

Agenda

Council Meeting

Date: Wednesday, 3 April 2024

Time 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT*

Quorum = 16

Pages

Information about this meeting

*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 by 2 April 2024.

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1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

Visitors and members of the public who are unfamiliar with the building and procedures are advised that:

- (a) The fire alarm is a continuous loud ringing. In the event that a fire drill is planned during the meeting, the Chair will advise of this.
- (b) Exit routes from the chamber are located on each side of the room, one directly to a fire escape, the other to the stairs opposite the lifts.
- (c) In the event of the alarm sounding, leave the building via the nearest safe exit and gather at the assembly point on the far side of the car park. Do not leave the assembly point or re-enter the

building until advised to do so. Do not use the lifts.

- (d) Anyone unable to use the stairs should make themselves known during this agenda item.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families or friends.

The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

4. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the meeting held on 21 February 2024 (Minute Nos. 666 – 681) as a correct record.

5. Mayor's Announcements

6. Questions submitted by the Public

To consider any questions submitted by the public. (The deadline for questions is 4.30 pm on the Wednesday before the meeting – please contact Democratic Services by e-mailing democraticservices@swale.gov.uk or call 01795 417330).

7. Questions submitted by Members

To consider any questions submitted by Members. (The deadline for questions is 4.30 pm on the Monday the week before the meeting – please contact Democratic Services by e-mailing democraticservices@swale.gov.uk or call 01795 417330).

8. Leader's Statement

9. Motion - Action to address violence, threats, harassment, bullying and intimidation against elected representatives

This Council utterly condemns the increasing levels of violence, threats,

harassment, bullying and intimidation against our elected representatives in Parliament and, increasingly, local councils, and calls on the Government to keep up the pressure on Chief Constables to use the legislation they already have at their disposal to deal with it.

This Council calls on The Leader to raise at Kent Leaders with a view to a joint meeting with the PCC and Chief Constable to discuss their plans to deal with this escalation.

Proposed: Cllr Tim Gibson

Seconded: Cllr Hannah Perkin

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|-----|--|---------|
| 10. | Motion - Housing Emergency Motion | 5 - 6 |
| | Full motion on Housing Emergency attached. | |
| 11. | Nomination of Mayor | |
| | Each candidate's proposer and seconder will be invited to speak for up to three minutes in support of their nomination. If more than one nomination is received for the position, a secret ballot will be taken. | |
| 12. | Nomination of Deputy Mayor | |
| | Each candidate's proposer and seconder will be invited to speak for up to three minutes in support of their nomination. If more than one nomination is received for the position, a secret ballot will be taken. | |
| 13. | Corporate Plan 2023 - 2027 | 7 - 36 |
| 14. | Member/Officer Protocol | 37 - 56 |

Issued on Friday, 22 March 2024

The reports included in Part I of 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 **democraticservices@swale.gov.uk**. To find out more about the work of the Council, please visit www.swale.gov.uk

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

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Housing Emergency Motion

New research “**The economic impact of building social housing**” carried out by CEBR on behalf of Shelter and the National Housing Federation (NHF), is the first to show the massive economic and social benefits of building 90,000 new social rented homes – the figure that needs to be built each year to fix the housing crisis and help end homelessness.

The report demonstrates that building 90,000 social homes provides both immediate and long-term value for money for the government and the economy. It would directly support nearly 140,000 jobs in the first year alone. Within three years, the wider economic benefits of building the homes would break even and return an impressive £37.8bn back to the economy, largely by boosting the construction industry.

Alongside this, the new social homes would generate huge savings for the taxpayer across multiple departments. These breakdown as follows:

- £4.5bn savings on housing benefit
- £2.5bn income from construction taxes
- £3.8bn income from employment taxes
- £5.2bn savings to the NHS
- £4.5bn savings from reduction in homelessness
- £3.3bn savings to Universal Credit

This report demonstrates that there are tangible solutions, that the government are just not choosing to take and locally we are left holding the problem.

Despite the housing growth in the area, the delivery of affordable rented properties falls far short from demand, It has become increasingly challenging to secure Registered Providers (RPs) on schemes with low numbers of s106 affordable homes, however the introduction of First Homes as part of the [s106] affordable housing contribution has been catastrophic and severely reduced the number of affordable/social rented and shared ownership homes available to RPs. There is an increasing number of affordable homes being left dormant on approved sites across the borough - currently in Swale there are just under 500 affordable homes secured on s106 sites but with no RP to contract and deliver these much-needed homes. Despite working in effective partnership with RPs, including applying strategic partnership funding to provide additional affordable homes on land-led schemes, more innovation is required to enable smaller RPs to utilise available Homes England affordable housing grant to start to deliver homes in areas where viability is ‘blocking’ delivering but where homelessness and poverty are acute.

At the Housing and Health Committee on 5th March, the committee scrutinised the current spend on Temporary Accommodation and the current controls that are in place. The committee strongly feels that this situation is unsustainable and continues to represent an existential threat to local government. Whilst the Council's teams will continue to do everything in its powers to meet both the needs of its residents and its statutory obligations, the system was not created to deal with these numbers. The driving forces underpinning this are systemic and structural and are

not in the Council's control. Under current funding arrangements the Council does not have the resources to solve the problem alone.

Over the 2023/24 financial year, this has resulted in:

- Increasingly ordinary working families being priced out of the housing market through no fault of their own;
- Today almost everyone knowing someone who is struggling to access housing of their choice; and
- The Council's total net spend on TA in 2023/24 forecast to be circa £4.5m, up from £2m just three years ago, with scores of local authorities across the country similarly affected.
- 306 households living in Temporary Accommodation, 2/3rds of these have children.
- 1,684 households that are on the Housing Register

As such, this Council resolves to:

1. Declare an Affordable Housing Emergency for the Borough of Swale.
2. Recognise and endorse the work of the Leader of the Council in working with District Council's Network in highlighting and tackling this issue.
3. Continue to work with the sector and try and engage Government to develop long term solutions to fix the national housing crisis.
4. Call on the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Housing Minister to urgently seek proper solutions to this crisis.

Proposed by: Councillor Angela Harrison

Seconded by: Councillor Alastair Gould

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Council Meeting | |
| Meeting Date | 3 April 2024 |
| Report Title | Corporate Plan 2023-2027 |
| EMT Lead | Larissa Reed – Chief Executive |
| Head of Service | Philip Sutcliffe – Communications & Policy Manager |
| Lead Officer | Janet Dart – Policy & Engagement Officer |
| Classification | Open |
| Recommendations | 1. To adopt the Corporate Plan 2023-2027 at Appendix I. |

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report recommends the final corporate plan 2023-2027 to council for adoption. The plan was endorsed by Policy & Resources Committee on 20 March 2024.

2 Background

- 2.1 Since the May 2023 borough election, the new administration have been meeting to discuss their vision and ambition for the borough and to consider what their priorities for the Council should be for the period 2023-2027. Committee chairs and vice-chairs have been working with senior officers to develop a new corporate plan which is a living document setting out the vision of the council and the strategic, corporate priorities.
- 2.2 The council's corporate plan establishes the political and managerial priorities on which the organisation will focus over a medium-term period. Without attempting to cover in any detail all of the objectives to be pursued by every department, it sets the tone for future resource allocation, establishing which activities and objectives are priorities.
- 2.3 In an era of constrained and diminishing resources, it is important to have a plan that is linked to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which should inform the key decisions of the council.
- 2.4 The plan is central to the strategic framework which links to departments' operational service plans and to individual officers' objectives. It establishes clear priorities while also providing a steer for all teams to link their work to the overall ambitions of the council.
- 2.5 The draft plan has been the subject of a public consultation exercise, the results of which are outlined in section 5 below.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Council is recommended to adopt the final version of the corporate plan at Appendix I.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Not have a corporate plan. There is a legal requirement for councils to have a definite policy framework, but there is no specific requirement for a corporate plan. However, the absence of a plan is likely to result in a lack of clarity about the organisation's priorities and less coherent decision-making by members, and is therefore not recommended.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Swale Borough Council members, town and parish councillors and members of the public were consulted at the September 2023 round of Area Committee meetings to seek feedback on the five priorities and their definitions.
- 5.2 The detailed objectives within each priority were taken to all-staff briefings and the staff engagement group in October 2023. A workshop was held with external partners to seek their feedback on the priorities and the proposed vision statement. Political group leaders were also consulted to seek their views.
- 5.3 The administration met to consider the feedback and used it to finalise the draft corporate plan.
- 5.4 An 8-week public consultation was conducted on the draft version of the corporate plan ending on 25 January 2024. This was predominantly by means of an online survey, but key stakeholders were written to individually, including all of Swale's parish councils. The consultation was advertised on social media and through channels such as the business bulletin, as well as internally through staff communications.
- 5.5 The consultation generated 29 responses. The first part of the consultation survey asked if responders agreed with each of the objectives under the 5 priorities and the vision statement. The majority of responses were supportive of all.
- 5.6 The second part of the consultation was a free-text box for responders to provide any comments. The majority of responses included only general indications of support or the opposite, some included specific suggestions for changes. An analysis of responses has been carried out and classifying responses as supportive, unsupportive or neutral, six can be read as supportive, four as unsupportive and 23 as neutral.
- 5.7 Following discussions with the administration, the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee considered the consultation responses and recommended

some minor amendments to the text and images, as at Appendix I, be made to the draft corporate plan which were agreed at the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 20 March 2024.

