambitions.
- The need to translate words into action.

### 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The Economic Improvement Plan aligns with the Corporate Plan
Financial, Resource and Property	Delivery of the Economic Improvement will need to make use of the Council’s existing available resources and compliment this through strong partnership working, and the pursuit of external funding and investment. The creation of new commercial floor space, supported through the Council’s economic improvement activity, contributes significantly to the Councils budget through retained Non-Domestic Rates. Actions taken, particularly related to infrastructure, will also have wider implications for future housing delivery and the consequent impacts on future Council tax receipts. The action plan seeks to identify where existing budgets

	and staff are to be used and where other resources will be required or need to be identified and assumes the current level of resources available.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Economic improvement is not a statutory function of the local authority but activity within the plan relates closely to a number of areas where the Council has statutory duties, in particular the Local Plan.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The Economic Improvement Plan reflects the local economy, its impacts on the environment and its contribution to the climate emergency. Actions are identified, which have been aligned with the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan.
Health and Wellbeing	Improving and enabling access to employment, skills and other opportunities will make a significant contribution to the overall well-being of residents of the Borough.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage. It should be noted that delivery against the Economic Regeneration Framework is, in part, dependent upon the working relationship with government and other partners and the funding decisions that are made by the private sector and at a county, regional and national level. This of itself places important elements of delivery beyond the Council's immediate control, mitigated by our ability to make a strong case to decision makers. Where direct Council investment is made and /or external funding is secured (for which the Council is the accountable body) appropriate controls will need to be in place to manage any financial and other risks.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage

## 7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Draft Economic Improvement Plan 2020-23

## 8 Background Papers

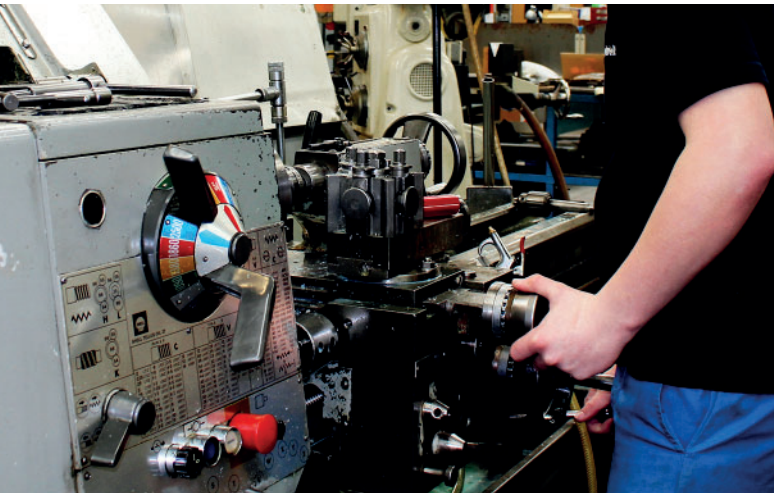
8.1 Report to Cabinet, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018, Swale Economic Regeneration Framework.

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# Swale Economic Improvement Plan

2020 – 2023



## Swale's Economic Improvement Plan 2020-2023

Even prior to the economic challenges created by the COVID-19 crisis, the performance of Swale's economy presented a mixed picture. Overall recent years have seen growth, reflected in the scale of activity and the number of jobs available across the Borough. This is to be welcomed, but the Council also recognises that there remain long-standing issues, with the COVID-19 crisis both compounding these and presenting new challenges.

This Economic Improvement Plan takes the opportunity to review our priorities for economic improvement in the Borough. There will need to be a focus on playing our part in helping meet some of the immediate challenges the Boroughs economy now faces, but we are also determined to take advantage of untapped potential, for longer-term benefit. Despite the undoubted challenges we face, we believe it remains the case that there is an opportunity to contribute to strengthening our economy for the future, deliver improved quality and choice in local employment opportunities and enhance quality of life for residents.

