

Cabinet Meeting	
Meeting Date	11 July 2018
Report Title	Swale Economic Regeneration Framework
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Cosgrove, Cabinet Member for Regeneration
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson
Lead Officer	Kieren Mansfield
Key Decision	Yes
Classification	Open
Recommendations	The revised Swale Economic Regeneration Framework 2018-2021 is adopted.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report presents the revised draft of a new Economic Regeneration Framework for adoption; subject to. The document has been subject to an eight week consultation period, which closed on the 4th May 2018, and was reviewed by the Policy Development and Review Committee on the 10 May 2018.
- 1.2 This high level document seeks to set out a framework to which relevant Council services and other, partner organisations can refer in making their contribution to promoting growth, particularly within the local economy. Such growth will support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy through business rate retention.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge in April 2016 made a number of recommendations, the first of which was for the Council to “Develop and articulate a clear policy and programme plan for Regeneration and Economic Development.” The Economic Regeneration Framework (at Appendix I) seeks to address the policy element of this recommendation and sets out particular ‘areas of focus’ under four broad themes. The document is presented as a Framework for the period 2018-2021, with a view to a refresh at this time, to align with the Local Plan Review and the new spatial policy framework that this will set.
- 2.2 Overall the Swale economy has performed well, with substantial growth having been a feature of recent years. The Council has played an important role, making provision for such growth in its spatial planning and through a range of activity, including efforts to promote the Borough to the investment and business communities; positively supporting private sector investment; lobbying for and securing government funding to help deliver infrastructure and providing a range of business support to encourage business start-up, growth and survival.

- 2.3 Much of the Framework's focus is to support the Borough's current trajectory and to maintain the pursuit of long-standing ambitions, not least improving access to the strategic road network and improved local access and choice for technical FE provision. It also seeks to address the points made by the Peer Review in respect of communicating the Swale brand and investment offer.
- 2.4 Whilst not a strictly like-for-like document, the Economic Regeneration Framework replaces the Council's previous Economic Development Strategy 'Open for Business'. The four priorities set out in the Framework are similar to those previously used, but the document reflects the progress that has been made and recognises the changing environment within which the Council's local ambitions are set. Aside from the economic uncertainties that persist and implications of Brexit, the Governments Industrial Strategy and policy drive for increased housing delivery are two key influences upon the future of the partnerships through which we work (such as the South east LEP) and the manner in which funding is distributed. There is also the emergence of the Thames Estuary Commission, overlaying the existing Thames Gateway initiative.
- 2.5 The Framework will be supported by action plans that will detail delivery and closely reflect the relevant service plans from across the Council. Delivery of the Framework will seek to make use of the Council's existing available resources and compliment this through strong partnership working and the pursuit of appropriate external funding and investment.
- 2.6 Outcomes will be measured through practical change as projects are progressed and completed and through both performance and local economic indicators. Those available to us and considered the most appropriate are set out in the document.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 The revised Swale Economic Regeneration Framework 2018-2021 is adopted.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 **Do nothing** - this is not recommended given the growth being supported by the Council and the contribution that is being made to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. Economic Regeneration is a corporate priority and no other organisation is as well placed to take a positive leadership role for the Borough, across the breadth of issues and opportunities that are highlighted.
- 4.2 **Status Quo** – The 'Open for Business' Strategy expired in 2016 and it is recommended that a new document setting a framework for the Council's regeneration and economic development activity over the next three years would be beneficial, particularly a period within which we are likely to see substantial uncertainty and change.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The draft Economic Regeneration Framework has been published for an eight week consultation, circulated to key partner organisations and to the Council's business e-bulletin recipients and presented to the Swale Economy and Regeneration Partnership. A limited number of sometimes detailed comments were received, which broadly welcomed the Framework but raised a number of issues, summarised at Appendix 2.
- 5.2 Further input was received from the Policy Development and Review Committee on the 10 May, at which there was detailed discussion about the draft Framework. In addition to the comments on particular elements of the document, there were particular requests for a clearer introduction to the Borough and requests for further detail including how the Borough compared against other areas. The input from both the consultation responses and PDRC has led to significant changes within the document.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>The priorities the draft Economic Regeneration Framework sets out contribute substantially to all three of the priorities in the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>A Borough to be proud of is supported by the securing of new investment and promoting Swale as a great location for investment and as a visitor destination</p> <p>A Community to be proud of is supported by the business support activity, the encouragement of co-operation within the business community and the drive to secure relevant skills provision for local people and businesses.</p> <p>A Council to be proud of is largely supported by the contribution that Economic Regeneration makes to the Council's future financial sustainability through retained business rates.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Delivery of the Framework will seek to use of the Council's existing available resources and compliment this through strong partnership working, and the pursuit of appropriate external funding and investment. The creation of new commercial floor space, supported through the Council's economic regeneration activity, contributes significantly to the Councils budget through retained Non-Domestic Rates. NDR has risen from £41,509,000 in 2013/14 to £47,542,000 in 2016/17, the largest growth in Kent. Areas of focus, particularly related to infrastructure, will also have wider implications for future housing delivery and the consequent impacts on future Council tax receipts. Whilst several service areas contribute to this agenda the core economic development activity costs are £441,000, with 5 FTE staff.</p>

Legal and Statutory	Economic regeneration is not a statutory function of the local authority but the agenda set out in the draft Economic Regeneration Framework does link closely with the Local Plan (both delivery and the review), particularly under the Secure Investment priority.
Crime and Disorder	No specific implications are identified at this stage, although access to employment, skills and other opportunities will help enhance the overall well-being of residents of the Borough.
Environmental Sustainability	Overall, the draft Economic Regeneration Framework is predicated on helping secure growth which has environmental implications for the Borough. The balance between these and the need for growth will largely be dealt with through the planning process. Specific elements, such as efforts to improve the provision of public transport will make a positive contribution as will the increase in local opportunities for residents, reducing the need to travel for leisure, employment and learning.
Health and Wellbeing	No specific implications are identified at this stage, although access to employment, skills and other opportunities will help enhance the overall well-being of residents of the Borough.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage. It should be noted that delivery against the Economic Regeneration Framework is, in part, dependent upon the working relationship with government and other partners and the funding decisions that are made by the private sector and at a county, regional and national level. This in itself places important elements of delivery beyond the Council's immediate control, mitigated by our ability to make a strong case to decision makers. Where external funding is secured, for which the Council is the accountable body, appropriate controls will need to be in place to manage any risk of claw back, taking account of the terms placed upon the funding.
Equality and Diversity	As a high level document, no specific implications are identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	No specific implications are identified at this stage. Management of the information used to support enquiry management and engagement with the local business community will in particular need to have regard for the issues around privacy and data protection.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- *Appendix 1: Swale Regeneration Framework 2018-2021*
- *Appendix 2: Summary of consultation responses*

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 Report to Cabinet, 7th March 2018, Swale Economic Regeneration Framework
Minutes of the Policy Development & Review Committee, 10th May 2018.