6 Implications

| Issue | Implications |
|--|--|
| Corporate Plan | The draft plan at appendix I will replace the existing plan on adoption by council. |
| Financial, Resource and Property | The corporate plan complements the MTFP, in that it sets out in broad terms what the council aims to achieve given the resources established by the MTFP. It is anticipated that the activities required by the plan will generally be funded within the resourcing framework established in the MTFP. |
| Legal, Statutory and Procurement | The legal status of the corporate plan as a component of the statutory policy framework originates from the Local Government Act 2000 and regulations subsequently made under it. No specific procurement implications have been identified at this stage. |
| Crime and Disorder | The draft plan at appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to crime and disorder, particularly under priority 1 – Community. |
| Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency | The draft plan at appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to the environment and to the climate and ecological emergencies, particularly under priority 3 - Environment. |
| Health and Wellbeing | The draft plan at appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to health and wellbeing, particularly under priority 4 – Health & Housing. |
| Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults | The draft plan at appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults, particularly under priority 1 – Community and priority 4 – Health & Housing. |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety | No specific implications have been identified at this stage. |
| Equality and Diversity | The public sector equality duty requires decision-makers to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity right throughout the decision-making process. A preliminary equality impact assessment is attached at appendix II. The corporate plan is in general at too high a level of abstraction for the aims of the equality duty to be relevant in any concrete way, although they are likely to be much more relevant to many of the pieces of work which will flow from it, which |

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| | will all need to be subject to individual impact assessments. The impact of the plan itself on the aims of the equality duty, without reference to these more detailed pieces of work, is at this stage considered to be low, and nothing requiring the mitigation of adverse impacts has been identified. It is believed at this stage that the plan involves no unlawful discrimination. |
| Privacy and Data Protection | No specific implications have been 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 corporate plan 2023-2027

Appendix II – Equality impact assessment

8 Background Papers

None.



Corporate Plan

2023 - 2027

Foreword by Leader

Welcome to Swale Borough Council's Corporate Plan, which sets out our ambitions and priorities up to 2027. It builds on what we have learnt over the last four years and sets out what we plan to focus on in the future. A great deal has been achieved over the last four years which is something our coalition administration is very proud of. Throughout the challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, the council has delivered projects at the same time as providing support to the community.

This document's primary purpose is to ensure that the organisation's resources are coherently allocated in support of agreed priorities. The objectives established here will therefore be a significant factor in determining the focus of the council's activities over the next few years

Our plan has been developed following conversations with residents, town and parish councils and representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

We believe the priorities in this plan, on homes, on jobs, on health, on social inclusion, on the environment and on our partnerships with the voluntary sector, are exactly the ones the council most needs to focus on if its efforts to improve the lives of residents in our borough are to be effective.



Cllr Tim Gibson
Leader of the Council

Introduction

The borough council is made up of 47 elected members representing 24 wards and employing 283 full-time equivalent staff. Of those 28 are working in a shared service. The all-out election held in May 2023 resulted in a change to the coalition administration which includes the Labour, Swale Independents Alliance and Green groups.

One of the objectives of the coalition administration, which was formed at SBC following the 2019 local elections, was to diffuse power among members and improve public engagement in decision-making. The council voted in October 2021 to move to a committee system of governance from the 2022/23 municipal year. A cross-party working group was set up to consider this governance change and to oversee the detail in the new governance model. At the February 2022 Council meeting members agreed a five-service committee model which was successfully implemented in May 2022.

As part of the objective to improve public engagement in decision-making, four area committees were established with their inaugural meetings taking place in September 2020. The purpose of the area committees is to enhance the quality of life and council services in the relevant area and to bring local insight to into council decision-making. The area committees have evolved over the last three years and have recently adapted due to them no longer having funding to allocate. They play an important role in developing new policies and projects as can provide local input at an early development stage.

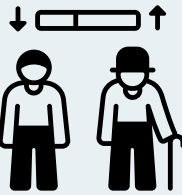
Mid Kent Services (MKS) is a partnership between Swale, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough councils. The partnership (originally Mid Kent Improvement Partnership) was formed in 2008, and means the councils work together to reduce costs and improve service delivery and resilience. The partnership delivers a number of different fully shared services, and the partner authorities work together on shared procurement exercises and contract monitoring arrangements (like waste and recycling services) and have some shared management arrangements eg in parking services. The partnership is flexible to meet the needs of each authority and not all the partners are part of every Mid Kent service, for example HR is shared between Maidstone and Swale only. Some services are provided to other authorities such as Ashford is a partner in the internal audit partnership and the HR service delivers payroll for Dartford Council. MKS is not a separate entity: all shared services staff are employed by one of the councils and deliver services to the councils who are partners in that service.

Swale is part of the following Mid Kent shared services:

- Internal Audit
- HR (including Payroll)
- Legal
- ICT
- Planning Support and land charges
- Fraud and compliance
- Debt Recovery
- Environmental Health

Understanding Swale

Swale population



151,700

Area of Swale



139 sq miles

Number of households in Temporary Accommodation in Swale

317

(figure as of February 2024)

8.5%

of Swale residents
classified as disabled
and limited a lot

Cost of Living crisis



14,800 households
provided food support through
Household Support Fund

Levelling-Up Fund



£20mil

secured for the
Sheerness Revival programme

Understanding Swale

Population

Swale is home to 151,700 people and the population grew by 11.7% between the 2011 and 2021 census - a higher rate than the South-East which grew 7.5% during the same period. It is anticipated that the population will grow to more than 180,000 by the year 2040. The largest age group is 55 to 59 years and there are slightly more females than males in the whole population.

In the 2021 census, around 137,400 Swale residents said they were born in England. This represented 90.6% of the local population. The figure has risen from around 125,600 in 2011, which at the time represented 92.5% of Swale's population. In 2021, 2.3% of Swale residents identified their ethnic group within the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" category, up from 1.0% in 2011.

In 2021, 8.5% of Swale residents were identified as being disabled and limited a lot. This figure decreased from 9.4% in 2011. In 2021, just over one in nine people (11.3%) were identified as being disabled and limited a little, compared with 10.7% in 2011. The proportion of Swale residents who were not disabled increased from 79.9% to 80.1%.

Economy and demographic make-up

Swale's demographic make-up includes a mix of affluent and less affluent communities. In general, the area is less well-off than is typical for the region, and there are some concentrated pockets of severe socioeconomic disadvantage to be found in locations across the borough.

While the causes of this are deep-rooted and complex,

the outcome is that a proportion of our residents suffer from entrenched inequality and a lack of opportunities which the council needs to do what it can to address.

The indices of multiple deprivation in 2019 showed Swale's overall position had deteriorated relative to other places, with the borough now the 69th most disadvantaged of 317 shire districts in England, and the second most disadvantaged in Kent.

Over recent decades, Swale has seen a successful diversification of its economy, which now has key strengths in manufacturing and distribution, as well as high-skilled activities including cutting-edge technology and life sciences.

However, it remains the case that much of the borough's employment is at the lower end of the skills spectrum and the average weekly earnings are significantly below regional and national averages.

Geography

Swale is one of 12 districts which make up the county of Kent. Located on the county's northern coast, the borough sits between Medway, Maidstone and Canterbury, around 37 miles (60km) from central London in one direction and 25 miles (40km) from the Channel Tunnel in the other.

The borough covers an area of 139 square miles (360km²), roughly one-tenth of Kent and is a remarkably diverse place, including the historic market town of Faversham, the traditional seaside resort of Sheerness, the more industrial market town of Sittingbourne and rural villages. The urban centres are connected both physically and culturally by the borough's extensive and important rural areas, accounting for around a quarter of the population, which take in a number of protected wildlife habitats and part of the Kent Downs area of outstanding natural beauty.

Challenges and achievements

The Covid-19 Pandemic in Swale

SBC's members and officers showed high levels of adaptability and innovation responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and worked in collaboration with a wide range of partners to facilitate and enable recovery. The council managed in the order of £50m to businesses and other organisations, involving over 10,000 grants made under the range of direct support schemes that were set up over the period of March 2020 to March 2022. The government's 'Everyone in' scheme which was delivered by the Housing Team assisted over 60 potential rough sleepers into emergency accommodation. The small Rough Sleeper Initiative team provided regular outreach work throughout lockdown to provide support and ensure no-one was overlooked. The Community Support team made contact with approximately 7000 individuals identified by the Government as Shielding or Vulnerable to ensure that they had adequate access to food and other essential supplies. With the support of partner agencies and the voluntary community sector the team ensured that food parcels were made available to those that needed them and that signposting was undertaken for all other essential needs.

Cost-of-Living crisis

The Swale Community & Partnership Team are currently working with Kent County Council (KCC) to deliver the Household Support Fund, this is government funding, to support vulnerable residents in need of help due to significantly rising living costs.

The scheme has been in place from 1 April 2022 and the current round ends 31 March 2024. So far, the scheme has provided food support awards to more than 14,800 households in the form of vouchers, food parcels, food shopping and hot meals.

Over 7,100 households have received energy and water support in the form of fuel vouchers, essentials linked to energy and/or water in the form of warm packs and hydro meters.

The Cost-of-Living Partnership Group was created in August 2022 to address issues impacting Swale residents and local organisations. The group now has a membership of over 40 organisations from across Swale including the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) and statutory partners. The meetings have been attended by local members of parliament as well as regularly attended by SBC Councillors and has enabled a collaborative voice on behalf of the VCS, which has also stimulated project delivery and improved relationships

Water emergency

In July 2022, water supplies to homes and businesses in the Isle of Sheppey were lost due to a major fault in the primary water main that carries water to storage reservoirs on the Island. Due to the hot weather at the time, demand for water was exceptionally high and the council put in place its Emergency Plan to work with Southern Water to keep the community informed and distribute bottled water to the community. Coinciding with this, there was a water emergency in the eastern end of the borough. This is a good example of the resilience of the council in times of crisis and demonstrates the dedication of staff who were redeployed from their day jobs so they could work shifts helping the efforts on the ground handing out water and delivering to vulnerable residents. There was also a team working behind the scenes co-ordinating logistics for both emergencies.