This document sets out our priorities under four headings; raising Swale's profile; securing investment and infrastructure; supporting local business and improving skills. These will be familiar themes to those conversant with the Boroughs efforts to improve the local economy to date. However, this plan presents a clear change of emphasis that reflects not only the Councils new ethos but, we believe, also repositions local economic priorities in manner well suited to addressing some of the new, immediate challenges. There is more focus on indigenous growth, focused around start-up and small and medium enterprises (SME's); an intent to 'up the ante' in supporting and developing the visitor economy and makes clear our wish to pursue economic improvement, but not at any cost. There will be more effort to improve the quality of the investment and the jobs available locally and the need to promote a more sustainable approach, reflecting the climate emergency and environmental challenges that many of our communities' face.

The Plan also has a relatively short time horizon. The economic circumstances we now face are uncertain and there will be a need to regularly review how we are responding to the prevailing circumstances and how these are impacting upon our longer-term ambitions. To assist, we will continue to monitor what could be a rapidly changing economic context over the period of the plan and adapt our approach accordingly. The individual actions identified are split between those which will be our focus in the short-term, and those which contribute to longer-term ambitions of the Council for local economic improvement.

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### Key local issues

The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both the national and local economies is not yet clear, but it will undoubtedly be severe. Beyond the forced closures and loss of business and income for so many, new ways of having to work and do business will become part of a 'new normal'. Unemployment has risen sharply, and many local businesses and residents will be facing an uncertain future.

Whilst the Council will play its part in responding to immediate challenges, it will not lose sight of longstanding issues that need to be tackled, some made worse by the crisis and all now set against a changing context.

The Borough has been successful in attracting inward investment, particularly from the industrial sectors, but combined with environmental and infrastructure constraints this means we are seeing a tightening supply employment land. There is a need to make sure that a future supply of employment land is secured through the Local Plan. However, there is also a wish to make sure that we are making the most of a broader spectrum of job creating opportunities, to compliment the portfolio of traditional employment land allocations, with growth encouraged from less land hungry uses.

It also remains the case that there is a gap between the employment available in the Borough and the jobs that are needed. Despite local employment growth, Swale has a low ratio between jobs and working age population, something common to many parts of Kent. Average workplace earnings are also well behind both County and regional averages, although average residents earning are broadly in line with the norm. This reflects the need for both more and better paid jobs in the Borough and the current gap is helping drive the volume of out-commuting that occurs. It is unclear as to how the COVID-19 may affect the labour market locally, including residents future choices in terms of commuting, but this re-enforces the need to extend choice of opportunity to work more locally.

With significant concentrations of manufacturing and transport and distribution, there is a need to further diversify, to create a more resilient local economy, in which average workplace wages can be pushed higher. There are a number of sectors in which average wage levels are higher, but which are either currently under-represented in Swale or are in evidence through a proliferation of micro-businesses, providing more limited employment. As an example, the creative industries represent only 7% of all businesses, the lowest concentration in Kent. Another is the professional, scientific and technical sectors, where despite representing around 14% of all local businesses, only provides 6.1% of employment, with little growth in recent years. The Council needs to understand the barriers and what could be done to support growth in such sectors.

Economic inactivity and in particular skill levels within the working age population have remained a persistent problem for Swale, impacting not only on individuals opportunities but also the ability of employers to meet their workforce requirements locally. Long-term health conditions play a significant role in the higher inactivity levels found locally, demonstrating the importance of meeting the wider infrastructure needs of the Borough. The skills gap is both a consequence and driver for the lower paid employment found locally and to meet the challenge a change in access to skills provision and employment that provides more opportunity are both required.

Due to the nature of businesses in Swale, the district has always had high energy consumption and emissions compared with other Kent districts. The 2017 total of 648.4kt CO<sub>2</sub> comprises 55% of the districts total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, although within the commercial sector there has been a 41% decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions between 2005-2017. There are also significant air quality issues, particularly focused around parts of the local road network, with population and economic growth both contributing to this.

To effectively tackle these issues, the Borough Council must engage with businesses and develop mutually supportive networks that support efforts that help tackle environmental impact, recognising that this can contribute to improved productivity. There will also remain a need for appropriate investments in the local infrastructure that will support tackling these challenges.



## Raising Swale's profile

Promoting Swale's assets is critical to delivering our priorities. A wider appreciation of the Borough's many natural and built assets and creating positive perceptions will significantly enhance our ability to attract interest, build value in the local property market, generate and retain investment and expand the visitor economy. We will build on the existing Swale Means Business and Visit Swale brands that have been developed in recent years and develop the associated on-line presence to showcase major assets such as Eurolink and the Port of Sheerness; the visitor offer; the areas fantastic natural environment and the many advantages of living in Swale.

