



Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee

Members of the **Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee** of **Gravesham Borough Council** are summoned to attend a meeting to be held at the Council Chamber, Civic Suite on **Tuesday, 18 June 2019 at 7.30 pm** when the business specified in the following agenda is proposed to be transacted.

S Walsh
Service Manager (Communities)

Agenda

Part A

Items likely to be considered in Public

1. Apologies
2. Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Terms of Reference (Pages 9 - 10)
Terms of Reference for Cabinet Committees (Annex 1.7) is attached and can be view on the Councils website here:
<http://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=Annex%201%20%20Responsibility%20of%20Functions&ID=2380&RPID=13051681>
5. Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) / Bird Wise Presentation
6. Strategic Environment - Did you know? Presentation
7. Future High Streets report (Pages 11 - 18)
8. To consider whether any items in Part A of the agenda should be considered in private or those (if any) in Part B in public.
9. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

10. Exclusion

To move, if required, that pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded from any items included in Part B of the agenda because it is likely in view of the nature of business to be transacted that if members of the public are present during those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Part B **Items likely to be considered in Private**

None at the time of publication.

Members

Cllr Brian Sangha (Chair)

Cllr Lauren Sullivan (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
 Conrad Broadley
 Harold Craske
 Brian Francis
 Gary Harding
 Baljit Hayre
 Bob Lane
 Emma Morley

Substitutes: To be notified

Planning and Regeneration Cabinet Committee**Thursday, 28 March 2019****7.30 pm****Present:**

Cllr Julia Burgoyne (Chair)
Cllr Robin Theobald (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Lee Croxton
 Brian Francis
 Samir Jassal
 Jordan Meade
 Lauren Sullivan
 Steve Thompson

Wendy Lane Assistant Director (Planning)
Tony Chadwick Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager
Lauren Wallis Committee Services Officer (minutes)

52. Apologies

No apologies for absence had been received.

53. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 20 November 2018 were signed by the Chair.

54. To declare any interests Members may have in the items contained on this agenda. When declaring an interest Members should state what their interest is.

No declarations of interest were made.

55. Presentation on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning (NSIP) Projects (including Tilbury 2 and excluding the Lower Thames Crossing)

The Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager gave a presentation on the following subjects:

- An update of NSIP projects
- The A2 Bean & Ebbsfleet junction improvements (Highways Order)
- The implication or lack thereof for Gravesham Borough Council Resource issues
- A general transport update

The presentation slides can be accessed via the following link:

<http://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=371&Mid=2930&Ver=4>

Lower Thames Crossing

The Committee was advised that the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report had not gone down well with a range of organisations submitting concerns, many including the issues highlighted in the response submitted by this Council. The Borough Council understood that Highways England was analysing 28,000+ responses and, as yet, there had been no feedback on issues raised.

An autumn submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) was expected. Marling Cross would be used for the storage of materials for use in the geophysical testing and this would be a temporary use.

The following questions were asked and answered:

- The Marling Cross Lorry Park entrance was on Kent County Council highway land.
- A projected additional 4,000 lorries using the road system around Marling Cross was mentioned by Kevin Gore – KCC District Manager (Gravesham) at the last meeting of the Gravesham Joint Transportation Board. It was confirmed that this would not happen as no planning application had been submitted for any works and therefore no consent had been given. The DCO would give permission for this sort of activity. There would be an impact and the Borough Council intended to ask for a Traffic Management Plan.
- The construction of the tunnels for the Lower Thames Crossing would start on the Tilbury side. However the cutting at the tunnel entrance/exit on the Kent side would have as big a scale as the tunnels and would result in a huge amount material being removed.
- Members were advised that the DCO would cover the overall permissions required for the scheme and its construction. There would need to be agreements on a whole range of issues with the appropriate organisations, for example KCC as Highways Authority.
- Recognising that Tilbury2 had started as a development management project and consequently was not treated as a strategic project, the Lower Thames Crossing was on a much bigger scale.

London Resort

The Committee was advised that the Council had not been seriously engaged by the developers of the London Resort for 18 months and the project was therefore, no further forward.

Tilbury 2

The Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager noted that Tilbury was closer to the town of Gravesend than it was to the town of Tilbury and was distant from the Essex and Thurrock populations.