Safer Streets Scheme Street Marshalls

Levelling-up funding

In 2022 the council secured £20 million of Government Levelling-Up Funding for the Sheerness Revival programme which will improve health, education, leisure and employment opportunities in Sheerness. The project will regenerate the Beachfields area which will include a new café, extend the healthy living centre to include an outdoor gym, soft-play and adventure golf areas. Funding will also expand Sheppey College to improve its further education offer and create workshop spaces at Masters House.

Public realm improvements

The last Corporate Plan cycle facilitated a number of improvements to public realm, including Faversham recreation ground, various churchyards and war memorials, several play areas including Beachfields Sheerness, Manor Grove Sittingbourne and Millfield in Faversham, and new public toilet facilities at Minster Leas, Milton Creek Country Park and Beachfields.

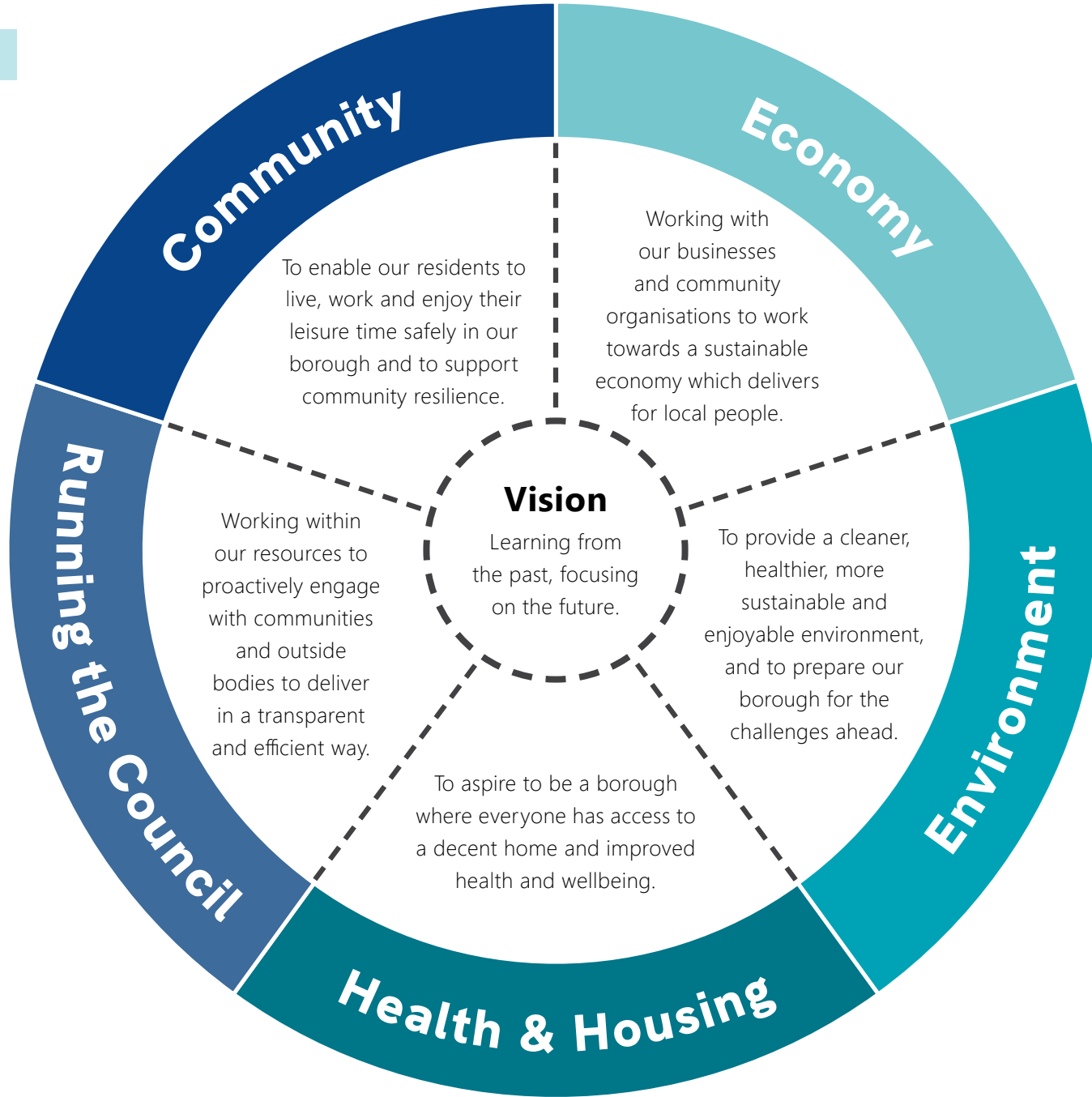
Murston HeArt Project

SBC awarded £100,000 to Murston All Saints Trust for the restoration and development of Murston Old Church. The project included restoring the 14th century chancel as an art gallery and meeting space, studios for visual arts and crafts, plus a community and education space and café which were completed in December 2022. A pocket park was created in the surrounding churchyard including seating, pathways and parking facilities.

Safer Streets

Swale Borough Council has been awarded a Safer Streets grant from the Home Office, in partnership with the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner for Sittingbourne and Sheerness. Initiatives include CCTV; cutting back trees; installing extra lighting; bystander training; street marshalls during the school holidays; and additional sessions at the County Youth Club in Sheerness. We have also purchased advanced Hollie Guard Apps which will be available to the most vulnerable people in Swale.

Our priorities



Community – the current picture

This priority is focused on creating a sense of community across the borough. We will do this by working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, town and parish councils and in maximising our partnership within the public and private sector. We want our residents to be proud of the borough they live in and have opportunities to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough. Our aim is for our communities to be resilient focusing our support towards the most vulnerable.

The ongoing recovery from the pandemic means that communities are more focused on what they can do in their leisure time and the benefits to health of either for formal or informal activity. We will deliver services that provide access to a range of leisure facilities and play opportunities both in the built and natural environment. These community assets are pivotal, and the plan identifies how we will look to work with a range of partners and volunteers across the community to achieve this.

Through the pandemic and other emergencies that Swale has faced we have seen our community come together to support each other, we want to build upon this working with Town and Parish Councils to develop more localised emergency plans.

Swale has a vibrant Voluntary and Community Sector who deliver a broad range of services to every part and demographic of the borough, we will play our part in working with the sector to develop and become stronger. Building on the work through the Cost of Living Partnership which has enabled us to support the most vulnerable in our community.

We have a strong Community Safety Partnership in the borough, together we tackle the most significant issues that are affecting our communities. Tackling crime, anti-social behaviour and violence is a key consideration for the partnership.

The Council will continue to play its part through using its powers under anti-social behaviour legislation, managing the town centre CCTV and using our licencing powers.

Parking, whether on or off-street, is an important consideration and links to a range of other functions such as safer streets, supporting the economy and regeneration and the encouraging environmental changes. This plan ensures we develop clear and transparent ways that we will manage this service moving forwards.

Swale Community Safety Partnership priorities for 2024/25

Domestic Abuse

- Focus on the development and delivery response of early intervention and support for children affected by Domestic Abuse
- Continued promotion of Perpetrator Services and ensuring adequate provision aimed at young people
 - Ongoing updates on local services and referral routes
- Enhanced Training for partners

Crime and Serious Violence

- Support delivery of Kent Serious Violence Strategy and ensure localised delivery
- Continue to monitor localised crime trends and support response as needed, with a partnership focus on potential increased youth crime/violence
- Delivery of Safer Streets Project

Swale CSP Priorities 2024/25

Anti-Social Behaviour

- Continue to support high risk ASB victims and tackle perpetrators;
- Continue to tackle location based problems, focusing on a potential increase in youth related ASB
- Support to the implementation of the Kent Police Neighbourhood Policing model

Supporting vulnerable people

- Continuation of Cost of Living work to support those most vulnerable in the community, with a wider focus on affects to young people
- Modern Slavery awareness, training and pilot of innovative approaches to engage possible victims
 - Continue to raise awareness of Prevent agenda

Cross Cutting Themes

- Reducing Reoffending
- Communication and Training
- Young People

Community – what we will do:

- Provide the evidence base for the Local Plan to ensure our built and outdoor sport and health facilities meet the demands of the current and future populations.
- Review the Leisure centre service in order to deliver a range of options for residents to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Inspect and maintain the playgrounds across the borough and seek external contributions to enhance them wherever possible.
- Complete the Parking Policy review and implement the principles to ensure traffic flow across the borough.
- Work in partnership with the local towns and parishes and voluntary sector on our community assets – e.g., playgrounds, sports pitches and pavilions, community halls.
- To support local groups and organisations in Swale through the delivery of the member grants programme and review the funding mechanism of a community lottery scheme.
- Enable and empower the existing voluntary and community sector in Swale to develop, strengthen, grow, and improve sustainability for the future.
- To consult with our residents on ways of devolving power and giving communities a greater say in what happens in their locale potentially through the establishment of new Parish, Town and Community Councils if there is community support to do it.
- To ensure active and effective engagement mechanisms are in place so that all residents and communities have the opportunity to engage with the Council.
- To support the voluntary and community sector to co-ordinate an effective response to the cost-of-living crisis, including effective distribution of the Household Support Fund.
- To work as part of the Community Safety Partnership to delivery priorities to address domestic abuse, crime, and disorder, ASB and support vulnerable people.
- To deliver the Safer Streets Programme in Sittingbourne and Sheerness town centres.
- To deliver an effective public space CCTV service and town centre radio scheme, and to grow wider service delivery by the control centre.
- To engage with schools to inform young people about democracy and the work of the council.

