



**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, 19 November 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. To consider whether any items in Part A of the agenda should be considered in private or any items in Part B in public.
5. Ebbsfleet Public Realm Strategy PRESENTATION
6. Draft Economic Development Strategy (Pages 9 - 24)
7. Planning Performance REPORT TO FOLLOW
8. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.
9. 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.

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

Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee**Tuesday, 17 September 2019****7.30 pm****Present:**

Cllr Brian Sangha (Chair)
Cllr Lauren Sullivan (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
Harold Craske
Brian Francis
Gary Harding
Baljit Hayre

Note: Cllr Sarah Gow was also in attendance.

Wendy Lane	Assistant Director (Planning)
Tony Chadwick	Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager
Shazad Ghani	Planning Manager (Policy)
Richard McEllistrum	Interim Planning Manager (Development Management)
Carlie Simmonds	Committee Services Manager

8. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Conrad Broadley and Bob Lane.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 were signed by the Chair.

10. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Harold Craske declared an interest in agenda item 5 (Lower Thames Crossing Presentation) in that he was one of the Council's representatives on the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Board. The Board was currently investigating the impact that the Lower Thames Crossing will have on Ramsar/Special Protection Areas.

11. Lower Thames Crossing Presentation

The Committee received a presentation on the 'Lower Thames Crossing' by the Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager.

The presentation can be viewed here:-

<https://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=444&MId=3242&Ver=4>

The Principal Transport and SCIP Project Manager highlighted the following:-

- the statutory consultation finished in December 2018 and the Council submitted its response which was agreed at the Full Council on 18 December 2018;
- the Council was currently waiting on more detailed information from Highways England on those responses that they had received from the residents of Gravesham. Broadly, the supportive comments were from further afield whilst the objections were clustered close to the alignment;
- if there were significant design changes over the statutory consultation scheme Highways England may carry out a further targeted consultation in due course;
- Geophysical investigations had commenced and data will also be used from the studies undertaken when the A2 was widened and HS1 built;
- the tunnels will be bored from Thurrock so much of the spoil will be removed from the North however there will still be a significant volume in Gravesham which continues to be a major concern;
- construction is due to take place between 2021-2027 with the completed scheme opening in 2027;
- the proposed road works include a variety of complex junctions. The primary purpose being to join A2/M2 with M25 in Essex. The Council had expressed concern regarding the impact of the proposed A2 junction on local flows at Marling Cross junction and lack of detail on the impact to traffic flow during construction;
- the red line on the map that formed part of the statutory consultation highlighted those properties that will be compulsory purchased. The Council was now required to declare any properties within 200m of the red line boundary when undertaking land searches;
- the Council expressed concern regarding Ramsar/Special Protection Areas and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AoNB);
- there was a lack of information regarding the charging regime however the Council had requested that residents of Gravesham receive the same discount as those in Dartford and Thurrock which should apply to both crossings and start from commencement of construction; and
- the Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager stated that the Council would need to give consideration to what measures will be required to mitigate the impact and what compensation will be required if those measures cannot be mitigated.

The Committee highlighted the following:-

- with regard to the targeted consultation, all Members will need to be involved and it would be beneficial for Members to receive a further briefing from Highways England;
- consideration needs to be given to accommodation for the construction workers on the project;
- as there will also be local skills and training opportunities, contact should be made with local schools, colleges etc. to offer safety advice and to explore the creation of apprenticeships. During the construction phase, Highways England should require its contractors to use local labour wherever possible;
- with regard to mitigation/compensation, consideration needs to be given to minimising the disruption to traffic flow i.e. limiting when construction activity will be undertaken possibly at night/during school holidays and advance warning of alternative routes will need to be advertised from the onset. Concern was expressed regarding the disruption that had been caused from recent weekend works which was insignificant compared with the scale that will be happening during the construction phase;

- concern was expressed regarding air quality during the construction phase. Highways England had proposed to plant rows of trees at the end of the construction period however opportunities should be explored to plant trees earlier in the construction process. In London, lung function tests were being undertaken on local residents and it was suggested that this approach should be undertaken in Gravesham pre, during and after the construction period. A collaboration could take place with local universities;
- consideration needs to be given to public transport particularly for schools and cross river links;
- the Council should give consideration to undertaking its own surveys/polls with local residents and businesses to ensure that its receives all relevant feedback to underpin the responses to Highways England.

