

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

9 September 2020		Agenda Item 5
<i>Draft 2019/20 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 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

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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
Committee members								
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	√	√
Visiting members and *substitutes								
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			√				
Swale Borough Council officers								
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
	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