The Assistant Director (Planning) explained the proposed layout of Tilbury 2 and that the key concern for the Council was the Construction Materials Aggregate Terminal (CMAT) which would require huge vessels to discharge tonnes of material from a wharf opposite the Canal Basin area which could impact on the residents and businesses of the town. The proposals

had to be determined by the Secretary of State and not by Thurrock Council as originally thought, as the project was large enough to fall within the NSIP criteria. Therefore the Borough Council had become involved in the project late in the process. The Borough Council wanted to constrain the hours of operation so that night time noise nuisance could be avoided. The Borough Council was not told who the operator would be and without this information the final design of the scheme was not known. To reduce the risk of negative impacts on residents and businesses, the Council had negotiated a number of concessions. Triple glazing paid for by the operator had been offered for residents, but the Borough Council did not consider this acceptable and instead had insisted that the noise should be reduced rather than just mitigated. Members were advised that it had been a difficult negotiation as Thurrock Council had been agreeable to the ports proposals. The officer was hoping that the Borough Council was wrong about the noise risk indicated by the modelling and, when operational, the port expansion would have a negligible impact on local residents and businesses. The Assistant Director (Planning) also explained the amount of man-hours staff had spent on Tilbury 2 and highlighted that the Lower Thames Crossing would take far more time.

The following questions were asked and answered:

- Concerning the use of public health powers in relation to noise nuisance, The Committee was advised that as the DCO was secondary legislation, this enabled various acts to be disapplied. Therefore, the applicants for Tilbury2 had asked for statutory noise nuisance to be disapplied and provided precedents from other DCOs to justify the request
- Members questioned whether the tides made 24 hour operation necessary. The Committee was advised that this point had been made but it had been suggested that whilst the vessel might need flexibility on the mooring time, the operator could delay the discharge of material if it was not within the defined working times.
- The Assistant Director (Planning) advised that if a Noise Management Plan was in place, then the Borough Council should use this to ensure that the port adhered to the plan
- The issue of increased river traffic caused by Tilbury2 had been raised by officers together with the higher level of pollution caused by most craft using "dirty" or marine diesel.
- Officers had also spoken to the sailing and rowing clubs together with the Port of London Authority to better understand what happened on the Gravesend side of the river.
- The Assistant Director (Planning) gave an explanation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and noted the Port of London's desire for an increase in shipping.
- The Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager also noted that officers would also have to keep a watching brief on the other half of the Tilbury 2 site which was owned by RWE. RWE's plans for a possible 300 megawatt open cycle gas turbine and an energy storage facility had recently been shelved but it was anticipated that another proposal would come forward on the site in due course.
- The adjacent Flexible Energy Plant was also mentioned with its proposal for gas engines which could be up and running from cold in 6 minutes and in 3 minutes from hot. Although this was a gas engine it would still need to be connected to the main electricity grid. The site was on Green Belt and formerly commercial land. Environmental scoping had been done but things had since gone quiet. It was noted that this site was a bit further away from Gravesend than Tilbury Energy Centre.

- There had been small scale gas turbine proposals in Gravesham at the Canal Basin and the Cyclopark but these had been purely speculative.

The Bean & Ebbsfleet junction improvements:

The Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager advised that the Borough Council had informed Highways England about the various concerns held by the Council relating to the transport modelling but it was felt that these should be resolvable.

It noted that there was a very significant archaeological site that had been excavated to the north of the junctions and Members were advised that Kent Council Council's Archaeology Service was aware of it. The artefacts relied on a non-oxygenated (waterlogged) environment and therefore the redevelopment would not be allowed to affect the water table in the area in any way.

Other Transport

A question was asked about the cycle route from the Cyclopark via Bedford Road and Cecil Rad into town and whether it could be routed on a safer route through the cemetery. It was confirmed that this had been agreed and that Members should speak with John Pexton – Major Projects Co-ordinator if they required additional information.

Further to a question about the transport interchange at Barrack Row and enforcement for the two bus gates, Members were advised that either APNR cameras or physical barriers could be put in place. However, the APNR cameras required back office support and KCC did not like physical barriers, and the increased number of buses might act as a deterrent to car drivers. Dartford Borough Council was trialling an experimental system.

With regard to the Crossrail extension at Abbey Wood, it was noted that the situation was challenging at the moment. An outline strategic case had been submitted to the Government which included an enlarged Northfleet Station and the critical factor would be the scale of the development in Bexley. Another constraint would be the terminal capacity in London. The Crossrail extension had a number of possible options but Ebbsfleet was the objective.