The Committee agreed that, as Gravesham would be the most affected by the Lower Thames Crossing, it was essential that the views of its residents and businesses were heard. All Members were responsible for representing their constituents therefore it was important that all three political parties work together to put the views of the residents and businesses at the 'heart of the Council's thinking' as the project moves forward. The Council needs to become a strong unified voice to ensure that issues such as investment in improving the local road network, design of the A2 junction, protection of the environment and more research on the impact of the Crossing on people's health continues to be top priorities. The Council will endeavour to keep residents well informed on progress of the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Chair advised that he would inform the Leader and the Cabinet of the above discussions and would also liaise with the Communications Team to request that there be a press release on the Council becoming a strong unified voice regarding the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Committee thanked the Principal Transport and NSIP Project Manager for an informative and interesting presentation.

12. Development Management - Draft Local Validation List

The Committee received a presentation on 'Draft Local Validation List – What is it?' by the Interim Planning Manager (Development Management).

The presentation can be viewed here:-

<https://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=444&MId=3242&Ver=4>

The Planning Manager (Development Management) informed the Committee that Gravesham Borough Council had not previously used or published a Local Validation List. The purpose of the list was to enable the Local Planning Authority to define what minimum information would be necessary to ensure that applications adequately describe the impact of the proposed development, in order to better enable decision makers and interested persons to understand the implications of that development and whether it would be in accordance with or contrary to planning policy and other material considerations.

Not having a local list had resulted in delays in the processing of planning applications and, in some instances, if inadequate information had been provided, then applications may have been refused as their impact could not be properly assessed.

To meet the Government's requirement as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the Interim Planning Manager (Development Management) drew Member's attention to the draft Local Validation List for Gravesham attached at appendix two of the report. The draft list had been compiled having regard to the format of the local lists of neighbouring Boroughs and Medway Council, in the interests of aiming for consistency, as far as achievable, with requirements in this part of the County.

The intention will be to commence a 6 week public consultation exercise using INOVEM, through the Gravesham website, social media and through direct email correspondence with users of the Planning (Development Management) service subject to GDPR considerations.

Following consideration of any responses received and any necessary modifications, a final Local List and accompanying bite size guidance will be adopted and published on the Council's website and kept under review by Officers on at least a biennial basis.

The Committee considered the report and highlighted the following:-

- the Committee supported the idea of liaising with those agents that regularly submit applications to request their views on an appropriate timescale for the Local List to be introduced. The list could also be presented to those agents for their views prior to consultation;
- as a majority of applications were submitted online, the Committee supported the idea of the agent/applicant having to complete a checklist (with tick boxes) prior to submission. It was also suggested that, when the list is published on the website, a popup box be introduced to highlight the new requirements;
- consideration needs to be given to those who are not computer literate/unable to access this information online. The Committee stated that there must continue to be face-to-face support. The Committee took the opportunity to commend the incredible level of support provided by the Customer Services Team to members of the public on all aspects of the Council.

The Committee thanked the Interim Planning Manager (Development Management) for an informative presentation and for the work that had been undertaken to date.

13. Future High Streets Fund

Further to minute 7 (18.06.2019), the Committee was informed that the Council had submitted a Phase 1 expression of interest to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for Future High Street Funding for Gravesend Town Centre in March 2019. In July 2019, the Government announced a shortlist of 50 town centres which would go through to Phase 2 and Gravesend was not included in that list.

Further to this, the Government announced in August that it would expand the funding to an additional 50 town centres. Again, disappointingly, Gravesend was not included.

The Committee was informed that it had been a very competitive round of funding, with over 300 town centres submitting expressions of interest. To date, the MHCLG had not provided feedback on individual submissions. A letter had been sent to the Deputy Director Infrastructure and Regeneration, MHCLG, to express the Council's disappointment at the outcome of the first round of funding. An invitation was also extended to the Deputy Director to visit Gravesend Town Centre to see the significant opportunities that exist to do so much more to revive the Town.

The Assistant Director (Planning) advised that the Council remained committed to taking forward the potential transformational investments which underpinned its expression of interest for Future High Street Funding and will therefore explore other funding opportunities. The MHCLG announced that a further round of Future High Street Funding will open next year and that unsuccessful town centres be encouraged to resubmit.

The Prime Minister also announced on 30 July 2019 that there would be a £3.6 billion Towns Fund to support an initial 100 'left behind towns' to support with improved transport and broadband connectivity. There was no application process for that Fund. On 6 September 2019, the Government announced the 100 towns that will benefit from this fund. Again, Gravesend was not successful.