Economy – the current picture

Many partners have a role to play in securing economic prosperity – from external funders recognising Swale’s significant potential, to local businesses and skills providers, to business advocacy and support groups.

The award of £20m Levelling-Up funding for the Sheerness Revival programme is major endorsement of this potential. Sheerness Revival will deliver not just short-term benefits but will pave the way, and set the scene, for a collaborative approach to Island regeneration.

The priorities in our Corporate Plan are set against a backdrop of difficult financial times for local authorities, and our objectives seek to maximise the impact of partnership working. Through this approach, our objectives support a wider array of corporate priorities, such as the climate change and ecological emergency agenda.

Limited resources highlight the importance of a clear and robust approach to delivery and our Property Asset Strategy and Economic Development Strategy will support the Corporate Plan in driving efficiencies and identifying opportunities to deliver for our residents and businesses.

The Local Plan is a key tool to deliver corporate priorities and we will seek to ensure Swale’s Local Plan supports the future of our borough as a sustainable, forward-looking place to live, work and enjoy.

Employment history

Swale (England)

Not in employment: Worked in the last 12 months
10.9% (13.2%)



Not in employment: Not worked in the last 12 months
64.9% (61.1%)



Not in employment: Never worked
24.1% (25.6%)



% of people aged 16 years and over not in employment

Economic activity status

Swale (England)

Economically active: in employment
56.7% (57.4%)



Economically active: Unemployment
3.2% (3.5%)



Economically inactive
40.1% (39.1%)



% of people aged 16 years and over



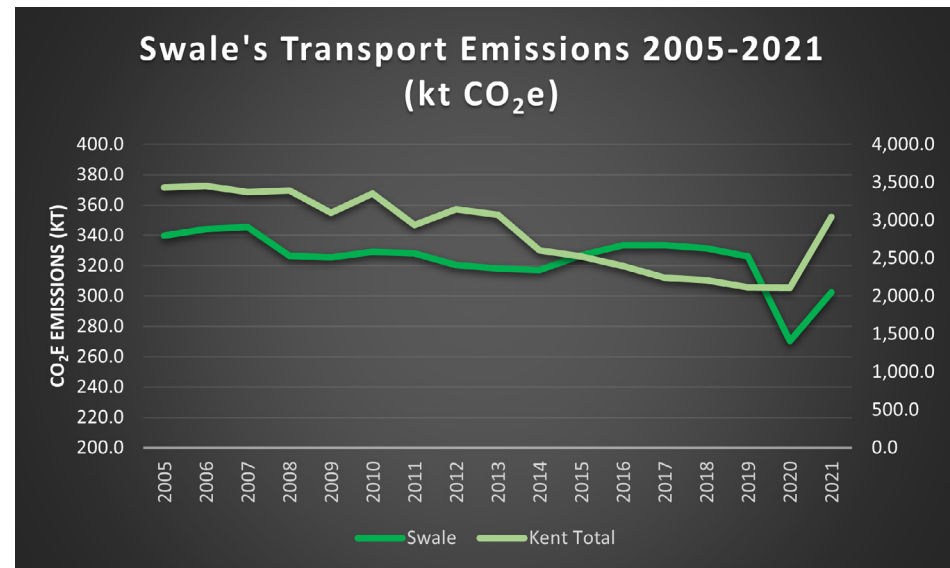
Economy – What we will do:

- Use the Levelling-Up Fund as a catalyst for further regeneration on the Isle of Sheppey.
- Use the Sittingbourne Supplementary Planning Document as a model framework to support town centre regeneration.
- Implement the Property Asset Strategy to support best use of our assets and look to increase our income.
- Deliver economic development through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) (currently programmed to March 2025).
- Develop an Economic Development Strategy, building on the successes of the Economic Improvement Plan.
- Progress a Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart.
- Support skills development through advocacy and partnership working.
- Develop the borough's second Heritage Action Plan that reflects in-house and partnership capacity, to support and promote our outstanding assets.
- Support modal shift and partnership-based solutions to key issues countering sustainability and congestion.

The scale of the challenge that the climate and ecological emergency presents us with is unprecedented. The crisis is not something that any of us are immune from, and we will be seeing the impacts on every aspect of our lives. While of course it needs global entities to do much of the work, we can make a small difference across our borough. Our last plan set a pathway for us to be an exemplar environmental steward and this plan looks to continue that approach. This cannot be done just by the Council's actions, we need everyone across the borough to take a positive step forward, whether that be residents at home, businesses or other public sector organisations. This plan looks to review our own targets for reaching net zero following recent national changes. This will include looking at the benefits that renewable energy can bring to our assets, reviewing policies and services to see what more can be done within the budget footprint, as well as maximising external investment in active travel.

The council is about to embark on a new waste, recycling and street cleansing contract. This is vitally important on a number of fronts. Keeping with the environmental challenges, it is imperative that we work with residents to ensure that firstly, we reduce the waste of materials. Doing so will not only support the environment, it will also help residents reduce the ongoing costs of replacing items. Secondly, if an item does need to be thrown away, we need to collectively ensure it goes to the right place, ideally being recycled for future use. The new contract is an opportunity to reset what we have been doing and to try to improve recycling participation, particularly in food and garden waste. We also need to reduce the amount of contamination in our recycling as the hard work of many residents is spoilt by others putting the wrong items in the recycling bins.

Finally, we want to focus on our public realm and how it looks. We want to improve the cleanliness of our borough through a more effective street cleansing contract. We will also work harder to tackle the problem of littering and fly-tipping. We also control large parts of public open space such as our parks, country parks, seafront and residential greens. Whilst our ability to fund major improvements is greatly reduced, we will do what we can to lever in external funding to improve our public spaces. Making sure that there is a balanced approach to keeping well-maintained areas of grass for people to enjoy sports and leisure time, but also providing areas that could be allowed to grow differently to promote ecological improvements.





Environment – What we will do:

- Refresh the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan and continue to be a leader in our work towards net zero.
- Look at the feasibility of solar and renewable energy solutions for our estate, including council car parks.

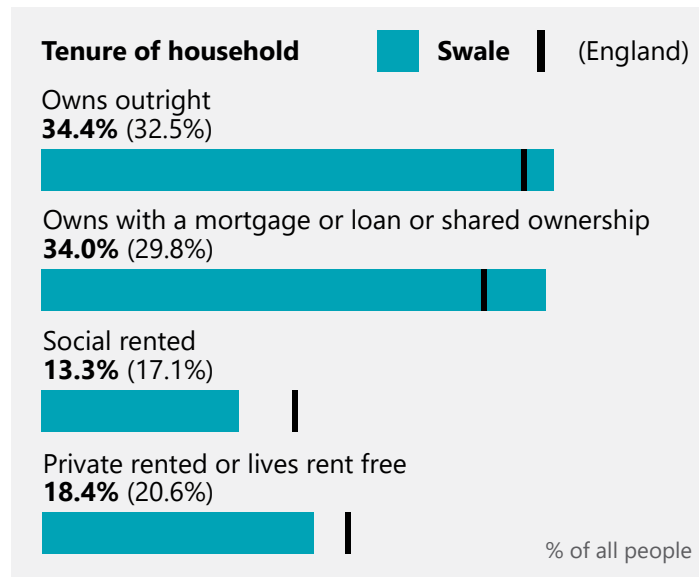
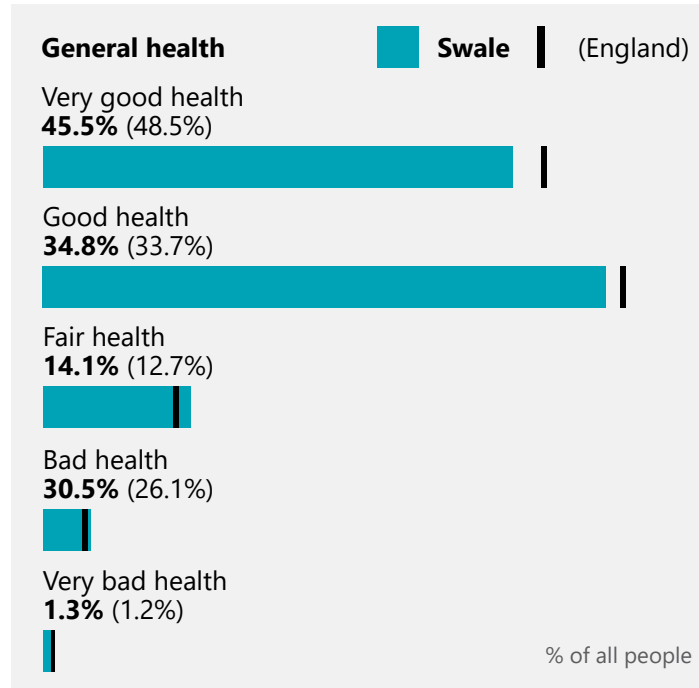
- Create an air quality policy that formalises what we can do to improve air quality for the benefit of our residents.
- Form partnerships with key stakeholders to ensure we champion active travel opportunities.
- Review the grounds maintenance service to ensure we maximise biodiversity gains, particularly with grass cutting, whilst continuing to provide places for residents to enjoy their leisure time.
- Ensure key policy documents such as the Local Plan and Open Spaces Strategy lever in improvements in the quantity and quality of open space to meet the needs of a growing population.
- Work with our partners and contractor to successfully deliver the new waste collection contract and undertake initiatives to deliver improved recycling participation.
- Promote the circular economy by raising awareness of how the materials residents put in their bins can be used for the benefit of the environment.
- Build on the benefits of an improved street cleansing service and work with residents to ensure they can take pride in their local community.
- Make best use of our resources alongside other enforcement agencies to investigate the most disruptive environmental crimes across the borough, in order to deliver the best environmental outcomes for residents.
- Lobby for the best possible standards in marine and coastal environments, protecting our habitats and reducing the impacts of pollution.

