

RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION ON STATEMENT OF INTENT – FEBRUARY 2015

Sol ref	Respondent	Parish/town council response	SBC Commentary
-	Iwade PC	At its January meeting my Members considered the documents received and are disappointed that Swale is still not taking into account the Charter proposal nor fully listening to Parish Councils.	We clearly stated in the documentation issued with the consultation that SBC will consider any suggestions from parish and town councils about developing the Sol in the future into a 'Charter' type document. The Sol is SBC's first step in how it and local councils can work together in partnership and cooperation. We await further proposals from parish and town councils with interest.
-	Sheldwich, Baddlesmere and Leaveland PC	At the Parish Council meeting last evening councillors discussed the document. It is considered completely satisfactory for our needs.	-
-	Dunkirk PC	I am writing to again express our disappointment with the draft Statement of Intent. I have attached a copy of the July Statement (in red) and the alterations you have made (in black) for the December Draft. We appreciate this is intended to be continually updated but, with both Town and Parish Councils having made representations, after a considerable amount of debate and time, some change could have been made in this draft.	A schedule listing all of the comments received on the Sol was sent to those parish and town councils who had commented in December 2014, just prior to the launch of the formal consultation. This detailed SBC's responses to those comments. Suggestions on how to improve on what is already being provided has been passed to the relevant officers for consideration.

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		Town and Parish Councils are part of the LPA. They all, in the main, express a desire to work with Swale. We are not an opposition. Dunkirk Parish Council are unable to support the 'Local First Swale Borough Council's Statement of Intent for supporting Town and Parish Councils Consultation draft – December 2014' in its unaltered state. To be clear, we are happy to continue a dialogue and discuss changes with Swale, but we are not prepared to endorse the current document.	
2.1	Minster PC	Minster-on-Sea Parish Council believes that to consult and then make no changes is unacceptable. To this end, it would hope that the requirement that the Borough Council will ensure its views and the views of residents “..will be given due weight and consideration” is upheld.	SBC will always give views expressed as part of a consultation due weight and consideration, and will consider carefully specific proposals put forward. . SBC will always seek to explain why it has pursued a particular course of action.
2.2	Minster PC	Legal and HR should be available to parish and town councils as a matter of course,	We understand that parish and town councils need to obtain the best Legal and HR advice and that they are able to do this as part of their membership of KALC.

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		not chargeable.	SBC has a duty to local people to cover its costs in order to provide value for money. Therefore SBC will continue to offer discretionary services at a reasonable charge.
2.3	Minster PC	SBC could do more to ensure its website is up to date. The layout of the site is also an issue with many items hard to find. Planning Reports are particularly difficult and the process of where Officers' reports are all combined to form one major document makes it difficult for the public to find important information. The website needs to be more accessible and transparent.	<p>We are committed to making sure our website is up-to date and made as accessible as possible. Swale BC follows the accessibility guidelines issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). We aim to meet Level AA of the W3C Web Accessibility Guidelines. Content and data is also published to our website in accordance to the DCLG's Local Government Transparency Code 2014.</p> <p>Work is in progress at the moment to make the Planning section in particular, easier for users to access relevant information, including having a better 'search facility' within the site.</p> <p>SBC has recently introduced a new Committee Administration System "Modern.Gov" to help with committee administration management. Planning Reports are now separated out on the website into individual applications to enable readers to select the particular report they require without having to wade through a large document.</p>
2.4	Minster PC	Discussion should take place with parish and town councils with regard to the New Homes Bonus, Section 106 Agreements and CIL. Minster-on-Sea Parish Council would also like to see better	Swale Borough Council would welcome the views of parish and town councils on any planning applications that are likely to result in Section 106 payments being made to it. Any recommendations brought forward by the Town or Parish Council as to how their local community might best benefit from those S106 payments will form part of the report that will be presented to Swale's Planning Committee for its consideration before it determines the application. Where the Town or Parish Council is aware of