NSIP

The Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager handed round an illustration of what would take place when a NSIP application was submitted and described the difficulties in applying the very tight timeframe. He gave an explanation of the Planning Inspectorate timelines and what had to be achieved by each deadline. The Borough Council would have to complete a Local Impact Report which had to be factual. The deadlines would be fixed so Members were asked to give consideration as to their involvement and how this could be structured. The Assistant Director (Planning) went through what Councillors could and could not do. Whilst there would be frequent Portfolio Holder briefings, there would not be time for the appropriate Member to be briefed on everything and in the early stages Members would need to give officers a steer to front load the process. The creation of a cross party Member working group was suggested. Members recognised the massive resource implication for officers of the Council and noted that if the London Resort was progressed, then the Council would have two NSIPs to deal with.

The Assistant Director (Planning) and the Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager were thanked for their detailed and interesting presentation.

56. The Great Crested Newt District Licensing Scheme - Verbal Update

The Assistant Director (Planning) advised that a Housing White Paper had expressed concern over environmental factors delaying development. Great Created Newts being highlighted as a particular concern because surveys of sites could only take place at certain times of the year. As part of the proposed District Licensing Scheme, Natural England had looked at the whole of Kent to determine where landscape scale improvements could be made and it had transpired that Gravesham had the least density of Great Created Newts so was not a focus for new pond developments. All Local Planning Authorities in Kent had been asked whether they would be interested in being the lead for the scheme but none volunteered. Members were given an explanation of the banding and funding system for the ponds and the criteria under which developments could be commenced. Some discontent had been expressed by expert groups because the approach concentrated on one species and they believed that the model was crude and not detailed enough. The fear was that good quality ponds would be lost and replaced by poor quality ponds. Kent County Council and the Kent Countryside Partnership were working together on this initiative.

More information can be found on this topic on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-for-newts-better-for-wildlife-business-and-people>

The Chair closed the meeting thanking the Members and officers for their support and hard work.

In return, the Chair was thanked by the Committee.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.07 pm

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Annex 1.7: Terms of Reference for Cabinet Committees

The Executive Leader has appointed the Cabinet Committees set out below.

Cabinet Committees:

The Executive Leader has appointed six such Committees – one for each of the policy portfolios assigned to Lead Members within the Cabinet (*see Annex 1.6 for details of portfolios*) - i.e.

- Operational Services
- Commercial
- Housing Services
- Community and Leisure
- Performance and Administration
- Strategic Environment

Membership: 10 Members of the Council.

Terms of reference

1. To make recommendations to the relevant portfolio holder as to determining any matters within his/her remit.

The Committees may invite such other persons as appear appropriate to attend and take part in their deliberations, subject to the nondisclosure of confidential and exempt information (as defined in the Access to Information Rules set out in Annex 2.2 to this Constitution).

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Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee

Date: 18 June 2019

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: Future High Streets Fund

Purpose and summary of report:

To update the Committee on the council's expression of interest for Future High Streets Funding.

Recommendations:

1. That the positive transformational opportunities presented by the Future High Streets Fund be noted;
2. That Members of this committee discuss and give their views on the council's aspirations for the Town Centre and potential areas for investment, with or without a successful outcome for Future High Streets Funding.

1. Future High Street Fund

- 1.1 The Government announced a £675 million Future High Streets Fund within the 2018 Budget as part of "*Our Plan for the High Street*". This also comprised the following actions:
 - 1.1.1 cutting business rates by a third for up to 90% of retail properties for two years;
 - 1.1.2 consulting on planning reform to make it simpler to create more homes, jobs and choice in town centres;
 - 1.1.3 setting up a High Streets Task Force to support local leadership with expert advice; and
 - 1.1.4 strengthening community assets, including the restoration of the historic buildings.
- 1.2 The objective of the Future High Streets Fund is to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.

