

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

18 July 2018	Agenda Item
<i>Draft 2017/18 Annual Report to Council</i>	
Report author:	Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer
Recommendations That the Committee: (i) considers and agrees the draft Annual Report to Council (Appendix i).	

1 Purpose of report and executive summary

1.1 This report is concerned with the Committee's 2017/18 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 2017/18 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 2017/18.

6 Officer contacts

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Draft Policy Development and Review Committee Annual Report 2017/18

Swale Borough Council

Policy Development and Review Committee Annual Report 2017/18

1. The Committee was established four 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 2017/18. Members appointed to serve on the Committee for 2017/18 were:

- Councillor Lloyd Bowen (Chairman)
- Councillor Andy Booth (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Sarah Aldridge
- Councillor Mike Baldock
- Councillor Monique Bonney
- Councillor Katy Coleman*
- Councillor Nicholas Hampshire
- Councillor James Hunt
- Councillor Peter Marchington**
- Councillor George Samuel
- Councillor Ben Stokes
- Councillor Tony Winkless.

* Councillor Katy Coleman sadly died in May 2017.

** Following a by-election, the political balance of the Committee changed and Councillor Peter Marchington joined the Committee from September 2017.

4. A schedule of meetings and the policies, plans and strategies considered by the Committee during 2017/18 is at Appendix [I]. 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 did come to light during 2016/17, and continued throughout 2017/18, was that while the relevant Heads of Service were attending the meetings, they were being accompanied by relatively junior members of staff and that these staff were being given the opportunity to present reports. This continued to have several benefits:

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

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

Policy Development and Review Committee membership and attendance – 2017/18

Name	Role	25 Oct	17 Jan	13 Feb	10 Apr	10 May
Committee members						
Clr Lloyd Bowen	Chairman	X	√	√	√	X
Clr Andy Booth	Vice-Chairman	√	√	√	√	√
Clr Sarah Aldridge	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√
Clr Mike Baldock	Committee member	√	√	X	√	√
Clr Monique Bonney	Committee member	X	√	X	√	√
Clr Nicholas Hampshire	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√
Clr James Hunt	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√
Clr Peter Marchington	Committee member	X	X	√	√	√
Clr George Samuel	Committee member	√	X	√	√	√
Clr Ben Stokes	Committee member	X	√	√	√	√
Clr Tony Winkless	Committee member	X	X	X	X	√
Visiting members and *substitutes						
Clr Cameron Beart	Member	√		√	√	
Clr Mike Cosgrove	Cabinet Member for Regeneration		√			√
Clr Duncan Dewar-Whalley	Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance	√				
Clr Sue Gent	Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs				√	
Clr Mike Henderson	Member	*√				√
Clr Alan Horton	Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities	√	√		√	
Clr Nigel Kay	Member		√			
Clr Gerry Lewin	Cabinet Member for Planning				√	
Clr Ken Pugh	Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing		√	√		
Clr David Simmons	Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural				√	

Name	Role	25 Oct	17 Jan	13 Feb	10 Apr	10 May
	Affairs					
Cllr Mike Whiting	Member		*√			
Cllr Ted Wilcox	Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance				√	
Cllr John Wright	Member				√	
Swale Borough Council officers						
Anne Adams	Head of Property Services					
Mohammad Bauluck	Licensing Officer	√				
Tracey Beattie	Mid-Kent Environmental Health Manager				√	
Martyn Cassell	Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact			√		
Philippa Davies	Democratic Services Officer			√	√	√
Della Fackrell	Resilience and Licensing Manager	√				
Russell Fairman	Community Sport and Physical Activity Officer		√			
Charlotte Hudson	Interim Head of Economy and Community Services		√			√
Zoe Kent	Revenues and Benefits Manager	√			√	
Kellie MacKenzie	Democratic Services Officer	√				
Kieren Mansfield	Economy and Community Services Manager					√
Mike Marsh	Leisure and Technical Services Manager			√		
Jo Millard	Senior Democratic Services Officer		√			
Lyn Newton	Economy and Community Services Manager		√			
Sarah Porter	Transformation Programme Manager				√	
Bob Pullen	Policy and Performance Officer	√	√	√	√	√
Graeme Tuff	Greenspaces Manager			√		
Nick Vickers	Chief Financial Officer				√	
Rebecca Walker	Strategic Housing and Health Manager			√		
Steve Wilcock	Environmental Protection Team Leader				√	
Chris Woodward	Head of ICT				√	

Policies considered by the Policy Development and Review Committee during 2017/18