The Chair advised that he had written to the Member of Parliament for Gravesham, Mr Adam Holloway to request that he pursues any available feedback from MHCLG in relation to Gravesham's unsuccessful bid for Future High Street Funding.

The Chair advised that a report on the creation of a Town Centre Strategy/Partnership will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee thanked all those officers that had been involved in producing an excellent bid.

14. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

The Chair invited Members and Officers to suggest agenda items for the next meeting of the Committee on 19 November 2019.

The Assistant Director (Planning) advised that a report on planning performance will be submitted to the next meeting.

The Committee requested that guidance on windows and doors within Conservation Areas be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

The Assistant Director (Planning) advised that draft guidance was being produced and could be submitted to a future meeting for consideration prior to consultation. A decision will need to be made on whether the guidance should be statutory or advisory.

To prevent delaying the consultation process, the Committee agreed that the initial draft be considered and signed off by the Chair of the Regulatory Board, Cllr Lauren Sullivan. During the consultation process, all Members be sent a copy for consideration and comment. Following consideration of any responses received and any necessary amendments, the final version be signed off by the Cabinet Member for Strategic Environment, Cllr Brian Sangha.

The Assistant Director (Planning) advised that there will be an article in the Spring edition of 'Your Borough' on protecting heritage buildings.

Close of Meeting

The meeting ended at 9.25pm

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Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee

Date: 19 November 2019

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: Economic Development Strategy

Purpose and summary of report:

To set out the intent to prepare an economic development strategy for Gravesham and to seek the Committee's views on the emerging objectives for that strategy.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee makes clear their priorities in respect of the council's objectives for economic development so that they can be taken into account in the preparation of a strategy and action plan.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The council's new Corporate Plan places '*a vibrant and productive local economy*' at the heart of its ambition '*to deliver a Gravesham to be proud of*'.
- 1.2 In respect of economic development, the Plan specifically commits to:
 - 1.2.1 Enhancing the vibrancy of the Gravesham economy by delivering strategic regeneration schemes
 - 1.2.2 Raising Gravesham's economic profile by developing infrastructure and land use.
 - 1.2.3 Promoting a Borough 'open for business', retaining existing businesses and encouraging new start-ups.
 - 1.2.4 Improving economic conditions to support local enterprises and develop skills.
 - 1.2.5 Positively promoting sustainable development through the planning system.
- 1.3 The Borough's potential for economic change and growth is evident and it is intended that an economic development strategy will help guide the actions that the council can take with its partners to create the best conditions possible for business investment and sustainable growth in the Borough.

- 1.4 It is proposed that a draft strategy be prepared over the coming months, together with an Action Plan which will be monitored and reviewed regularly, to ensure that it responds to changing circumstances.
- 1.5 Steps will be taken to align the council's economic development strategy with other strategies that are being prepared for Kent & Medway, the South East and the Thames Gateway and to engage with local businesses and investors in its preparation.

2. Recent Achievements

- 2.1 The preparation of an economic development strategy for the Borough takes place against a background of ongoing investment in Gravesham. These create the building blocks for further growth and include:
 - 2.1.1 *Investment in infrastructure, enhancing Gravesham's connectivity*, e.g. Highspeed 1 train services from Gravesend Rail Station; access to Superfast Broadband; investment in Gravesend's Transport Quarter, Gravesend Rail Station improvements and the Rathmore Road scheme; trialling of fast river bus services between Gravesend and Central London.
 - 2.1.2 *Investment in commercial space, creating momentum for further investment* - refurbishment of St George's Shopping Centre and Gravesend Borough Market in Gravesend Town Centre; new build business space at Northfleet Embankment.
 - 2.1.3 *Investment by business, creating employment* – Kent Space and PrepWorld at Springhead Enterprise Park, Berkley Homes at Northfleet, independent businesses in the Town Centre.
 - 2.1.4 *Activity to support and strengthen the local business community* – financial incentives for business growth, e.g. North West Kent Enterprise Zone status and Escalate Loan Programme and LEADER grants scheme; business networking – the Gravesham Business Network and other local networking, e.g. for the tourism and creative sector; the Gravesham Business Awards raising the profile of local businesses; Go Trade Interreg Project in support of the Market.
 - 2.1.5 *Investment in education, skills and careers advice* – refurbishment and expansion of North Kent College and local schools; local careers and jobs fairs.
- 2.2 This list is not comprehensive, but it demonstrates that changes are taking place and that these will influence and support further investment and growth. This is especially the case in respect of the strategic investments that the council is also making to regenerate Gravesend Town Centre, to develop additional business space, such as at North East Gravesend, together with investment proposals referred to later in this report.