- 1.3 Local authorities were asked within a Phase 1 Expression of Interest to define the specific challenges faced by their Town Centres, to set out their overarching strategic ambition for what their Town Centre should become and to identify what needs to be done to make this possible.
- 1.4 The Government received over 300 expressions of interest from local authorities and these are currently being assessed against the published criteria. Places moving to Phase 2 will be announced in Summer 2019.
- 1.5 During this second phase, shortlisted places will receive some revenue funding to support the development of their town centre strategies which shall include specific project plans and associated business cases setting out how they shall regenerate these places. These will need to be submitted by Late 2019 for assessment and announcement of funding confirmation in Spring 2020.
- 1.6 It is anticipated that a second round of the Fund will be made in due course.
- 1.7 An expression of interest for Gravesend Town Centre was submitted by the council by the 22 March 2019 deadline. The challenges facing the Town and a vision and ambition for change are summarised in Appendix 2. The expression of interest was accompanied by a series of letters of support from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and other partners, including KCC, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership; development partners, such as Reef Estates; and, community and local business interests.

2. Potential Areas for Investment

- 2.1 Government guidance indicates that they expect any identified needs for investment to be developed within Phase 2 of the application process to fall under the following themes ([Source: MHCLG, Dec 2018](#)):
 - 2.1.1 Investment in physical infrastructure;
 - 2.1.2 Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm;
 - 2.1.3 Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area;
 - 2.1.4 Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification;
 - 2.1.5 Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology.
- 2.2 Submissions need to be co-funded from other public and/or private sector funding.
- 2.3 A Phase 2 application for the Town Centre could include the following investments:
 - 2.3.1 Viability gap funding to overcome barriers to housing development with the aim of quickening the pace of **new residential communities** in and around the Town Centre.
 - 2.3.2 Physical infrastructure to support the potential for a **Thames Fast River Service** from Gravesend to strengthen its locational benefits through added transport connectivity.

- 2.3.3 Physical infrastructure in the form of a '**Creative Hub**' to assist in the development of a creative cluster in the Town Centre. Potentially, complementary to new '**co-working spaces**' and/or a '**digital hub**' to help small business growth within the Town, attracting more jobs into the Town Centre.
 - 2.3.4 Co-ordinating public services effectively within the Town Centre to create a '**public service hub**', accessible to more people from the Borough, bringing them into the Town.
 - 2.3.5 New **leisure/entertainment experiences**, creating compelling reasons for people to be in Town.
 - 2.3.6 Enhancement of **Gravesend's Waterfront**, incorporating public realm improvements to St Andrew's Gardens and reconnecting the riverside with the Town Centre.
 - 2.3.7 Enhancement of **Harmer Street** to encourage investment in properties, raise the quality of residential accommodation, ground floor uses and air quality issues.
 - 2.3.8 Replacement of car park and traffic signage around the Town Centre with new and enhanced **Variable Message Signage** which make it easier for people to arrive in the Town, easing traffic flow.
- 2.4 Alongside these physical investments, complementary work is being undertaken to identify options for incentivising business growth and property improvement in the Town; together with projects related to place branding & marketing, promoting the evening & night-time economy, events programming and business support, especially in respect of digital technology.
- 2.5 Future High Streets Funding is an opportunity to quicken the pace and co-ordinate investment in the Town. At this stage there is no guarantee that the expression of interest will be successful and, whilst it is the intention to progress all these projects, the Committee's views on what the council's priorities should be would be helpful.

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Future High Streets Fund Prospectus, Application Form and Bidding Guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-high-streets-fund-call-forproposals>.

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	No implications at this stage.
Finance and Value for Money	Indications are that successful bids for Future High Street Fund could receive between £5 million and £10 million to support Town Centre renewal. The Expression of Interest included an assessment of the revenue funding required to work up a Phase 2 bid if successful at Phase 1.
Risk Assessment	The Future High Street Fund is an opportunity to make a positive case for funding to support the revivification of Gravesend Town Centre, without which much needed investment in the Town may falter or not take place.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p>
	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No</p>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Plan	Strategic Objective 3 - Sustainable Gravesham
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications at this stage.
Digital and website implications	None at this stage.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	None at this stage.

Future High Street Fund Expression of Interest Gravesend Town Centre

Summary of Challenges

Challenge 1 – Impact of competing centres & contraction of retail

- Competition from three of the UK's top regional retail centres all within a 25 minute journey time - Bluewater, Lakeside and Westfield Stratford City, which are ranked as the 5th, 4th and 10th largest.
- Loss of the Town's 'big name' retailers - Marks & Spencer, BHS and Poundworld Plus and recently Poundland and Brighthouse - leaving large vacancies in the main shopping streets, having a far greater impact on vibrancy and vitality of the Town and its street scene. Risk of more departures to come.
- Constant uncertainty about the Town's future shown in the fears and attitudes of the local community and the media.
- Decline in Town Centre footfall (decreased by over 9% in the last 3 years).