Health & Housing – the current picture

We are currently in the midst of national housing crisis, and this is placing significant pressure on borough councils to keep up with increasing demand on those that find themselves homeless. We have made strong progress during the life of the last corporate plan to tackle the issue of homelessness and increase affordable housing. Yet still more needs to be done to tackle the ever-increasing demand on our services. The priorities within the corporate plan reflect how we intend to manage the service to make sure the service is as effective as possible and takes a long-term strategic approach to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, we will also work with our partners to ensure that we reduce homelessness and enable affordable housing to be delivered and maintained in the borough.

Ensuring everyone has access to a decent home is a clear ambition of the council, during the life of this plan we will make steps towards this ambition through the use of our enforcement powers and looking at the introduction of new powers that will be introduced through the Renters Reform Bill.

Swale has significant health inequalities across the borough, these are more pronounced in our more deprived areas. As the borough council we have a significant place leadership role to ensure that health inequalities are addressed in everything we do. We will embed in the organisation through all our policies, consideration on the impacts of health and wellbeing of our residents and actively work with our partners through the Integrated Care System and Health and Care Partnership to make a step change in the health of our residents.





**Affordable Housing at
Watling Gate, Sittingbourne**

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Health & Housing – What we will do:

- Work with Breaking Barriers Innovation playbook programme, to develop a long-term programme to tackle health inequalities on the Isle of Sheppey.
- Actively play our role in the Health and Care Partnership to address health inequalities in the borough.
- Ensure we address health inequalities in all our policies ensuring a blueprint for a healthy borough.
- Deliver the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 -2027, to meet and build on our statutory obligations to tackle homelessness and improve the standards of homes.
- Purchase accommodation to use as temporary accommodation to enable us to control costs and provide improved quality and more local provision.
- Prepare for the introduction of the Renters Reform Bill 2023 and ensure we implement the requirements when it receives royal ascent.
- Work in partnership to maximise the number and range of affordable homes in the borough.
- Ensure we meet our safeguarding obligations to keep children and vulnerable adults safe.
- Achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation, demonstrating our commitment to identifying abuse, preventing it and provide help to those affected.



Running the Council – the current picture

Like all councils, we are facing significant financial challenges at a time when the need for our services has never been greater. The council has worked hard to ensure that our main services have been protected and have worked to prioritise our spend to ensure that we protect the most vulnerable in our borough.

Our work in partnership with business and the voluntary sector has enable our money to go further and we need to continue this for the coming four years.

The way we provide services may need to look different but we will ensure that all our customers, residents and businesses will be able to access the help and support they need.

As one of the largest employers in Swale, we also are proud of our record for paying the real living wage to all staff including apprentices and providing high quality training and support to our staff. We need to continue to be the employer of choice for our staff to ensure we retain highly qualified and experienced people who share our values and share our passion for Swale and for providing high quality services.

Image was taken by and copyright of Alex Hare Photography

Running the Council – What we will do:

We seek to provide a caring, responsible and accountable Council

- Maintain fiscally sound and stable position.
- Seek to make best use of assets and staff resources.
- Effective partnership working.
- Maximising opportunities for external funding and income streams.

We will focus on

- Reviewing our customer service options to enable better outcomes for customers.
- Ensuring inclusivity and equality for all residents.
- Improving communication with residents via all channels.
- Reviewing contract and partnership arrangements to ensure the most appropriate and efficient means of delivering services to our diverse communities and customers.
- Investing in projects which deliver financial returns and/or contribute to our wider objectives around Net Zero.
- Work towards maximising the rates of income on all commercial council properties.
- Maximising opportunities for external grant funding to deliver the Council's corporate objectives.
- Managing finances and having a sound culture of performance management robustly to ensure Value for Money.
- Provide services that meet the needs of residents.
- Create a culture that empowers and fosters an ambitious and motivated workforce.

We will embed a positive culture by

- Welcoming fair and appropriate challenge.
- Instilling the values of integrity, dignity, respect and pride.

We will have clear performance expectations by

- A sound culture of performance management.
- Ensuring core governance around corporate and financial planning, workforce planning, managing assets and sound and ethical procurement.
- Ensuring value for money is embedded in culture, service quality and social values.

We will promote strong staff/member relations by

- Maintaining effective governance that allows sound decision making.
- Working together to ensure that staff and elected members codes of conduct are met and adhered to.
- Embedding well-being policy.
- Supporting and training for effective workforce development.
- Appropriate training and support to be provided to our councillors.
- Actively promoting fairness, equality and diversity.
- Work collaboratively to alleviate difficulties with recruitment and retention.

In short, we will:

- Achieve a balanced budget.
- Demonstrate good governance.
- Develop and implement our Customer Access Strategy, ensuring customers can access our services in the most efficient and effective way.
- Provide value for money services.
- Support and develop staff.
- Ensure well managed assets.

Tree planting at Oare Gunpowder Works for National Tree Week



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Values and behaviours

We are doing a piece of work to review our values and behaviours which will be complete by April 2024. We are also developing a member/officer protocol to improve levels of collaboration, mutual understanding and tone of communication between members and staff.

Our current values, which represent the beliefs and expected behaviour of everyone working for Swale which aim to support quality services, are;

Fairness - being objective to balance the needs of all those in our community

Integrity - being open, honest and taking responsibility

Respect - embracing and valuing the diversity of others

Service - delivering high quality, cost effective public service

Trust - delivering on our promises to each other, customers and our partners

Monitoring

The priorities and objectives in this Corporate Plan will be monitored and reviewed annually at the Policy & Resources Committee.

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An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in decision-making.

When to assess

An EIA should be carried out when you are changing, removing or introducing a new service, policy or function. The assessment should be proportionate; a major financial decision will need to be assessed more closely than a minor policy change.

Public sector equality duty

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- 1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- 2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- 3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics that apply to the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

We also ask you to consider other socially excluded groups, which could include people who are geographically isolated from services, with low literacy skills or living in poverty or low incomes; this may impact on aspirations, health or other areas of their life which are not protected by the Equality Act, but should be considered when delivering services.

Due regard

To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances and in particular on the relevance of the aims in the general equality duty to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential

impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. The three aims of the duty may be more relevant to some functions than others; or they may be more relevant to some protected characteristics than others.

Collecting and using equality information

[The Equalities and Human Rights Commission](#) (EHRC) states that 'Having due regard to the aims of the general equality duty requires public authorities to have an adequate evidence base for their decision making'. We need to make sure that we understand the potential impact of decisions on people with different protected characteristics. This will help us to reduce or remove unhelpful impacts. We need to consider this information before and as decisions are being made.

There are a number of publications and websites that may be useful in understanding the profile of users of a service, or those who may be affected.

- The Office for National Statistics Neighbourhoods website <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>
- Kent County Council Facts and Figures about Kent <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent>
- Public health and social care data http://www.kpho.org.uk/search?mode=results&queries_exclude_query=no&queries_excludefromsearch_query=yes&queries_keyword_query=Swale

At this stage you may find that you need further information and will need to undertake engagement or consultation. Identify the gaps in your knowledge and take steps to fill these.

Case law principles

A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The person completing the EIA should have knowledge and understanding of the service, policy, strategy, practice, plan.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- A public authority is responsible for ensuring that any contracted organisations which provide services on their behalf can comply with the duty, are required in contracts to comply with it, and do comply in practice.
- The duty is a continuing one. It applies when a service, policy, strategy, practice or plan is developed or agreed, and when it is implemented or reviewed.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- The general equality duty is not a duty to achieve a result, it is a duty to have due regard to the need achieve the aims of the duty.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

| | |
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| Lead officer: | Janet Dart – Policy & Engagement Officer |
| Decision maker: | Council |
| People involved: | Larissa Reed – Chief Executive Phil Sutcliffe – Communications & Policy Manager Janet Dart – Policy & Engagement Officer |
| Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy, project, service, contract Review, change, new, stop | This is a high-level strategic plan which has been developed following the formation of the new political administration in May 2023. |
| Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision. | To adopt the new corporate plan – Council: 3 April 2024. |
| Summary of the decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims and objectives Key actions Expected outcomes Who will be affected and how? How many people will be affected? | <p>The main purpose of the corporate plan is to set the council's strategic direction over the medium term. It is intended to influence and guide future detailed decision-making about resource allocation and activities, rather than to set out the detail of that decision-making in advance. It is therefore very difficult to foresee equality-related issues at this stage, and separate EIAs will need to be conducted on individual decisions as they arise.</p> <p>Insofar as it provides guidance for the allocation of council resources over the medium term, the corporate plan potentially has an impact on everyone living in, working in or visiting the borough.</p> <p>The plan proposes five overarching priorities for the council to focus on over the period 2023-2027.</p> <p>Community – to enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience.</p> <p>Economy – working with our businesses and community organisations to work towards a sustainable economy which delivers for local people.</p> <p>Environment – to provide a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable and enjoyable environment and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.</p> <p>Health & Housing – to aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Running the Council – working within our resources to proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver our priorities in a transparent and efficient way.</p> <p>Beneath each of these priorities sit a number of high-level objectives which are set out in detail in the draft corporate plan.</p> |
| Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. Include sources and key findings. | The text of the plan contains some contextual demographic information about the borough and its residents. However, the plan is (intentionally) at too abstract a level to have a definite impact on people with particular protected characteristics. More detailed pieces of work which will sit under the objectives in the plan will |

| | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include information on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics. | need to be subject to impact assessments in their own right in due course. |
| <p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been specific consultation on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • Can any conclusions be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? | Significant internal and external consultation has taken place during the development of the plan, and public consultation has been undertaken and the results of that consultation factored in prior to final adoption of the plan. This was considered by the administration and the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee recommended some minor amendments which were agreed on 20 March 2024. |