However, with our desire to support locally driven employment growth we will also use these platforms to reach out to the local small businesses and make more of the local success stories which can help inspire local people to bring forward their ideas and to develop their businesses and promote the business support that is available to residents and local companies. In the short-term, a particular focus will be placed on reaching out to residents and businesses that can take advantage of support that is available.

The Council's new ethos and approach to delivering economic improvement and change is something which needs to be clearly articulated across a wide range of partner organisations, funders and the business community. The Council is developing a range of plans and strategies, that sit beneath the Corporate plan and we need to make sure that we develop a narrative for our economic ambitions that is consistent, understood by those we hope to work with and encourages them to play their part in securing the positive changes we hope to achieve. In the short term we also need to be making the case for the challenges the Borough is seeking to meet with funding bodies.

### Our priorities

In the short-term we will:-

- Put forward the Borough's case for support, as it is made available through Government, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other agencies, to aid the economic recovery of the Borough.
- Refresh and enhance the Swale Means Business Swale web presence, using social and other media to communicate with the local business community and increase our reach into the community of local SME's.
- Inspire local businesses through local 'success stories' that promote creativity, innovation and the use of technology, to help rebuild business success in the "new normal".

In addition we will:-

- Develop and present a clear narrative for the Borough's longer-term ambitions so that it is understood and reflected through the work of key bodies including Locate in Kent, Visit Kent, the Thames Estuary Commission and the South East LEP.
- Use the attributes of each area of Swale to promote places and the Borough as a whole as a great place to visit and invest.
- Work with partners to develop and promote shared stories about Swale as a great place in which to invest and do business.

## Securing investment and infrastructure

Properly funded and planned infrastructure, delivered at the right time is vital - not only to redress the adverse effects of development on our local communities, but also to unlock economic potential in the Borough. A broad and long-sighted view of the infrastructure that is needed is required, taking account of not only immediate issues (such as lorry and coach parking and congestion) but also future challenges and opportunities.

Recent years have seen a particular focus on delivering highway improvements to facilitate housing and help drive economic growth. Whilst road network issues need to be addressed, particularly where there are issues of road safety and air quality, we must also acknowledge the climate emergency, with the Council's goal for the Borough to be net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. Consequently, we will place more focus on infrastructure that supports this. Through the planning process, initiatives such as the emerging walking and cycling strategy and by lobbying government and business we wish to encourage modal shift for both people and freight. We will also support initiatives to help meet emerging sustainable infrastructure needs, such as electric vehicle charging points. Improved broadband services across the Borough are also an essential asset for the future, making on-line working credible in urban and rural communities alike, and reducing the need to travel.

Aside from helping address climate change, embracing this approach will also create new opportunities. Improved broadband connectivity will help stimulate economic activity in rural areas. Walking and cycling routes and good public transport links will support the visitor economy and also make it easier for residents to access employment and learning. And delivering against broader infrastructure needs, including education and health care will also support the economy by removing barriers to work and developing the pool of local labour available to business.

Our town centres are also an important area needing investment, to help them change, adapt and improve in the face of considerable challenge. The Council's attention has been largely focused on delivery of the major regeneration project in Sittingbourne Town Centre and it is our intention that we now move forward by looking at the wider opportunities that exist. Improving peoples experience and the way in which they relate to and use the town centres will be vital to bringing life back to them. We aim to improve the public realm and look after our heritage through a mix of investment and enforcement. Retail, leisure and other services will all continue to play a vital role, but we also need to diversify and give people a wider set of reasons to come into our town centres. This might include co-working and small studio space for homeworkers and small businesses and encouraging new residential communities into town centres where it makes sense to do so.

### Our priorities

In the short-term we will:-

- Work with partners and invest in improving the appearance, functionality and economic and environmental sustainability of our town centres, that can help meet the immediate challenges created by COVID-19 and encourage confidence amongst local residents and visitors
- Work with partners to introduce measures that encourage more walking and cycling to secure modal shift as well as develop the borough's visitor economy

In addition we will:-

- Offset housing growth and promote sustainable, local economic improvement through balanced improvements to physical, environmental, social and health infrastructure.