3. The Challenges

- 3.1 Gravesham's economy faces a series of challenges which need to be addressed if the council's ambition for a vibrant and productive economy is to be realised.

- 3.2 These derive from an analysis of Gravesham's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (Appendix 2) and key economic indicators for the Borough (Appendix 3). The challenges are as follows:
- 3.3 Gravesham has low productivity levels and the smallest local economy in Kent & Medway when compared with other Kent Districts. The Borough's Gross Value Added (GVA) per head – a recognised measure of overall economic well-being – is £13,918¹, equating to 60% of the figure for Kent (£23,149). This is within the 20% of authorities in the country with the lowest GVA per head² and is directly associated with lower average earnings for those residents who work in the Borough. Statistical analysis also demonstrates that local residents who commute out of the local area for work, enjoy markedly higher earnings.
- 3.4 The size of the Gravesham economy is also relatively small by comparison with other Kent Districts in terms of the number of businesses operating locally and consequently, the number of job opportunities (including self-employment) within the Borough - estimated as circa 41,000 in 2017³. Gravesham's job density is therefore low, with a ratio of 0.62 jobs available for each person aged between 16 and 64 (the 'working age' cohort), compared with a figure of 0.87 for the South East.
- 3.5 The Borough's economy is no longer dependent in the way that it once was on the string of large scale manufacturing industries employing significant numbers of people and located alongside the River Thames. Overall employment in manufacturing has declined significantly over recent decades and whilst employment has increased, especially in small businesses in a variety of other sectors, this has not been fast enough within those sectors which attract higher wage, higher value jobs.
- 3.6 Wage levels in Gravesham remain low with average resident median gross weekly earnings (£576.90) 3.6% lower than that for Kent (£598.10) and 6.5% lower than the South East (£614.50) in 2018⁴. This reflects a lack of higher value/higher paid work within the Borough. The presence of knowledge economy based jobs is relatively low – 7% of Gravesham's jobs, compared to 14.9% in Kent and over 20% in the South East (20.7%) and Great Britain (20.1%)⁵.
- 3.7 On the positive side, the proportion of those aged 16-64 in the Borough who are in employment (the employment rate) is relatively high – the 4th highest in Kent – but a high level of residents have to leave the Borough to access work. Around a third of Gravesham's workforce leaves the Borough to commute to work outside the area⁶. Welcomed investment in the Borough's transport connectivity, especially high speed rail services into London, have significantly improved access to the wider job market, but these have yet to attract the businesses, jobs and better paid work into Gravesham that could be expected from its location.
- 3.8 Unemployment (resident based %age) in Gravesham (3.4%, September 2019⁷) continues to report above the Kent figure (2.6%). There are pockets of higher

¹ Source: Office for National Statistics

² Source: Kent Economic Indicators 2019, April 2019, Kent County Council

³ Source: Office of National Statistics

⁴ Source: Kent Economic Indicators 2019, April 2019, Kent County Council/District profiles, KCC

⁵ Source: Kent Economic Indicators 2019, April 2019, Kent County Council/District profiles, KCC

⁶ Source: 2001 Census.

⁷ Source: Office of National Statistics/KCC 'Unemployment in Kent', September 2019

unemployment in Gravesham – Riverside (5.1%), Northfleet North (5.0%), Coldharbour (4.8%), Pelham (4.5%), Westcourt (4.5%)⁸.

- 3.9 On average, Gravesham residents of working age have lower attainment and skill levels than other parts of the South East and nationally. Those with Level 4+ Gravesham (28.4%); Kent (35.4%); SE (42.2%); GB (39.3%)⁹.
- 3.10 There are around 4,000 enterprises in Gravesham¹⁰ of which 80% employ less than 5 people and 91% employ less than 10 people. There are indications that the small business sector performs well in Gravesham with 3-year survival rates being relatively strong (65%)¹¹. Lower wage and property costs may be a factor in keeping costs low, compared with other Kent districts.
- 3.11 It is timely to take stock of Gravesham's economic position given the series of opportunities for change on the horizon. Fundamental to achieving a more productive local economy is an expansion in the number, variety and quality of job opportunities in the Borough. Investment in new employment space and skills are essential to this and in ensuring that local residents can access better paid jobs within the Borough.