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| Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty? | |
| Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's PSED Technical Guidance - https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance | |
| Aim | Yes/No |
| 1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation | Yes |
| 2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it | Yes |
| 3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it | Yes |

| | | |
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| Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics. | | |
| When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men. | | |
| Characteristic | Relevance to decision High/Medium/Low/None | Impact of decision Positive/Negative/Neutral |
| Age | Medium | Positive |
| Disability | Medium | Positive |
| Gender reassignment | Low | Neutral |
| Marriage and civil partnership | Low | Neutral |
| Pregnancy and maternity | Low | Neutral |
| Ethnicity | Low | Neutral |
| Religion or belief | Low | Neutral |
| Sex | Low | Neutral |
| Sexual orientation | Low | Neutral |
| Other socially excluded groups ¹ | High | Positive |

¹ Other socially excluded groups could include those with literacy issues, people living in poverty or on low incomes or people who are geographically isolated from services.

| | |
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| <p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. • There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision. <p>Advise on the overall equality implications that should be taken into account in the final decision, considering relevance and impact.</p> | <p>The corporate plan is in general at too high a level of abstraction for the aims of the equality duty to be relevant in any concrete way, although they are likely to be much more relevant to many of the pieces of work which will flow from it. The impact of the plan itself on the aims of the equality duty, without reference to these more detailed pieces of work, is at this stage considered to be low, and nothing requiring the mitigation of adverse impacts has been identified. It is believed at this stage that the plan involves no unlawful discrimination.</p> |
|---|--|

Timing

- Having ‘due regard’ is a state of mind. It should be considered at the inception of any decision.
- Due regard should be considered throughout the development of the decision. Notes should be taken on how due regard to the equality duty has been considered through research, meetings, project teams, committees and consultations.
- The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising the due regard shown to the equality duty throughout the development of the decision. The completed EIA must inform the final decision-making process. The decision-maker must be aware of the duty and the completed EIA.

Full technical guidance on the public sector equality duty can be found at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance>

Please send the EIA in draft to Janet Dart in the Comms and Policy Team (janetdart@swale.gov.uk) who will review it with colleagues and let you have any comments or suggested changes.

This Equality Impact Assessment should form an appendix to any EMT/SMT or committee report relating to the decision, and a summary should be included in the ‘Equality and Diversity’ section of the standard committee report template under ‘Section 6 – Implications’.

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| Council | |
| Meeting Date | 03 April 2024 |
| Report Title | Member-officer protocol |
| EMT Lead | Robin Harris - Monitoring Officer |
| Head of Service | |
| Lead Officer | |
| Classification | Open |
| Recommendations | <p>The standards committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the Member/Officer Protocol for adoption. 2. Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make any final or consequential amendments to the text, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee. 3. Delegate the Standards Committee to review the operation of the protocol after 12 months. |

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report introduces a final version of a member/officer protocol, the substance for which was agreed at the Standards committee meeting in September 2022. The protocol has now been subject to consultation by the Trade Union and staff during the course of 2023 and was recommended to Council by the Standards Committee in December 2023. The report seeks the approval of Council for adoption of the member/officer protocol.

2 Background

- 2.1 Most councils' constitutions include a member/officer protocol setting out the respective roles of members and officers and providing some elementary regulation of the relations between members and officers. While there is no legal requirement for councils to adopt such a protocol, Swale is unusual in not having one. Indeed, the LGA Model Code of Conduct that Swale utilises, refers to a member/officer protocol.
- 2.2 There remains a heightened interest in, and focus on, member standards in Swale, particularly in the light of the negative findings of the Council's peer review, in respect of the member/officer relationship. It is therefore timely to bring forward this document which, it is hoped will have a positive effect on member/officer relations.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Following the Standards Committee decision in September 2022, officers have consulted with EMT, SMT, CLT, the Trade Union and all staff.
- 3.2 The protocol was presented to EMT and CLT and then shared via email with Trade Union representatives and all staff. There were generally only minor issues raised. It is likely that the true test of the document will arise in the event that the protocol is adopted by Council and put into practical daily use. To that end, it is suggested that the Standards Committee consider a review of the operation of the protocol after 12 months of use have elapsed.
- 3.3 EMT reviewed the draft protocol in May 2023. Officers were satisfied with the content and predominantly focused on an appropriate mechanism for consultation. EMT determined that it would be best for the protocol to be considered by CLT first, with any comments considered before the document then went to the Trade Union and all staff.
- 3.4 CLT reviewed the draft protocol in July 2023. Some modest amendments to the text were suggested which did not alter the fundamental substance of the document. An example was seeking clarification on the columns in the table at 2.13 in the protocol. Officers raised concerns that this would prevent the bringing of a grievance in circumstances where this was necessary, but it was confirmed that employment law and standards are separate matters that can be run concurrently where appropriate.
- 3.5 The Trade Union were consulted in October 2023 and their response was that they were happy with the staff elements, but would not comment on member matters as it was not appropriate for them to do so.
- 3.6 All staff were consulted by email in November 2023 and there were no further comments from staff.
- 3.7 Council is now asked to: **Approve** the Member/Officer Protocol for adoption.
- 3.8 Council is asked to: **Delegate** authority to the Monitoring Officer to make any final or consequential amendments to the text, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee.
- 3.9 Finally, Council is asked to: **Delegate** the Standards Committee to review the operation of the protocol after 12 months.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 There is no obligation on the council to adopt a member/officer protocol, so council could choose to reject the proposed document. However, most councils do include a protocol along these lines in their constitutions as a means of regulating the relations between members and officers. There is no legally

mandated format for these protocols, so the specific content is for Swale's members and officers to agree.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The protocol has been before the Standards Committee, all staff and the trade union.

6 Implications

| Issue | Implications |
|--|---|
| Corporate Plan | The idea of a member/officer protocol supports the council's fourth priority of 'Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future'. |
| Financial, Resource and Property | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Legal, Statutory and Procurement | There is no legal obligation to adopt a member/officer protocol, but equally there are no specific legal constraints on what a protocol can cover. |
| Crime and Disorder | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Health and Wellbeing | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Equality and Diversity | No implications identified at this stage. |
| Privacy and Data Protection | No implications 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: Member/Officer Protocol

8 Background Papers

8.1 There are no background papers.

APPENDIX I: DRAFT MEMBER-OFFICER PROTOCOL

Protocol for Member/Officer Relations

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Mutual trust and respect between members and officers is core to the Council's governance strategy and working culture. It is an essential partnership necessary for the effective and successful operation of the Council.
- 1.2 The Member Code of Conduct states "*The public have high expectations of us and entrust us to represent our local area, taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. We have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations.*" Therefore, this Protocol supplements the Member Codes of Conduct.
- 1.3 The Council has adopted Codes of Conduct for both officers and members. The Protocol also seeks to reflect the principles underlying the respective Codes of Conduct which apply to members and officers. The shared objective of these Codes is to enhance and maintain the integrity (real and perceived) of local government.
- 1.4 This Protocol guides members and officers of the Council in their relations with one another. Members and officers have a responsibility to act fairly, honestly, in good faith.
- 1.5 Given the variety and complexity of such relations, this Protocol does not seek to be either prescriptive or comprehensive. It seeks simply to offer guidance on some of the issues, which most commonly arise. It is hoped however, that the approach, which it adopts to these issues, will serve as a guide to dealing with other issues.
- 1.6 Members and officers must always respect the roles and duties of each other. They must show respect in all their dealings by observing reasonable standards of courtesy, and by not seeking to take unfair advantage by virtue of their position.

2 The Role of Members and Officers and Effective Relations

- 2.1 Members and officers are indispensable to one another and mutual respect between both is essential. It is important to recognise and take account of their different roles. This is necessary for the day-to-day interaction between members and officers and for the public perception of the council by ensuring transparency between the political role of members and the professional, impartial, role of officers
- 2.2 Members provide a democratic mandate to the council, whereas officers contribute to the professional expertise needed to deliver the policy framework agreed by members.
- 2.3 Members are accountable to the electorate and serve only for as long as their term of office lasts whereas officers are employees of the council and accountable to it.
- 2.4 An officer's role essentially is to put policies into effect and organise the provision of services. Officers may also be delegated by members to make policy decisions. Officers may have to advise members from time to time that certain courses of action cannot be carried out. Officers, therefore, have a duty to give unbiased professional advice.
- 2.5 Ultimately, officers serve the Council as a whole and not any political group, combination of groups or any individual member. Nonetheless, officers may properly be called upon to assist the deliberations of political groups and to help individual members in their different roles.
- 2.6 Mutual respect and good communication are the key to establishing good member and officer relations.
- 2.7 Where a personal relationship has been disclosed, those concerned should avoid a situation where conflict could be perceived. Specifically, a member should not sit on a body or participate in any decision which directly affects the Officer on a personal basis.
- 2.8 In order to be effective, both members and officers should discuss and agree the values and behaviours they expect from each other in a relationship of mutual trust.