- Push for a range of measures that contribute to ease of movement and improved traffic management across the Borough, including appropriate improvements to the road network; alternative modes of freight transport; public transport provision; lorry and coach parking and measures that encourage walking and cycling.
- Where we can, promote the delivery of broadband and mobile services, that support the changing needs of both the urban and rural economies and residents working patterns.
- Develop and deliver clear strategies for our town centres, investing in improving their appearance and working with partners to diversify their offer to enhance the important role as centres for economic, cultural and community activity.
- Implement the visitor economy framework to increase investment, address new visitor demands and grow the value of the sector to the Swale economy.

## Supporting local business

This plan reflects our aspirations to create a positive commercial environment aimed at supporting local businesses, as well as attracting new investment. We believe that it is primarily through new businesses and growing existing small and medium enterprises (SME's) that sustainable and more diverse employment growth can be achieved, less vulnerable to remote decisions, driven by macro-economic influences.

Swale Borough Council wants to provide proactive support and guidance to local small businesses to help them achieve and sustain their ambitions and deliver the economic benefits to the borough. It has worked hard to establish a business facing brand through Swale Means Business and delivers a free business support service to all existing and start-up businesses across Swale. We will continue to promote the business support programme to maximise awareness and take-up of the service, but also increase our efforts around sector specific targeting that supports the Council's wider priorities, such as the visitor economy sector and the voluntary and community services sector.

We also wish to make best use of all the avenues through which businesses engage with the Council, to offer the most appropriate support and guidance. The Council engages with business on many fronts, on issues as diverse as environmental health, climate change, business rates and planning and we need to continue to build a collaborative approach that makes sure that help is provided where it is needed, with Economy & Community Services playing a co-ordinating role.

Utilising and growing our business existing business networks we will seek to understand the changing issues impacting on local employers and seek to help address them. We will also strive to encourage employers to become more involved with the community and assist us in achieving our ambitions through their own investment, aiding our lobbying efforts and by providing their workforce with a living wage.

Although the Borough has delivered substantial growth in commercial floorspace there is an increasingly tight supply of land and premises, limiting the options available to what is a hugely diverse and potentially changing market. With our focus on start-up and SME businesses we particularly wish to see new facilities which meet their needs and encourage engagement and collaboration, including studio and co-working space. There is also a need for grow-on space and more up to date stock and through the Local Plan review we will need to identify sufficient employment land to meet identified need over the coming years.

It is also important that the Council considers how it can use its own assets and investment to support our economic ambitions. This is an area which needs exploring to understand where such opportunities are, how they fit against our broader priorities and where it makes financial sense for the Council to pursue them.

## Our priorities

In the short term we will:-

- Optimise access to government financial support to businesses through direct delivery and signposting
- Deliver our support service for start-ups, improving awareness and providing access best suited to the prevailing public health advice and the demand from residents
- Gather intelligence to understand the immediate and potential ongoing impacts on the local economy to try and understand the threats and opportunities that may lie ahead and inform how we support local business.

In addition we will:-

- Continue to develop our support service for start-ups and businesses across sectors including those which support the visitor economy and promote creativity and innovation in the Borough.
- Investigate the evolution of a 'one business account' approach within the Council, reviewing how the key business support service functions interact and share information, that then helps us better support local businesses and aids their understanding how to be compliant in relation to their business activity
- Improve the supply and diversity of space that supports micro and start-up businesses, including co-working space
- Support a pipeline of available commercial sites and premises across Swale, to serve local businesses expansion needs as well as new investment.
- Provide networking and learning opportunities that help businesses take forward ideas, develop their workforce, improve productivity and grow sustainably.
- Support creative and innovation led businesses to tap into centres of excellence and knowledge, including Higher Education, to support innovation and growth.

## Improving Skills

It is important that local people are given the opportunity to benefit from economic growth, whether that is locally, or further afield. There are often a range of factors that mean for many individuals and families there are significant barriers to this - transport issues, a lack of confidence and skills and health issues are all factors holding local residents back.

In the 2019 indices of multiple deprivation, identifies skills as a particular challenge and an area in which the Borough is ranked in the worst 10% nationally. This impacts not only on access to employment opportunities for local people but also the type of job -led investment that the Borough can attract.

