

IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Andrews, Bonin, Clayton, Eyre, Hogarth, McGregor, Nelson and Waterton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Bayley

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Fleming be appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2022/23.

(Cllr Fleming in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Bayley be appointed Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2022/23

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee held on 24 February 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

5. Actions from previous meeting

There were none.

6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, provided an update on several development sites. The planning application for Bevan Place had been submitted. The Business Hub at 27 - 37 High Street, Swanley was under construction and should be complete in late summer, with a planned opening of the facility scheduled for late autumn or early winter. The former White Oak Leisure Centre had been demolished and would be cleared to provide a car park for the new centre. Planning permission had been granted for Stangrove Estate. Following public

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consultation, the plans for the Farmstead Drive estate were being revisited to provide extra parking and improve community facilities.

The Customer Solutions Team retained the 20% increase in demand for its services it gained over the course of the pandemic, and Officers were exploring technological options to mitigate this, such as the automatic renewal of certain subscriptions.

The Place Campaign launch was a success, and its purpose was to encourage businesses and people to move into the District. The Committee watched a video presentation on the Place Campaign.

7. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

8. Cyber Security

The report was presented by the Head of Information & Customer Solutions and the Chief Officer for Customer & Resources. It outlined the state of the cyber security in the Council. The Committee heard about the individuals and organisations that posed the largest cyber security threat and how they necessitated a wide range of defences.

They explained that independent audits had identified the strengths and potential vulnerabilities of the Council's cyber security defences. The Committee heard that the members of an organisation were one of its largest cyber security vulnerabilities, and outlined the Council's measures against this, including compulsory training for all staff with in-depth training for key personnel.

The Committee also heard the Council had acquired more software and monitoring resources, to ensure it had up-to-date security, and how these measures were partly through funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities.

The Committee discussed the report and Officers would direct Town and Parish Council's to resources that could aid them.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. Welcome Back Fund Project Review

Members considered the report presented by the Economic Development & Programme Manager which reviewed the Welcome Back Fund Project. He explained to the Committee that the funding of £214,212 (available as £107,106 per year between 2020 and 2022) was for temporary projects that supported the high street.

He explained how the project worked closely with Town and Parish Councils to ensure local needs were met. The Committee heard that the Council successfully

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spent 99% of the allocation, with 100% of the claims on the funding paid in full. The Committee then heard an outline of the projects successfully funded in this way. He further explained that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan would develop upon these projects. The Committee discussed the success of the Project in forming relationships with smaller businesses and how these could be developed upon in the future.

Resolved: That the successful delivery of the Reopening High Street Safely/Welcome Back Fund and the positive impacts the interventions had across the district, be noted

10. Sevenoaks District Draft Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development & Programme Manager presented the report which detailed the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for the District for the period 2022 - 2027. He explained that the Strategy addressed the challenges facing businesses with supply chain issues, a tight labour market and rising costs. It also focusses on the opportunities provided by changes in working practices and the possibility of capturing new spending patterns.

He outlined the four focus areas of the Strategy, which were Business & Enterprise, Tourism and Rural, Town Centres, and Skills & Employment, and explained the elements within these that the EDS specifically targeted. He emphasised the importance of sustainability and Council's Net Zero plan within all these areas, and the opportunities for growth that these presented for the District.

The Committee then heard about the importance of the District Council's partnerships in the Strategy, and the role of consultation with these groups in the creation of the Strategy's priorities. They also heard about how the Strategy includes an annual economic report to monitor its performance.

The Committee discussed the measures in the EDS to retain businesses in the District once developed, and heard the measures the EDS included to develop the available office space within the District to allow these businesses to remain. They further discussed the ways the EDS addressed inequality in the District, and how the provision of digital and transport infrastructure in both rural and urban areas was crucial to the levelling up of the District as a whole.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Economic Development Strategy 2022 - 2027 be adopted.

11. Work plan

The work plan was noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.23 PM

CHAIRMAN