2.9 Members and officers should communicate clearly and openly avoiding ambiguity and the risk of misunderstanding.

2.10 Members and officers should work in a spirit of partnership, to turn the council's core values and priorities into practical policies for implementation.

2.11 Officers can expect from members:

- political leadership and direction
- respect, dignity and courtesy
- not to be treated or considered as subordinate or subservient but a partner within their respective roles
- an understanding of and support for respective roles, workload and pressures
- not to be subjected to bullying
- not to be harassed or placed undue pressure
- not to use their position or relationship with officers to advance their personal interests or those of others or to influence decisions improperly.
- to comply with the Member Code of Conduct

2.12 Members can expect officers to:

- behave in a professional manner and courteous manner
- to respect, have dignity and courtesy
- maintain confidentiality
- perform their duties effectively, efficiently and with political neutrality
- avoid personal close familiarity with members and not use their relationship with members to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly
- report to their director any time that a member asks or pressurises the officer to deal with a matter outside of Council procedure or policy
- demonstrate an understanding of and support for respective roles, workload and pressures
- comply with the Officer Code of Conduct

| Communication and Consultation | | |
|---|--|---|
| Political (Members) | Collaboration (Together) | Operational (Officers) |
| <p>Being clear about the Council's priorities</p> <p>Understanding people's concerns</p> <p>Signalling political change</p> | <p>Prioritisation taking account of aims and constraints.</p> <p>Understanding and responding to community concerns</p> <p>Focus on the positive</p> <p>Promoting community interaction and leveraging community action</p> | <p>Options and platforms for consultation and communication</p> <p>Managing and facilitating the change (meetings in the community etc)</p> |
| Partnership Working | | |
| Political (Members) | Collaboration (Together) | Operational (Officers) |
| <p>Understanding that councillors have a community leadership role that goes beyond the Council's services</p> <p>Be clear about what we can and cannot do (and what we are responsible for)</p> <p>Provide the political willingness to work in partnership and understand this may involve some loss of control/sovereignty</p> | <p>Agree services to be delivered in partnership</p> <p>Sign up to the aims and ambitions of the partnership</p> <p>Facilitate 'connectivity' – e.g. with parish and town councils, VCS</p> <p>Leveraging capacity from partnerships and communities</p> | <p>Being clear about the resource required to lobby or undertake work on behalf of a partner</p> <p>Resource and service partnerships as required</p> |

| Political (Members) | Governance Collaboration (Together) | Operational (Officers) |
|---|--|--|
| Provide a political steer on political architecture and decision-making | Understand, oversee and approve key control mechanisms | Advise on what is required to meet statutory obligations and ensure they are met |
| Providing a political steer on appetite for risk | Set the approach to risk and be clear on the appetite for it | Set and manage departmental budgets and operational risks |
| | Work together on a realistic and deliverable budget | |

3 **Officer Impartiality and Undue Pressure**

- 3.1 Members must not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise officers' impartiality.
- 3.2 The Council operates through a system of groups of councillors, based on political affiliation. All Officers must, in their dealings with political groups and individual Members, treat them in a fair and even-handed manner. Officers must at all times, maintain political neutrality (see para' 17 Officer Code of Conduct)
- 3.3 The support provided by officers can take many forms, ranging from the meeting with a Chair and Vice-Chair before a committee meeting to a presentation to a full political group meeting. Officers will provide support and advice to the executive, scrutiny and regulatory functions of the Council. Officers will also provide advice and assistance to individual members in respect of Council business, including issues raised by constituents.
- 3.4 Officers, therefore, must ensure that there is no conflict of interest in their advice or conduct.
- 3.5 Whilst in practice such support is likely to be in most demand from whichever political group is for the time being in control of the Council, it should be available to all political groups. The advice given by officers to different political groups should be consistent.

- 3.6 Members must respect officers' impartiality.
- 3.7 The LGA Members Code of Conduct states, paragraph 3, "*Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. Members can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, members must not try and force officers to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity*".
- 3.8 Therefore, a member should not apply undue pressure on an officer to do anything which he/she is not empowered or authorised to do, or which is against the officer's professional judgement, or to undertake work outside normal duties or normal hours (other than within accepted working patterns, e.g. evening meetings). Members should be aware that to exert pressure improperly on an officer in this way may be a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.
- 3.9 Similarly, an officer must neither seek to use undue influence on an individual member to decide in her/his favour nor raise personal matters to do with her/his job nor make claims or allegations about other employees. The Council has formal procedures for consultation, grievance and discipline set out in Part 4.1 Members' Code of Conduct.

4 Service Standards

- 4.1 Officers and members will do their best to give timely responses to enquiries from one another. This will be in accordance with the minimum service standards. Enquiries should be responded to in no later than 10 working days unless a holding response, setting out the reasons for delay is given. However, neither officers or members should have unreasonable requests placed on them.

5 Confidentiality and access to information

- 5.1 The Officers Code of Conduct emphasises the importance of maintaining confidential information. For example, officers will provide advice and information to members on declarations of interests. However, members

will know the nature and extent of any interest they may have. It is the member's responsibility, therefore, to decide whether any interest should be declared. Officers must, when requested to do so, respect members' confidentiality when providing advice on declarations of interest but may otherwise draw to a members' attention the need to declare a known interest.

- 5.2 Officers are reminded that the misuse of confidential information is a breach of the Officers Code of Conduct; thus, regarded as a disciplinary offence.
- 5.3 Any Council information provided to a member must only be used by the member for the purpose for which it was provided i.e. in connection with the proper performance of the member's duties as a member of the Council.
- 5.4 Officers should make it clear to members if they are giving them confidential information. If a member is not sure whether information is confidential, he or she should ask the relevant officer, but treat the information as confidential in the meantime.
- 5.5 Each member has the right to inspect and have copies of the reports, minutes and background papers relating to the public part of any Council, Panel or Committee agenda. This is set out in Part 3.2 Access to Information Procedure Rules
- 5.6 The Members Code of Conduct, states "*[members] Behaving in accordance with all our legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within this authority's policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the Authority's resources.*" Accordingly, members are expected to comply with Paragraph 10, Part 3.2 Access to Information Procedure Rules members do not have an automatic right of access to all documents relating to confidential or "Exempt" items on the agenda. These might include, for instance, information relating to employees, occupiers of council property, applications for grants, contracts, industrial relations negotiations, legal advice and criminal investigations.
- 5.7 In respect of such confidential information, members will normally receive, or have access to all papers unless they are of particular sensitivity. A member may have access to such sensitive documentation

insofar as it is reasonably necessary to enable them to properly perform their duties as a member of the Council. The relevant question to be asked is whether they need to know the information to perform such duties.

- 5.8 Any Council confidential information provided to a member must only be used by the member in connection with the proper performance of the member's duties as a member of the Council. Confidential information should not be disclosed, discussed with or released to any other persons. Such disclosure would be a betrayal of trust.
- 5.9 Members should never disclose or use confidential information for the personal advantage of themselves or of anyone known to them, or to the disadvantage or the discredit of the Council or anyone else.
- 5.10 Any confidential information provided to members should be clearly marked as such prior to its provision.
- 5.11 Further advice regarding members' rights to inspect Council documents may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer.

6 Officer relations with specific members

- 6.1 The working relationship between senior officers and the Leader/Committee Chairs will be particularly close. Committee Chairs will have broad-ranging responsibilities. Officers may provide briefing notes, advice and information to the Committee Chairs in respect of reports or questions at Panel, Committee and Council Meetings. This relationship, however, must not:
- compromise officers' duties to all members of the Council;
 - be so close as to give the appearance of partiality on the part of the officer;
 - undermine the confidentiality of any discussions that officers are privy to;
 - compromise officers' professional responsibility to advise members that a particular course of action should not be pursued;
 - abrogate officer responsibility for action taken under delegated powers.

6.2 Committee Chairs are recognised as the legitimate elected spokesperson on their committees' areas of responsibility. Where authority is delegated to officers (under the Scheme of Delegations to Officers), they will often wish to consult the relevant Chairs about the action which they propose to take, but the responsibility for the final decision remains with the officer who is accountable for it.

7 Officer attendance at political group meetings

7.1 Officer advice and support will be provided to: -

- Council Meetings;
- Meetings of any Committees established by the Council;
- Meetings of Committees/Sub-Committees and Panels;
- Working Parties/Forums, etc.;
- Chairs/Vice-Chairs of Committees and Panels;
- All Members of Council on Council business

7.2 Senior officers may be invited to attend political group meetings. The Chief Executive will decide whether such attendance may take place. If it is agreed that an officer can attend a political group meeting, the Chief Executive will inform the other group leaders and offer a similar facility.

7.3 Officer attendance at group meetings must be approved in advance, by the relevant Director.

7.4 Officer support will not extend beyond providing factual information or professional advice in relation to matters of Council business.

7.5 Officers will not be involved in advising on matters of party business, and therefore should not be expected to be present at meetings or parts of meetings when such matters are to be discussed.