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		communication in place to ensure any entitlements are passed to the relevant parish or town council and any associated projects achieved within the agreed timescales.	a possible future application of sufficient size to likely require an S106 contribution from the developer, then it should contact Swale's planning officers and/or local elected members for early discussions.
2.5	Minster PC	The requirement to "...support town and parish councils to develop, channel shift, move towards online and digital methods of enquiry as opposed to specific face-to-face advice" does little to include the section of the community who lack the basis IT skills. Swale's history of having a significant number of the population with below average basic skills means that these people could be disadvantaged. To resolve this, Minster-on-Sea Parish Council would like to see some form of face to face to continue to be offered.	SBC agrees and has amended the Sol accordingly. The purpose is to encourage the development of new technologies to offer a choice for residents and local communities as to how they interact with local government.
2.6	Minster PC	Minster-on-Sea Parish Council is pleased that you have taken on board its previous suggestion to offer places to Clerks on its own Member Training and Development	-

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		courses.	
2.7	Minster PC	<p>The requirement to “ensure a named SBC officer is provided...” is listed as discretionary. The Parish Council is concerned that this could lead to the introduction of unallocated casework. Minster’s Elected Members believe that allocating cases particularly for large scale applications to named officers is crucial and something Swale’s Planning Department has always been good at. Unallocated cases will lead to problems for all involved in the planning process (the Planning Authority, the relevant Parish or Town Council and Applicant), cause major problems and put pressure on Planning Officers who may feel unable to keep on top of their caseload. To resolve this Minster-on-Sea Parish Council would like the allocation of a named SBC Officer to become mandatory practice.</p>	<p>All planning applications are allocated to a case officer and this is included on the weekly list and on the public access IT systems. There are no plans to discontinue the practice of allocating cases to named officers.</p>

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		<p>Furthermore, there is no mention of 'enforcement' which is the teeth of the planning system. Without it planning would be ineffectual. Swale needs to practise this important service and establish a relationship with Parish and Town Councils to share information and advice in a more generic way so that they can work in partnership more effectively. It also needs to review its existing resources and work with these organisations to resolve issues earlier in the process in line with its own Swale Planning Enforcement Strategy.</p>	<p>The Council has an adopted Planning Enforcement Strategy and Charter which was subject to consultation with parish and town councils. The Council is currently undertaking a review of this Strategy and Charter as well as the whole Planning Enforcement Service. As part of that review, we will be considering how to keep councillors, parish and town councils and the general public informed of progress on cases and complaints. The review is due to be completed in Summer 2015.</p>
2.8	Minster PC	<p>Signposting to available guidance including bespoke geographic analysis of key data needs clarification. Some feel signposting is a euphemism for zero funding. SBC tries very hard to promote 'localism' but stops short of putting any real investment into Neighbourhood Plans. Whilst funding is limited for Parish and Town Councils</p>	<p>Neighbourhood plans are all entered into voluntarily by parish and town councils. There is no obligation on parish and town councils to undertake neighbourhood plans but where they do then SBC will continue to offer professional advice. There is little point in SBC duplicating information that is already available from the Department for Communities and Local Government or websites such as Community Rights.</p> <p>The grants that are available to district councils are intended to offset the costs of discharging statutory duties such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publicising and designating neighbourhood areas and

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		to £7,000 per designated area, the Borough Council can currently apply for £5,000 following the designation of a neighbourhood area, a further £5,000 when it publicises the plan prior to examination and a further £20,000 on successful completion of the neighbourhood planning examination. Swale Borough Council has the resources and expertise available to enable it to do more to support Parish and Town Councils in producing Neighbourhood Plans.	<p>neighbourhood planning forums;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publicising the plan/order and inviting representations to send to the examiner; ▪ Appointing the examiner and paying their costs, and making arrangements for the examination; ▪ Assessing whether the plan/order meets basic conditions so it can proceed to a referendum; and ▪ Organising the referendum and paying any costs involved.
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2.2	Emma Wiggins	SBC to enable parish and town councils to have access to artwork in order to print posters and signs (eg. dog fouling, fly tipping etc.) to put up in their local areas.	-
2.6	Lyn Newton	Include Visit Kent among the list of partners SBC works with who can support parish and town councils on tourism business support activities.	-