4. Strategy Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 The overall aim of the economic development strategy, in seeking to achieve a dynamic and productive economy, is to create the best possible conditions for business investment and sustainable growth in the Borough. The strategy will set out the council's vision for economic change and growth and this needs to be a shared vision with other key partners.
- 4.2 The strategy will establish clear and measureable objectives and a series of actions. The following objectives are proposed in response to the challenges set out in Section 3 and the Cabinet Committee is asked to consider these and to make their priorities known.

Objective 1: Place Branding to Promote Gravesham as a Place 'Open for Business'.

- 4.3 Gravesham has struggled to capture the essence of why it is a well-connected location to do business and to promote its significant advantages as a place where businesses can locate and do well. This needs to change if investment is to be influenced. Place branding needs to take place in conjunction with the sharing of the council's vision for the local economy with other partners. A key element will be how it can be used to promote the attractiveness of Gravesend Town Centre as a place to visit, shop, work and do business.
- 4.4 Actions
 - 4.4.1 Undertaking a place branding exercise to develop Gravesham's 'story' and as a means to agree how best to communicate a vision for growth.
 - 4.4.2 Influencing the preparation of the economic development strategy and other strategies, e.g. for the Town Centre.

⁸ Source: Ward Unemployment in Kent, September 2019, Kent County Council

⁹ Source: Kent Economic Indicators 2019, April 2019, Kent County Council

¹⁰ Source: BRES, 2018/District Profiles, KCC

¹¹ Source: ONS/Kent Economic Indicators 2019, April 2019

Objective 2: New employment land and premises to enable businesses to grow

- 4.5 The availability of a good quality supply of employment land and premises is a constraint on expansion of business and jobs in the Borough and the attraction of inward investment. Expansion in the supply of employment space is required to attract business and employment growth, especially within higher value sectors.
- 4.6 The Gravesham Local Plan is addressing this issue by seeking to create a more balanced approach between housing and employment by bringing forward good quality employment sites. The council is taking a lead in this area with its own property portfolio and will work with other landowners to release stalled sites.
- 4.7 Actions
 - 4.7.1 Bringing forward key commercial development sites.
 - 4.7.2 Local plan policies to protect employment land and encourage more efficient use of land.
 - 4.7.3 Take a lead in conjunction with development partners in bringing forward new business workspace within the Town Centre regeneration scheme and at Lion Business Park.
 - 4.7.4 Work with the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and Homes England to advance employment sites in the North Kent Enterprise Zone.
 - 4.7.5 Where possible protect the commercial use of riverside sites.
 - 4.7.6 Work with private and public sector partners to develop a cluster of space for creative businesses in Gravesend Town Centre.
 - 4.7.7 Explore financial incentives to influence the take-up of large and/or long-empty business premises.

Objective 3: Enhancing the Borough's Infrastructure to Re-inforce Accessibility & Connectivity Advantages

- 4.8 Efficient transport & digital communication networks are required to support the vitality and competitiveness of the Borough's economy. Gravesham's economic position ought to be far different from what it currently is given how well-connected the Borough is, especially to Central London. Investment in additional infrastructure can only reinforce the Borough's location for business.
- 4.9 Actions
 - 4.9.1 Additional train capacity on Highspeed 1 to resolve congestion issues at peak times.
 - 4.9.2 Continuing to develop the case for fast river bus services to and from Gravesend with additional capacity at Town Pier Pontoon.
 - 4.9.3 Identifying transport infrastructure improvements which can unlock employment land and co-ordination of funding through Local Growth Funding and Section 106 contributions from developers to deliver these.

- 4.9.4 Influencing the impact that the Lower Thames Crossing will have on the future economic prospects of the Borough so that investment opportunities do not pass the area by.
- 4.9.5 Enhancement of public transport with new Fastrack routes via main employment sites, cycling and walking routes to support the functioning of the local economy, especially from the eastern side of the Borough and the villages.
- 4.9.6 Implementing a parking strategy for Gravesend Town Centre to support business growth.
- 4.9.7 Investment in digital connectivity, e.g. a digital hub with vide enhanced access to support business development.