7.6 Political group meetings are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council, and conclusions reached at such meetings do not rank as formal Council decisions. The presence of an officer confers no formal status on such meetings in terms of Council business and must not be interpreted as doing so. Where officers provide factual information and advice to a political group in relation to a matter of Council business, this is not a substitute for providing all the necessary information and advice when the matter in question is formally considered by the relevant committee of the Council.

- 7.7 It must not be assumed that an officer is supportive of a particular policy or view considered at a political group meeting simply because they have attended or provided information to the meeting.
- 7.8 Officers will respect the confidentiality of any political group discussions at which they are present and, unless requested to do so by that political group, will not relay the content of such discussions to another political group or to other Members. This will not prevent an officer providing feedback to other officers on a need-to-know basis. Factual information upon which advice is based will, if requested, be available to all political groups.
- 7.9 The duration of an officer's attendance at a political group meeting will be at the discretion of the group, but an officer may leave at any time if they feel it is no longer appropriate to be there.
- 7.10 An officer accepting an invitation to any one political group meeting will not decline an invitation to advise another group about the same matter.
- 7.11 Officers should be given the opportunity of verifying comments and advice attributed to them in any written record of a political group meeting.
- 7.12 No member will refer in public or at meetings of the Council, to advice or information given by officers to a political group meeting.
- 7.13 At political group meetings, where some of those present are not members of the Council, care must be taken not to divulge confidential information relating to Council business.
- 7.14 Special care needs to be exercised whenever officers are involved in providing information and advice to a meeting of a political group which includes persons who are not members of the Council. Such persons will not be bound by the codes of conduct [for members and employees] (in particular, the provisions concerning the declarations of interest and confidentiality) and for this and other reasons, officers may not be able to provide the same level of information and advice as they would to a members only meeting.
- 7.15 Should any difficulty or uncertainty arise in the area of officer advice to political groups, this will be raised with the relevant Director, who should discuss the matter with the group leader.

8. Friendships/relationships between members and officers

- 8.1 Informal and collaborative two-way contact between members and officers is encouraged, but personal familiarity can damage the relationship, as might a family or business connection.
- 8.2 Members and officers should always be open about their relationships to avoid any reason for suspicion and any appearance of improper conduct. Close personal familiarity should be avoided; i.e. 'be friendly, but don't be friends'.
- 8.3 Members and officers should inform the Monitoring Officer of any relationship which might be seen as unduly influencing their work in their respective roles.

9. Use of council resources and facilities

- 9.1 The only basis on which the Council can lawfully provide support services to members (e.g. stationery, typing, printing, photocopying, transport, computers etc), is to assist them in discharging their role as members of the Council.
- 9.2 Members should not approach or pressure staff to carry out duties or provide resources or support in a biased or partisan way. Examples are:
 - business which is solely to do with a political party;
 - work in connection with a ward or constituency party political meeting;
 - electioneering;
 - work associated with an event attended by a member in a capacity other than as a member of the Council;
 - private personal correspondence;
 - work in connection with another body or organisation where a member's involvement is other than as a member of the Council; and
 - support to a member in his/her capacity as a councillor of another local authority.

10 Criticism and complaints

10.1 Members and officers must conduct themselves in a way that is acceptable within a professional environment. They must afford dignity, trust and respect to everyone and themselves. They must have awareness of the effect of their behaviour on others and only make reasonable and manageable demands.

10.2 Members and officers must not conduct themselves in an unacceptable manner. The Members Code of Conduct states:

"Valuing my colleagues and staff and engaging with them in an appropriate manner and one that underpins the mutual respect between us that is essential to good local government.

Always treating people with respect, including the organisations and public I engage with and those I work alongside".

10.3 In line with the above, LGA model of Code of Conduct , at paragraph 2, explicitly states members must not bully, harass or discriminate.

10.4 Bullying is characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others. Examples of bullying include but are not limited to:

- verbal abuse, such as shouting, swearing, threats, insults, sarcasm, ridiculing or demeaning others, inappropriate nicknames, or humiliating language
- physical or psychological threats or actions towards an individual or their personal property
- practical jokes
- overbearing or intimidating levels of supervision, including preventing someone from undertaking their role or following agreed policies and procedures
- inappropriate comments about someone's performance

- abuse of authority or power, such as placing unreasonable expectations on someone in relation to their job, responsibilities, or hours of work, or coercing someone to meet such expectations
- ostracising or excluding someone from meetings, communications, work events or socials
- sending, distributing, or posting detrimental material about other people, including images, in any medium
- smear campaigns.

10.5 Bullying behaviour should be contrasted with the legitimate challenges which a member can make in challenging policy or scrutinising performance. An example of this would be debates in the chamber about policy or asking officers to explain the rationale for the professional opinions they have put forward. Members are entitled to challenge fellow councillors and officers as to why they hold their views. However, if the criticism is a personal attack, threat, unsubstantiated allegation, abusive or offensive in nature, members are likely to cross the line of what is acceptable behaviour.

10.6 Harassment is conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person. Examples of harassment include but are not limited to:

- sending unwelcome emails
- unnecessarily repetitive, intrusive questioning
- unwelcome physical contact such as touching or invading 'personal space'
- haranguing
- intimidation
- inappropriate remarks or questioning such as comments about someone's appearance, lewd comments, and offensive jokes
- overbearing or intimidating levels of supervision, including preventing someone from undertaking their role or following agreed policies and procedures
- inappropriate comments about someone's performance

- placing unreasonable expectations on someone in relation to their job, responsibilities, or hours of work, or coercing someone to meet such expectations
- sexual harassment

There is not an exhaustive list of acts of harassment that may constitute a criminal offence. Examples may include, but are not limited to physical assault:

- making violent or death threats
- stalking
- hate crimes
- sexual harassment

10.7 Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Examples of discriminatory behaviour include but are not limited to:

- exclusion or victimisation based on the Protected Characteristics
- treating someone less favourably or limiting their opportunities based on any of the Protected Characteristics
- comments, slurs, jokes, statements, questions, or gestures that are derogatory or offensive to an individual's or group's characteristics
- promoting negative stereotypes relating to individual's or group's characteristics
- racial or ethnic slurs, insults, or jokes
- intolerance toward religious customs
- mimicking, mocking, or belittling a person's disability
- homophobic, biphobic or transphobic comments or slurs
- discriminating against pregnant people or mothers
- declaring ('outing') someone's religion or sexuality or threatening to do so against their will
- deliberate, unwarranted application of an authority's practice, policy or rule in a way that may constitute indirect discrimination

- instructing, causing, inducing, or knowingly helping someone to commit an act of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.
- 10.8 Members and officers personality and life experiences will naturally incline them to think and act in certain ways. They may form views about others based on those experiences, such as having an affinity with someone because they have a similar approach to life or thinking less of someone because they are from a different generation. This is known as “unconscious bias” and it can lead people to make decisions based on biases or false assumptions. Members need to be alert to the potential of unconscious bias and ensure they make decisions based on evidence, and not on assumptions they have made based on biases.
- 10.9 Members must not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any officer who is likely to be a complainant, a witness, or involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings relating to a failure to comply with the Member Code of Conduct.
- 10.10A Member who is unhappy about the actions taken by, or conduct of, an officer should:
- avoid personal attacks on, or abuse of, the Officer at all times;
 - ensure that any criticism is well founded and constructive;
 - never make a criticism in public;
 - take up the concern with the officer privately. If direct discussion with the officer is inappropriate (e.g. because of the seriousness of the concern) or fails to resolve the matter, the member should raise the issue with the officer’s manager or the relevant Director.
- 10.11 Members and officers should not criticise or undermine respect for the other at meetings of the Full Council, Committee or Sub-Committees, or in any public forum.
- 10.12 Members should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an individual officer or officers collectively at meetings held in public. officers should observe the same rule in respect of Members.
- 10.13 If a member believes that they have not been treated with proper courtesy or has a concern about the conduct or capability of an officer, then they should raise the matter confidentially with the Chief Executive or relevant Director who may utilise the Council’s formal disciplinary

procedures if this is considered appropriate. If the member is still not satisfied with the action that has been taken, then they may raise the matter confidentially with the Chief Executive, or a Director if the Chief Executive considered the original concern, who will look into the matter afresh. If they believe that there is a case to answer, then they may utilise the Council's formal disciplinary procedures. If the Chief Executive/Director suggests no action they will inform the member and relevant Group Leader of this.

10.14 If an officer feels that they have not been treated with respect or is concerned about any action or statement relating to themselves or a colleague by a member, or the conduct of a member, they should raise the matter with their line manager. If they are not satisfied with any action that has been taken as a result, they should raise the matter with the Chief Executive or their Director. If the Chief Executive or Director is of the opinion that the member has acted in breach of the Members' Code of Conduct, they should make a complaint to the Monitoring Officer.

11 Oversight, breaches and further advice

11.1 The Executive Management Team and Standards Committee oversees compliance of this Protocol.

11.2 If a member believes an officer may have acted other than in accordance with this Protocol, he/she should raise their concern with the relevant Director who will consider how the complaint or allegation should be dealt with. A breach of this Protocol by an Officer may lead to an investigation under the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

11.3 If an officer believes a member may have acted other than in accordance with this Protocol, he/she should raise their concern with the Monitoring Officer who will consider how the complaint or allegation should be dealt with. At a minor level, this may be no more than informally referring the matter to the Leader of the relevant party group. More serious complaints may result in an investigation and a hearing before the Hearing Panel.

11.4 Further advice or clarification can be sought from the Monitoring Officer or the Head of Legal Partnership.