

<b>PDRC Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
<b>Report Title</b>	Economic Improvement Plan
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Monique Bonney, Cabinet Member for Economy and Property
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Economy, Communities and Housing
<b>Head of Service</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Economy, Communities and Housing
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Kieren Mansfield, Economy and Community Services Manger
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. PDRC are asked to consider, discuss and make comment on the document to inform the final document to be presented to Cabinet.

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report presents the Draft Economic Improvement Plan 2020-2023, which sets out the priorities for the Council and the headline actions it intends to take in respect of the future development of the local economy. This document is being used to consult with the public, local businesses, and a wider set of partner organisations, which alongside discussion and comment from PDRC , will inform the final document to be presented to Cabinet.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The Council currently has an Economic Regeneration Framework 2018-21, adopted in July 2018. Produced under the previous Conservative administration, this document set out four priority areas, under which there are a number of 'areas of focus', providing some further detail under each priority.
- 2.2 Whilst the four 'headline' priorities in the Economic Regeneration Framework remain relevant to the Borough, the detail beneath this has been considered in light of the new coalition administration's priorities and approach, resulting in the appended, new draft document. This is acknowledged in the Draft Economic Improvement Plan as a change in emphasis, with *"more focus on indigenous growth, focused around start-up and small and medium enterprises (SME's); an intent to 'up the ante' in supporting and developing the visitor economy and makes clear our wish to pursue economic improvement, but not at any cost."*

- 2.3 The Economic Improvement Plan was originally drafted prior to the COVID-19 crisis but was reviewed in light of current circumstances. This includes the identification of short-term (within a year) actions which are focused on immediate recovery, with more medium-term actions identified as work to be undertaken towards the administrations established ambitions.

### 3 Proposals

- 3.1 The Draft Economic Improvement Plan sets out the coalition administration’s priorities for the local economy and intended to replace the existing Economic Regeneration Framework. PDRC are asked to consider, discuss and make comment on the document to inform the final document to be presented to Cabinet.

### 4 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 4.1 The draft Economic Improvement Plan has been consulted upon from the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020, for a period of 8 weeks. In addition to 2000+ local business contacts comments have also been invited from KCC, Parish Councils, business representative organisations and other key partners. At the time of writing the response has been muted, with 10 responses received via the online questionnaire.
- 4.2 Broadly speaking the responses indicate agreement with content of the economic improvement plan with comments reflecting the following points: -
- Agreement with the four headline priorities for the most part, but with some dissent in respect of the skills agenda and its value for inclusion within a strategy for a district authority.
  - A question of whether the time horizon is too short and the need for longer-term thinking and ambitions.
  - The need to translate words into action.

### 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The Economic Improvement Plan aligns with the Corporate Plan
Financial, Resource and Property	Delivery of the Economic Improvement will need to make use of the Council’s existing available resources and compliment this through strong partnership working, and the pursuit of external funding and investment. The creation of new commercial floor space, supported through the Council’s economic improvement activity, contributes significantly to the Councils budget through retained Non-Domestic Rates. Actions taken, particularly related to infrastructure, will also have wider implications for future housing delivery and the consequent impacts on future Council tax receipts. The action plan seeks to identify where existing budgets

	and staff are to be used and where other resources will be required or need to be identified and assumes the current level of resources available.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Economic improvement is not a statutory function of the local authority but activity within the plan relates closely to a number of areas where the Council has statutory duties, in particular the Local Plan.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The Economic Improvement Plan reflects the local economy, its impacts on the environment and its contribution to the climate emergency. Actions are identified, which have been aligned with the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan.
Health and Wellbeing	Improving and enabling access to employment, skills and other opportunities will make a significant contribution to the overall well-being of residents of the Borough.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage. It should be noted that delivery against the Economic Regeneration Framework is, in part, dependent upon the working relationship with government and other partners and the funding decisions that are made by the private sector and at a county, regional and national level. This of itself places important elements of delivery beyond the Council's immediate control, mitigated by our ability to make a strong case to decision makers. Where direct Council investment is made and /or external funding is secured (for which the Council is the accountable body) appropriate controls will need to be in place to manage any financial and other risks.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage

## 7 Appendices

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

- Appendix I: Draft Economic Improvement Plan 2020-23

## 8 Background Papers

8.1 Report to Cabinet, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018, Swale Economic Regeneration Framework.