The issue of skills and education is a complex one in which the council's role is indirect, as the communities' champion, lobbying for change, and providing a conduit through which the work of others can be influenced and enabled. Our focus is not just on addressing the limited further education provision for Swale's young people but also the wish to see local people, at all stages of their careers, provided opportunities to upskill and retrain.

As well as focusing on those agencies involved in funding and providing opportunities to learn, we need existing local employers to take more of a role, both directly as employers but also through engaging within the wider community, to help inform provision and give young people insight into potential careers.

## Our priorities

In the short term we will:-

- Help provide local, labour market intelligence to partners and local schools, to help inform provision for young people and adults.
- Keep tabs on how the crisis is impacting upon need locally and use that information to lobby providers and funders to respond to local challenges
- With partners, take steps to help the most disadvantaged families and communities to embrace opportunities from economic growth, job creation and skills provision.

In addition we will:-

- Pursue all opportunities to progress our long-term ambition to enhance the provision of further and higher education accessible to Swale residents
- Encourage employers to become more engaged with developing young people, working with local schools and providing progression opportunities through work placements and apprenticeships



## POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

<b>9 September 2020</b>		<b>Agenda Item 5</b>
<b><i>Draft 2019/20 Annual Report to Council</i></b>		
Report author:	Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer	
<b>Recommendations</b>		
That the Committee:		
(i) <b>considers and agrees</b> 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 2019/20 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 2019/20 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 2019/20.

### **6 Officer contacts**

Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer  
[BobPullen@swale.gov.uk](mailto:BobPullen@swale.gov.uk) ☎ 01795 417187

**Policy Development and Review Committee Annual Report 2019/20**

**Swale Borough Council**

## Policy Development and Review Committee Annual Report 2019/20

1. The Committee was established six 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 2019/20. Members appointed to serve on the Committee for 2019/20 were:

- Councillor Alastair Gould (Chairman)
- Councillor Ghlin Whelan (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Lloyd Bowen
- Councillor Mike Dendor
- Councillor Ann Hampshire
- Councillor Benjamin A Martin
- Councillor Ken Pugh
- Councillor Ken Rowles
- Councillor Julian Sanders
- Councillor Sarah Stephen
- Councillor Corrie Woodford.

4. A schedule of meetings and the policies, plans and strategies considered by the Committee during 2019/20 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 2019/20, 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 (latter meetings were held in the Committee Room which encourages a much less formal approach than the Council Chamber).

7. Cabinet continued to implement the reforms to the Committee's working introduced during the previous Civic Year of placing a greater emphasis 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 introduced during 2018/19 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.

## Policy Development and Review Committee membership and attendance – 2019/20

Name	Role	19 Jun	17 Jul	24 Sep	16 Oct	20 Nov	29 Jan	4 Mar
<b>Committee members</b>								
Cllr Alastair Gould	Chairman	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr Ghlin Whelan	Vice-Chairman	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr Lloyd Bowen	Committee member	X	√	X	√	√	√	√
Cllr Mike Dendor	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr Ann Hampshire	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr Benjamin A Martin	Committee Member	√	√	√	√	X	√	√
Cllr Ken Pugh	Committee Member	X	√	√	X	X	X	X
Cllr Ken Rowles	Committee member	√	√	√	X	√	X	√
Cllr Julian Saunders	Committee member	X	√	X	X	√	√	√
Cllr Sarah Stephen	Committee member	X	√	√	X	√	X	√
Cllr Corrie Woodford	Committee member	√	X	√	X	X	√	√
<b>Visiting members and *substitutes</b>								
Cllr Mike Baldock	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning		√	√	√	√	√	
Cllr Cameron Beart	Member			√	√	√		
Cllr Derek Carnell	Member				√*			
Cllr Steve Davey	Member	√*			√*	√	√	√
Cllr Angela Harrison	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing				√*		√*	
Cllr Alan Horton	Member	√*			√*			
Cllr Ken Ingleton	Member		√	√		√*	√*	
Cllr Denise Knights	Member		√					
Cllr Peter Macdonald	Member	√*						
Cllr Peter Marchington	Member		√		√			√*
Cllr Ben J Martin	Cabinet Member for Housing							√

