

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

25 October 2017	Agenda Item 6
<b><i>Draft 2016/17 Annual Report to Council</i></b>	
Report author:	Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer
<b>Recommendations</b> That the Committee: <b>(i) 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 2016/17 Annual Report to Council.

### 2 Background

2.1 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.

### 3 Discussion

3.1 The attached draft report to Council incorporates a draft Annual Report on the Committee's work for the 2016/17 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 2016/17.

### 6 Officer contacts

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**Draft Policy Development and Review Committee Annual Report 2016/17**

**Swale Borough Council**

## **Policy Development and Review Committee Annual Report 2016/17**

1. The Committee was established three 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 2016/17. Membership during 2016/17 was as follows:

- 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 Angela Harrison
- Councillor James Hunt
- Councillor George Samuel
- Councillor Ben Stokes.

4. A schedule of meetings and the policies, plans and strategies considered by the Committee during 2016/17 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 2015/16, and continued throughout 2016/17, 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 and Licensing Policy, which are in any case the preserve of the Local Development Framework Panel and General Licensing Committee respectively. 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 – 2016/17

Name	Role	1 Jun	28 Sep	26 Oct	17 Jan	21 Feb
<b>Committee members</b>						
Cllr Lloyd Bowen	Chairman	√	X	√	√	√
Cllr Andy Booth	Vice-Chairman	√	√	X	√	X
Cllr Sarah Aldridge	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr Mike Baldock	Committee member	√	√	√	√	X
Cllr Monique Bonney	Committee member	X	√	X	X	√
Cllr Katy Coleman	Committee member	√	X	√	X	√
Cllr Nicholas Hampshire	Committee member	√	X	√	X	X
Cllr Angela Harrison	Committee member	√	√	X	X	X
Cllr James Hunt	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√
Cllr George Samuel	Committee member	√	√	√	X	√
Cllr Ben Stokes	Committee member	√	√	√	√	√
<b>Visiting members and *substitutes</b>						
Cllr Cameron Beart	Member		*√	*√	*√	*√
Cllr Duncan Dewar-Whalley	Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance			√		√
Cllr Paul Fleming	Member		*√			
Cllr Sue Gent	Member		*√			
Cllr Mike Henderson	Member	*√				
Cllr Alan Horton	Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities			√	√	
Cllr Nigel Kay	Member					*√
Cllr David Simmons	Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs		√			
<b>SBC Officers</b>						
Anne Adams	Head of Property Services					√

Name	Role	1 Jun	28 Sep	26 Oct	17 Jan	21 Feb
Brooke Buttfield	Project Officer, Economy and Community Services				√	
Amber Christou	Head of Resident Services			√		
Steph Curtis	Interim Economy and Community Services Manager				√	
Philippa Davies	Democratic Services Officer		√			√
Zoe Kent	Revenues and Benefits Manager			√		
Kellie MacKenzie	Democratic Services Officer			√	√	
Jo Millard	Senior Democratic Services Officer	√				
Lyn Newton	Economy and Community Services Manager		√			
Bob Pullen	Policy and Performance Officer	√	√	√	√	√

## Policies considered by the Policy Development and Review Committee during 2016/17

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
28 September 2016	Swale Green Grid Partnership	<p>The Committee was asked to provide feedback and input into the draft Swale Green Grid Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan. The strategies had previously been used as part of the evidence base for the Council's Local Plan and continued to support planning and external funding applications made by local organisations.</p> <p>The Green Grid Strategy provides a vision for planning, designing and managing green spaces as an interconnected network rather than isolated sites. The Biodiversity Action Plan provides a framework for protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geology and soils and coordinated working to secure coherent ecological networks and a reversal in declines in the quality and diversity of the environment and provides a platform for partner agencies, communities and individuals to work together to conserve the Borough's wildlife.</p> <p>The Committee considered the draft Strategy and Action Plan and explored such issues as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ greater synergy with the Council's Local Plan;</li> <li>▪ connectivity opportunities of green spaces within Swale;</li> <li>▪ highlighting the importance of tourism;</li> <li>▪ loss of land due to sea erosion and the effect on wildlife;</li> <li>▪ encouragement of traditional farming traditions – e.g. traditional orchards, perhaps run by local community groups;</li> <li>▪ extension of wildflower grassland across wider areas;</li> </ul>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ encouraging parish councils to develop parish environment plans;</li> <li>▪ encouraging farmers and landowners to promote educational visits by schools; and</li> <li>▪ further detail needed on the network of ponds and their natural water courses.</li> </ul>
26 October 2016	Council Tax support scheme	<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 2017/18 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ alternatives to increasing the amount of Council Tax people needed to pay;</li> <li>▪ the effect of reducing the maximum level of support for working age applicants, particularly those on low incomes;</li> <li>▪ whether the Family Premium for all new working age applicants should be removed;</li> <li>▪ reducing backdating of Council Tax applications to one month;</li> <li>▪ using a set income for self-employed earners after one year's self-employment;</li> <li>▪ reducing the period for which a person can be absent from the country and still receive Council Tax Reduction to four weeks;</li> <li>▪ introducing a standard level of non-dependent deduction of £15 for all</li> </ul>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<p>claimants who have non-dependents resident with them;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ whether to take any child maintenance or child benefit paid to a claimant or partner into account in full in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction;</li> <li>▪ whether to remove the second adult reduction from the scheme;</li> <li>▪ whether to remove the work related activity component in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction; and</li> <li>▪ whether to limit the number of dependent children within the calculation for Council Tax to a maximum of two.</li> </ul>
17 January 2017	Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment	<p>The Swale Community Safety Partnership annually refreshes its Partnership Plan, which is a rolling three year document highlighting how the Partnership plans to tackle community safety issues that matter to the community. The Plan had been issued for consultation and the Committee's comments fed into this consultation.</p> <p>The Committee made a number of comments and suggestions around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ violence against women and girls;</li> <li>▪ crime;</li> <li>▪ anti-social behaviour; and</li> <li>▪ supporting vulnerable people.</li> </ul>
21 February 2017	Property Strategy	<p>The Committee considered an updated version of the Council's Property Asset Strategy 2017-2020.</p> <p>After consideration of the revised Property Asset Strategy, the Committee recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ that the strategy included the integration of new acquisitions and disposals and that this should be reflected in the property strategy for</li> </ul>

Date considered	Policy title	Summary of Committee considerations
		<p>town centre regeneration, and broadened to include town centres for any other sizeable acquisitions; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ that when the review of the Community Asset Transfer Policy was made later that year, that the following should be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ discourage transfers to Community Interest Companies;</li> <li>○ encourage transfers to registered charities that give the members of the public who are beneficiaries the opportunity to become members of the organisation and to control it;</li> <li>○ highlight in the policy the role of the Council to assist organisations to be ready to have assets transferred to them by providing training; and</li> <li>○ encourage a revised procedure for Asset Transfers, that are being funded by a Section 106 Agreement, to ensure that whenever possible the Section 106 monies facilitate additional grants being obtained.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>