

Cabinet Meeting	
Meeting Date	28 th October 2020
Report Title	Economic Improvement Plan 2020-23
Cabinet Member	Cllr Monique Bonney, Cabinet Member for Economy and Property
SMT Lead	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Economy, Communities and Housing
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Economy, Communities and Housing
Lead Officer	Kieren Mansfield, Economy and Community Services Manger
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. That Cabinet approve and adopt the Economic Improvement Plan 2020-2023

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report presents the post-consultation draft of Economic Improvement Plan 2020-23. The document 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.

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 does not align with the new coalition administration's priorities and approach and a new document is required to reflect this. 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 drafted prior to the COVID-19 crisis but has now been amended to reflect current circumstances. This includes the identification of short-term (with a year) actions which are focused on immediate

recovery, with more medium-term actions identified as work towards the administrations established ambitions.

- 2.4 Beneath this Economic Improvement Plan a draft action plan has been produced. Whilst not intended as part of the policy document, the action plan seeks to identify activity, those involved and the resource available. It is intended by as a 'live' document which would change over time, depending on changing context, circumstances and resources.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The Economic Improvement Plan sets out the coalition administration's priorities for the local economy and it is proposed that it is adopted, to replace the existing Economic Regeneration Framework.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 Do not adopt the Economic Improvement Plan. This is not proposed as the document, alongside the Visitor Economy Action Plan, is an important element of how the administration can articulate its priorities and ambitions for the local economy and informs the work of the relevant teams within the Council.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Economic Improvement Plan was consulted upon over a period of 8 weeks, ending the 10th September 2020. The document was sent to local businesses and other organisations via the Council's e-bulletin, to other named contacts including relevant partner organisations and was publicised via social media and both the Councils main website and through Swale Means Business. This generated 45 responses, which indicated a high level of support for the headline priorities, with comments provided by those who responded under each. The draft document was also discussed at the Policy Development and Review Committee on the 9th September 2020. The document has been amended, having considered the comments received.

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.
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 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: Economic Improvement Plan 2020-23

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 Report to Cabinet, 18th July 2018, Swale Economic Regeneration Framework.
- 8.2 Report to the Policy Development and Review Committee, 9th September 2020, Swale Draft Economic Improvement Plan 2020-23