Challenge 2 – Failure to bring forward mixed-use residential sites in the Town Centre

- A number of former public sector land holdings remaining derelict - former Gravesend Police Station, Windmill Street and the old Maternity Block, Bath Street.
- Failure to bring forward a string of housing and mixed-use sites in and around the Town Centre – if unlocked, these could deliver more than 2,000 dwellings, creating new residential communities which will underpin and strengthen the functioning of the Town.
- Complex sites with large viability gaps given the abnormal costs of development.

Challenge 3 – Yet to fully realise the transformational impact of High Speed 1

- The Town has yet to see the kind of transformational impact that high profile transport interventions have brought to other places - due to service frequency (2 HS1 trains per hour); premium cost of HS1 services relative to resident incomes; Town yet to raise its head as a 'property hot-spot'; and no significant growth in conventional office space.
- Gravesend is essentially part of London's commuter zone and supply chain, yet the Town does not experience much of the economic, cultural and social opportunities that such proximity might be expected to bring.

Challenge 4 – Vulnerable independent businesses

- Gravesend has a sizeable independent business community (66.4% of units), representing a mix of retail, food and service related activity. Located mainly in the secondary shopping streets, many are start-ups and vulnerable to failure due to lack of footfall in the Town.
- They require additional support and training, in many circumstances to increase their online presence to attract additional customers.

Challenge 5 – Net outward movement of the area's working population and poor economic performance

- Gravesham has the smallest local economy in Kent with the lowest GVA per head of any local authority area in Kent.
 - Almost 16,000 more people leave the Borough daily for work than come in (25,815 OUT against 10,166 IN) - a significant loss of daytime workforce expenditure from the Town.
 - Gravesham is far less prosperous than many other Kent districts. A large proportion of wards within its urban catchment are within the 20% most deprived in England & Wales.
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Challenge 6 – Absence of a compelling leisure, entertainment & cultural activity

- The Town lacks a larger presence of commercial leisure that will attract people, especially as there is a strengthening presence of cinema, gyms and other leisure alongside branded restaurants at Bluewater and Medway Valley Leisure Park, all within a 15 minute drive of Gravesend Town Centre.
- Consumer leisure habits in the Borough identify a strong preference for visits to cinema, restaurants, health and fitness clubs and children's play venues outside the Town Centre.
- There is a gap for compelling multi-leisure and entertainment experiences that increase dwell time and support the Town's restaurants and bars.

Challenge 7 – Weakness in the Town's evening & night-time economy

- The Town's Evening and Night-time Economy (ENTE) is weak, with declining footfall. There is a diverse, yet dispersed restaurant and bar offer that may not attract far outside of the Town.
- Perceptions of the Town Centre in the evening and at night are poor, because of inadequate lighting, lack of activity and a fear of crime and safety issues - 20% of respondents identifying Town Centre safety as their single most important issue.

Challenge 8 – Risk of losing the commitment of the people that it serves

- Prospects for population and employment growth are good with proposals for new residential communities along Northfleet Riverside and within the Ebbsfleet Garden City.
- Gravesend needs to offer something new, innovative and unique as a destination so that those new communities will automatically look to Gravesend to meet many of their day to day social, leisure, employment and retail needs.
- Gravesend Town Centre has had a clear focus in serving the needs of the local area and there is a high level of commitment by local communities to use the Town. That commitment is at risk of being lost, especially if the Town is unable to engage with the younger members of its community and with those within its population who have a greater propensity to spend.

Challenge 9 - The Town has turned its back on its River

- Gravesend is here because of the River Thames. Retail change over the decades has relocated retail into New Road and the two shopping centres in the Town and a significant stretch of the waterfront has been redeveloped for flats.
- The Town's relationship with its River has weakened, cut off by the one-way system running along the Town Centre on its northern side.