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
25 October 2017	Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19	<p>The Council Tax support scheme was introduced by the government in April 2013 as a replacement for Council Tax Benefit administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.</p> <p>The Council is required to approve a new scheme every year and the Committee was asked to consider the results of the consultation on the 2018/19 scheme. In particular, the Committee was asked to consider the potential impact of the proposed changes on working age claimants taking into account the protected characteristics of disability, age and gender, under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The Committee considered issues around the appropriate level of support the Council should set and whether this would have implications for the collection of Council Tax.</p> <p>The Committee recommended that the maximum level of support for working age applicants be reduced to 77.5% although this recommendation was not accepted either by Cabinet or Council when they considered the issue later in the year.</p>
25 October 2017	Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy	<p>The Committee considered a new draft Statement of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy prior to the document being finalised for public consultation. The overriding objective of the policy was the need to ensure the safety of customers, particularly given the role of local authority responsibilities for taxi licensing which had resulted in instances of widespread child sexual exploitation as in Rotherham.</p> <p>The Committee considered:</p>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application of six monthly vehicle compliance tests; • licensing of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage electric and hybrid vehicles, links to air quality policies and vehicle emissions; • probationary badges and street knowledge tests; • driving experience requirements; • Disclosure and Barring Service criminal records checks; • Dress codes and the code of conduct for drivers; • Disciplinary and enforcement measures. <p>The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities welcomed the Committee's comments and indicated they would be fed into further iterations of the draft before being considered by the General Licensing Committee later in the year.</p>
17 January 2018	Visitor Economy Strategy	<p>Prior to the Committee's consideration of the Visitor Economy Strategy, the Scrutiny Committee had undertaken a review on the Council's Leisure and Tourism activity and issued a report and recommendations to Cabinet. This report had informed the development of the Visitor Economy Strategy.</p> <p>The Committee considered the Strategy and made the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that greater prominence be given to rural areas in the Framework; • that further consideration be given to how businesses are assisted to help promote Swale as a place to stay; • that the maritime theme be developed and promoted; • that further resources be allocated to promoting tourism; and • that further consideration be given to the implications of food and food networks.
17 January	Active Lives	The Committee considered a consultation version of the draft Active Lives

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
2018	Framework	<p>Framework which set out to how the Council and its partners could play their part in enabling Swale's residents to be active and thus lead a more healthy and sustainable lifestyle.</p> <p>The Committee considered the following aspects of the Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the range and breadth of partner organisations in Swale involved in promoting or supporting sport and physical activity; • multi-agency approaches to tackling obesity; • budget and resources; • improvements to a dedicated website; • sport and activity for disabled residents; • the target audience for the Framework; and • the importance of good advice on diet in tandem with promotion of sport and physical activity.
13 February 2018	Tenancy Strategy Refresh	<p>All councils were required to have an up to date tenancy strategy in place, even where, like Swale, they did not have their own housing stock. The strategy enabled the Council to have a monitoring role in relation to the housing associations who owned and managed social housing stock in the borough.</p> <p>The Committee considered the following aspects of the Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lifetime tenancies; • fixed-term tenancies; • affordability of rents; • shared ownership; and • affordable housing.
13 February 2018	Revised Open Spaces and Play Strategy	<p>The Open Spaces and Play Strategy had been prepared to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a sound body of evidence for supporting open space policies

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<p>within the Local Plan;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify key opportunities and strategic imperatives, plan for the delivery of improvements to existing open spaces for the next five years and introduce a policy of declining adoption of new open spaces triggered by development; and • provide a working document that set standards for open space provision in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. <p>The Committee considered the following aspects of the Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • role of developer agreements in the provision of open spaces and play areas; • designation of areas surplus to requirements; • catchment zones for play areas and provision for Flagship Play Sites; • management companies; • facilities for disabled people; and • funding and resources.
10 April 2018	Digital Strategy	<p>This Strategy set out the direction the Council was taking with regard to offering a greater range of digital services for residents and businesses and encouraging innovation in this field. The Strategy's aim was to achieve digital use, not by default, but by choice.</p> <p>The Committee considered the following aspects of the Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • user-friendliness of digital options; • website and search engine; • ensuring access to digital services in areas of deprivation and poor broadband service; • web casting of Council meetings; and • Skype for Business facility and staff working from home, including during recent instances of inclement weather and the unexpected closure of

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		Swale House.
10 April 2018	Discretionary Housing Payment Policy	<p>All councils are awarded grant from Central Government to provide payments to those Housing Benefit claimants who had a shortfall between their rent and their Housing Benefit.</p> <p>The Committee considered the consultation version of the policy and commented on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need for more signposting to other agencies who could assist claimants; • measures to tackle potential fraud; • the support that was available from the Council to help residents to remain in their homes and prevent homelessness and the use of expensive temporary accommodation; and • caps on payments.
10 April 2018	Swale Strategic Air Quality Action Plan 2018-22	<p>The Action Plan set out clear objectives for delivering air quality improvements in the Borough. Five Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) had been established in Swale, each with their own Action Plan.</p> <p>The Committee had an in-depth consideration of the Action Plan and made numerous recommendations to Cabinet. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that air quality monitoring is undertaken at all sites where 100+ homes are allocated in the Local Plan; • all Council-owned vehicles or those contracted to work on behalf of the Council to operate newest, cleaner technology vehicles; • 2-for-1 tree-replanting schemes; • higher parking standards on new developments to ensure roads are not blocked; • bus stop locations reviewed to relieve pinch points; • more provision for electric charging points;

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage education, local businesses and public services to promote variable shift patterns to change the spread of traffic volumes; and • greater use of planning conditions to promote cleaner air.
10 May 2018	Regeneration Strategy	<p>The Committee considered a consultative draft of the Council's new Economic Regeneration Framework covering the period 2018-21.</p> <p>The Committee made various suggestions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearer aspirations on better transport and connectivity; • more emphasis on skills and the need for a Further Education facility located within Swale; • lack of hard targets and objectives; • Council needed to demonstrate how it was assisting new businesses in their first year and how many new businesses survived; • provide data on skillsets of Swale's workforce in order to attract new businesses into the Borough; • reflect importance of agriculture sector in Swale; and • better promotion of 'growth highlights'.