

Policy and Resources Committee	
Meeting Date	Wednesday 26 th March 2025
Report Title	Empowering You in Swale – Community Development Strategy 2024-2027
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing & Community Services
Lead Officer	Sarah-Jane Radley, Community & Partnerships Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. For the Policy & Resources Committee to note the Empowering You in Swale Strategy has been ratified by the Community & Leisure Committee and to recommend to Full Council for formal adoption.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Empowering You in Swale strategy document is being developed to provide Swale with a Community Development Strategy to outline how the council intends to support the community over the next 3 years in line with Swale’s Corporate Plan. We ask the committee to note the Empowering You in Swale Strategy has been ratified by the Community & Leisure Committee and to recommend to Full Council for formal adoption.

2 Background

- 2.1 In March 2024 the Health & Housing Committee agreed to the closedown of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy due to the restructure of the community team and the deletion of the Health & Wellbeing post. The committee proposal included the development of a new strategy that encompasses key delivery for community services in line with the existing Corporate Plan and Service Plan.

A cross party member working group took place to discuss ideas and suggestions for the key priorities of the strategy and how members would like the strategy to be set out. The name Empowering You in Swale was agreed as the title for the document and an outline of items that should be included.

In addition to the members working group, the Cost of Living Partnership Group were engaged in a workshop to discuss the key themes and priorities within the strategy and valuable input from our statutory and VCS partners helped to start to shape the document.

Community & Leisure Committee reviewed the draft strategy at the meeting held on the 5th March 2025 and amendments have been made accordingly.

2.2

2 Proposals

- 3.1 We propose to use the Empowering You in Swale Strategy as the roadmap for delivery of community development led activities. The Community & Partnerships Team will continue to deliver against the priorities set out within the strategy and utilise existing mechanisms to promote innovation and new opportunities for the benefit of Swale residents.
- 3.2 The committee is asked to note the Empowering You in Swale Strategy has been ratified by the Community & Leisure Committee and to recommend to Full Council for formal adoption.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The alternative option of continuing to deliver the Health & Wellbeing Plan was dismissed by the Health & Housing Committee due to a lack of resources. The work of the Community & Partnerships Team has evolved since the development of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy to encompass a wider area of delivery and so this is reflected within the new strategy.
- 4.2 We do not feel that the option to 'do nothing' is the best option as although we have a commitment to community within the Corporate Plan, this strategy enables us to provide a level of detail for how we intend to improve the lives of Swale residents through community development.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 An 8-week public consultation has been carried out to enable public feedback to be collected and used to refine the strategy. A cross-party members working group discussed ideas and proposals for the document and made suggestions for its name. In addition, we have delivered workshops, online, and face to face sessions including presenting at all four Area Committees to enable multiple opportunities to feed into the document.
- 5.2 We received 16 responses to the external consultation. The responses contained some constructive feedback of which we have adjusted some of the strategy details to reflect and some we are able to utilise in the forward planning of the work of the team. We also noted the comments that were made at Area Committees, however some of the overall comments were outside of the scope of the work or were not appropriate to the delivery of the strategy.
- 5.3 In general, the feedback and comments were supportive of the strategy priorities and in favour of our commitment to the strategy.

5.4 Community & Leisure Committee reviewed the draft strategy at the meeting held on the 5th March 2025 and amendments have been made accordingly.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Empowering You in Swale links to the four key objectives of the Corporate Plan through the delivery activities being proposed within the strategy.
Financial, Resource and Property	Delivery of the work associated to the Empowering You in Swale Strategy will be committed to from the existing delivery resources of the Community & Partnerships Team and wider team input where there is a cross over of service delivery, no additional funding for projects outside of this area of work has been agreed.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	The Empowering You in Swale Strategy outlines collaborative projects that aim to improve the lives of communities and links to the delivery plan for the Community Safety Executive.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The Empowering You in Swale Strategy outlines collaborative projects that aim to improve the lives of communities through community development, and this includes tackling fuel and water poverty in the borough.
Health and Wellbeing	The Empowering You in Swale Strategy outlines collaborative projects that aim to improve the lives of communities through community development, and this includes tackling health inequalities in the borough.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The Empowering You in Swale Strategy outlines collaborative projects that aim to improve the lives of communities through community development, and we ensure that all partners we work with comply with safeguarding policies and we are delivering according to our own policies.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	Equality Impact Assessment
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: Empowering You in Swale – Community Development Strategy for Swale 2024-2025

8 Background Papers

Community & Leisure Committee – Agreement to proceed to P&R Committee
5th March 2025

[Agenda for Community and Leisure Committee on Wednesday, 5 March 2025, 7.00 pm](#)