Challenge 10 – Congestion & poor air quality around the Town

- The one way system around the Town confuses those who are unfamiliar with the Town as they arrive and it spoils the waterfront and architecturally superior streets, including Harmer Street.
- There are points where there is frequent congestion which delays traffic which is a frustration for those seeking to come into Town.
- The one-way system is identified as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

Challenge 11 – Tired and unattractive areas of the built and physical environment

- The public realm throughout the Town Centre is in need of a deep clean and a maintenance upgrade.
 - St George's Shopping Centre is in need of modernisation to increase its attractiveness. This is underway.
 - A number of larger poor-grade, dated retail frontages and neglected smaller units and longer term vacancies, in a declining state of repair, have a significant impact on the street scene.
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- Harmer Street is dominated by traffic on the one-way system and requires public realm improvements to enhance the street, encourage changes of use to residential and see a general improvement in the quality of the housing stock.
- Queen Street, with a culturally diverse business community, close by the Gravesend Borough Market and alongside the key redevelopment area in the Town Centre is also a strong candidate for a co-ordinated enhancement scheme.

Town Centre Vision and Ambition for Change

The council has a clear vision and ambition for reviving Gravesend Town Centre's purpose as a more balanced and healthy place which thrives as a unique and attractive destination and performs successfully as a focus for the diverse and growing communities which it serves. We want it to be a positive experience for all that visit and live, work or shop in the Town.

Critical to achieving this is the unlocking of mixed-use development sites in and around the Town Centre. These have the potential for circa 2000 new homes enabling many more people (+33%) to live in the Town and to use it to meet their everyday needs.

The council and its partners will bring forward a package of transformational projects that will elevate the Town's status, increase the momentum for investment and rebuild the confidence of business and local communities.

Leading this transformation is the council's working with the Reef Group to refurbish the St George's Shopping Centre. An innovative 'income strip' model of financing is being applied to enable a lender to advance the capital necessary to facilitate significant improvements. Beyond this, plans are taking shape to extend the Centre with a new entertainment quarter and new residential communities within the heart of the Town.

The council has taken this lead to regenerate the Town and to 'kick-start' investment that will create a more balanced mix of uses in the Town. It has also demonstrated its willingness to acquire sites to make this happen.

Future High Street Funding will ensure that these developments take place and are co-ordinated with a package of other investments that will make Gravesend Town Centre an attractive and genuinely different experience, set apart from other competing centres. The council is committed to engaging with community, business and developer interests to achieve a shared view of the Town and to support the case for resources.

Officer teams have been established to progress specific projects, building upon its experience of working closely with Kent County Council and with other stakeholders, and these will be expanded to ensure capacity to deliver the next stage of Future High Street Funding.

The vision addresses the identified challenges in the following ways:

Challenge 1

- A broader mix of uses creating more reasons for people to be in Town.

Challenge 2

- Overcoming barriers to development with substantial progress in delivering new, well designed mixed-use communities.
 - Many more people living and working in the Town Centre, underpinning and strengthening its functioning.
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- St George's Shopping Centre refurbished and extended, bringing life back into the heart of Gravesend.

Challenge 3

- Fast-river services to and from Central London, with expansion of capacity at Town Pier Pontoon, together with Highspeed1 redefining Gravesend as a place.

Challenge 4

- Independent businesses with a stronger online presence and benefitting from more people in Town.

Challenge 5

- More people working in affordable co-working and grow-on spaces, benefitting from higher networking speeds and business support.
- A new 'creative hub', supporting the area's expanding creative/digital businesses.

Challenge 6

- New leisure/entertainment experiences, orientated towards families and younger people, creating compelling reasons for more people to come into Gravesend.
- Promotion of the Town's cluster of immersive video, board gamer and escape room experiences to a wider audience.
- A recurring programme of curated cultural events and entertainment to attract footfall and encourage people to stay longer.

Challenge 7

- Greater recognition of the Town's culturally diverse restaurants, drawing people in from further afield.
- A more active place creating a safer place and experience.

Challenge 8

- Residents of surrounding villages and Ebbsfleet Garden City looking to Gravesend to meet their needs.
- All generations enjoying Gravesend and interacting socially within valued, welcoming and community-centred buildings and spaces.
- Public and health services co-ordinated more effectively and accessible to more people, bringing them into Town.

Challenge 9

- Gravesend's waterfront transformed with a high quality, attractive and active greenspace, connected to the Town via a well-designed 'shared space'.

Challenge 10

- An attractive pedestrian 'gateway' from Gravesend Rail Station, linking the transport hub with the Town Centre.
- Real-time transport and car parking information making it easier for people to arrive, with traffic flowing more freely.

Challenge 11

- Public realm improvements creating more attractive and active spaces and streets.
 - Property owners incentivised to improve their buildings.
 - Higher standards of cleanliness, safety and accessibility.
-