Name	Role	19 Jun	17 Jul	24 Sep	16 Oct	20 Nov	29 Jan	4 Mar
Cllr Richard Palmer	Cabinet Member for Communities	√*						√
Cllr Hannah Perkin	Deputy Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing		√					√
Cllr Paul Stephen	Member				√*	√*		
Cllr Bill Tatton	Member		√					
Cllr Eddie Thomas	Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment							√
Cllr Roger Truelove	Leader		√	√				
Cllr Tim Valentine	Cabinet Member for Environment							√
Cllr Tony Winkless	Member			√				
<b>Swale Borough Council officers</b>								
Simon Algar	Conservation and Design Manager						√	
Katherine Bescoby	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager				√			
Zoe Callaway	Strategy and Enabling Officer							√
Steph Curtis	Economy and Community Services Manager							√
David Clifford	Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services		√	√			√	
Philippa Davies	Democratic Services Officer	√		√				
Charlotte Hudson	Head of Economy and Community Services							√
Kellie MacKenzie	Democratic Services Officer							√
Jo Millard	Senior Democratic Services Officer		√			√	√	
Lyn Newton	Economy and Community Services Manager						√	
Sarah Porter	Interim Policy and Performance Manager		√	√	√	√		√
Bob Pullen	Policy and Performance Officer	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Roxanne Sheppard	Housing Options Manager							√

## Policies considered by the Policy Development and Review Committee during 2019/20

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
17 July 2019	Constitutional Review	<p>Following the May 2019 elections a new coalition Cabinet formed and outlined their objectives for the next four year administration. One of these objectives was around constitutional review, diffusing power among members and improving public engagement in decision making.</p> <p>The Committee considered three papers at this session linked to the constitutional review. The first considered the objectives of a constitutional review, the second the possible creation of area committees and the third models of governance. The purpose of the discussion was to get the Committee's initial views on possible changes to the Council's Constitution rather than an in-depth consideration.</p> <p>Discussion largely centred around the idea of establishing area committees which could help the Council to diffuse powers among members and improve public engagement in decision making.</p> <p>In looking at alternative constitutional models more generally, members were said they needed to be mindful of the potential costs of proposals and additional costs to the taxpayer. There was a strong sense that in any new governance model, it was important to continue for there to be a mechanism to hold decision-makers to account.</p> <p>In considering the possible establishment of area committees, members were adamant that any model adopted should not seek to replicate the previous Local Engagement Forums (LEFs) which had become ineffective, time consuming and resource intensive. Residents had simply stopped attending and they were wound up as a result.</p>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<p>It was agreed that a working group of the Committee would be formed, with co-optees from the wider Council membership, to explore the question of area committees in more depth.</p>
24 September 2019	<p>Corporate Plan 2020-2023</p> <p>Area Committees</p>	<p>Following the May 2019 elections, the new administration had introduced a radical change in direction with different priorities. A new corporate plan was needed to reflect these priorities and develop the changes over the next four years.</p> <p>A first set of possible priorities were brought before the Committee for their consideration along with supporting objectives. These were very much a skeleton of a plan to form the basis of a discussion rather than a plan that was 'oven ready'.</p> <p>The Committee considered each of the priorities and objectives in turn and made comments and suggestions which were considered by Cabinet in drawing up the full version of the draft plan for public consultation.</p> <p>The Committee also considered an update from the working group which had been established to consider the area committee aspects of the Constitutional Review.</p> <p>The working group had initially been considering what delegated powers and resources area committees might have. It considered that planning matters were probably not appropriate, given issues around predetermination and the frequency with which Planning Committee needed to take place in order to keep up with business. The group had also given early consideration to how many area committees there might be and which wards they might cover. The working group had also contributed views to officers on a survey which had been issued to gather the public's views on the possible establishment of area committees.</p>



Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
16 October 2019	<p>Area Committees</p> <p>Swale Active Travel Strategy</p> <p>Marine Assets Strategy</p>	<p>The Committee again received an update from the working group on the work they had been doing and interim results from the public survey. The group set out some of their interim findings and took the Committees views on these.</p> <p>The Committee were invited to consider how the Council could promote a modal shift in transport, away from car use. Topics discussed included: bus services; electric cars; promotion of 'active travel' (walking and cycling) and improvements to infrastructure; role of KCC; better broadband connectivity; flexible working; and rail services.</p> <p>It was suggested that Cabinet should be asked to consider feedback from the Committee and consider what more it could do in terms of its powers.</p> <p>The Committee were invited to consider how the Council could promote tourism and recreational use of Swale's marine assets, and to support the marine community. Topics discussed included: need for improved publicity and a joined up approach covering all of the Borough's marine assets; resource implications; encouraging overnight or longer stays; better use of tidal facilities; Sheerness Port; tapping into existing networks; infrastructure for the visiting marine community; and capitalising on tourist potential.</p> <p>Cabinet would consider further the suggestions made by the Committee.</p>
20 November 2019	Area Committees	<p>The Committee considered the final report of the working group with their recommendations on Area Committees.</p> <p>The working group met three times and considered all elements of area committees, along with the results of the public survey, before producing their report and recommendations.</p>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<p>Consideration of the draft report focussed on the following issues: special responsibility allowances for committee chairmen; delegated power to distribute resources; extra burdens on officers to service the committees; review effectiveness after a year of operation; other avenues for public to take part in Council decision-making; potentially useful mechanism for engaging with parish and town councils, and also to seek the public's views in unparished areas; membership; role of parish and town councils; role of the public; number and timing of meetings; areas covered; and alternative options.</p> <p>As a result of the discussion, the Committee made numerous amendments to the working group's report before it was submitted to the Cabinet Member for consideration. Cabinet agreed a set of recommendations for establishing area committees at their meeting of 12 February 2020. This included most, but not all, of the Committee's recommendations.</p>
20 January 2020	Swale Heritage Strategy	<p>The Council produced a Heritage Strategy and accompanying action plan which the Committee were invited to comment on. The Strategy would function both as a corporate document and as an evidence base document to support the current adopted and emerging replacement Local Plan. The Committee were asked whether the document would provide a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the Borough's historic environment, recognising that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and thus seeking to conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.</p> <p>Issues discussed included: funding for remedial works; priority listing of buildings under threat; the Council's role and powers in conservation matters; conservation areas; ownership issues; unauthorised works and signage and the role of planning enforcement; the role of community groups and the voluntary sector in conservation.</p> <p>The Committee's comments were fed into the version of the Strategy and action plan which were approved by Cabinet on 18 March 2020.</p>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
	Corporate Plan 2020-2023	<p>The comments made earlier in the year by the Committee on a discussion paper relating to the new Corporate Plan had been incorporated into the version which had been issued for public consultation and the Committee were invited to make comments on this version too.</p> <p>The main issues the Committee made were around: development on brownfield land; affordability of housing for local people; generation of high-skilled jobs in the Borough; cleanliness and recycling; and local democracy.</p> <p>The revised Corporate Plan was approved by Cabinet on 18 March 2020 for adoption by Council.</p>
4 March 2020	<p>Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan</p> <p>Housing Allocations Policy</p>	<p>The Committee were asked to consider and comment on a draft Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. The draft Action Plan set out the activities needed to adapt and mitigate against a changing climate. It was a longlist of potential actions which the Committee were asked to consider and comment on.</p> <p>Discussion focussed on the following issues: sharing knowledge with parish and town councils; financial resources; electric vehicles and charging points; air quality; recycling; green space; energy use of public buildings – environmentally friendly lighting systems; carbon savings; enabling tools; buildings and energy efficiency; transport and air quality; resource consumption and waste; ecology and biodiversity; energy generation and storage; and resilience; and adaptation and offsetting.</p> <p>The Action Plan was approved by Cabinet on 22 April 2020 for adoption by Council.</p> <p>The Committee were asked to consider the draft Housing Allocations Policy which detailed the discretionary areas the Council had over allocating social housing.</p>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
	CCTV Policy	<p>The main issues the Committee discussed were: years of residency those seeking social housing needed to prove; treatment of those fleeing domestic violence; and prison release cases.</p> <p>From April 2020, the Public Space CCTV Service will be managed in-house by the Council from a new purpose-built control room. The Committee were invited to consider a draft policy and procedures designed to ensure the service operated within legal requirements.</p> <p>The main issues the Committee discussed were: ongoing partnership arrangements with Medway Council; targeting illegal parking; and location of CCTV cameras.</p> <p>The policy was approved by Cabinet on 22 April 2020.</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