Objective 4: Supporting Enterprise to Encourage Business Growth

- 4.10 Gravesham's economy has a prevalence of small and micro-businesses, with a high level of self-employment and home-based businesses across a wide range of sectors. Access to business support services, especially to start-up businesses remains important and efforts to co-ordinate this, have been made through the Kent & Medway Growth Hub, funded by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).
- 4.11 Business networking has become a key component of business support activity locally, with the council's Gravesham Business Network encouraging expansion of local networking and strengthening of the community of local businesses, their collaboration and informal mentoring.
- 4.12 Actions
 - 4.12.1 Dialogue with and a programme of visits to local businesses to understand the issues that they face.
 - 4.12.2 Initiatives to understand and strengthen those sectors from which business, jobs and wage growth can be achieved, e.g. construction, river-related businesses, creative industries and the visitor economy.
 - 4.12.3 Improvement of communication routes with businesses via a business e-newsletter, social media and the council's website.
 - 4.12.4 Maintain good working relationships with business support agencies, including the Kent & Medway Growth Hub, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

Objective 5: Skills & employability to ensure that the local workforce is equipped with appropriate skills to access employment opportunities.

- 4.13 Gravesham's relatively high unemployment, low skills and limited access to better paid work locally requires interventions to ensure that there is local workforce that bring about economic change. Conversations with local businesses suggest a lack of specific skills which they are having to source from further afield.
- 4.14 The council does not have strategic responsibilities for skills and training, but can champion the needs of local businesses, set an example as a good, large employer in the area and encourage greater co-ordination to address skills gaps.

4.15 Actions

- 4.15.1 Liaise with businesses and skills groups, such as the Adult Skills Forum, to obtain clarity in respect of local recruitment and skills issues and to identify initiatives to address these, e.g. promotion of river related job opportunities, engineering skills.
- 4.15.2 Broad expansion of digital skills to ensure that businesses residents are equipped in respect of technological change.
- 4.15.3 Partnership working with Further Education, HE and other training providers to enhance provision in the borough.
- 4.15.4 Collaborate with others on sector specific and/or general jobs & training fairs to bring employers and jobseekers together.
- 4.15.5 Demonstrate the council's commitment to apprentices and work experience opportunities, encourage local businesses to consider the benefits of taking on apprentices and inform them of the funding available.

Objective 6: Recognising the Changes that are taking place in the rural economy and its contribution to overall local economic growth

- 4.16 Gravesham has an extensive rural area, representing around 75% of the borough in spatial terms. Much of this is Green Belt and of significant landscape and biodiversity value. Nationally, the rural economy is becoming increasingly diverse and Gravesham's no different. It is recognised that the business and employment changes taking place within the rural area, especially where they are smaller in scale, are not fully understood and there is a need to assess the contribution that these are making.

4.17 Actions

- 4.17.1 Confirm how the rural economy is changing in Gravesham and its economic importance to the borough.
- 4.17.2 Promote the assistance that is currently available to enhance broadband connectivity and address 'not-spots' in superfast broadband availability.
- 4.17.3 Promote local food producers and supply.
- 4.17.4 Promotion of grant funding to assist rural businesses, e.g. LEADER (DEFRA/EU funding - coming to an end December 2019).

Objective 7: To identify the Implications of the council's climate change commitments in support of sustainable economic development

- 4.18 The council has made its commitment to take action to prepare for the borough to become carbon neutral by 2030. This requires the council to do what is within its powers and resources to achieve this commitment.

Actions

- 4.19 To engage local businesses in achieving the council's goal - a working group has been established to identify actions.

- 4.20 Communicate those actions that businesses can take to contribute to delivering this goal.
- 4.21 Investigate possible sources of funding to engage businesses in support of this commitment.

5. A Shared Vision for Gravesham's Economy

- 5.1 Gravesham's ambition to increase its productivity and fulfil its economic growth potential is consistent with the delivery of economic ambitions at a county, regional and national level.
- 5.2 The council's Corporate Plan, 2019-23, places achieving a *vibrant and productive* economy at the heart of its overriding ambition of *delivering a Gravesham to be proud of*. This is consistent with the spatial vision set out in the Gravesham Local Plan of a vibrant and attractive Borough where residents have access to quality jobs:
 - 5.2.1 *By 2028, Gravesham will be a place where residents have access to quality housing, jobs and services that allow them to meet their day-to-day needs in an environmentally safe, vibrant and attractive borough; a Gravesham to be proud of. Development and growth will be managed to ensure that local infrastructure impacts are mitigated. Whilst facilitating this growth, the borough's protected landscapes and natural habitats will be safeguarded and the impact of growth on the environment minimised.*
- 5.3 To this end, the Local Plan makes provision for the protection and expansion of employment opportunities in the Borough. The objectives of the Local Plan include:
 - 5.3.1 A regenerated Gravesend and Northfleet, from areas with a significant number of brownfield sites and redundant buildings to areas that offer a more diverse range of employment and housing.
 - 5.3.2 Economic growth and a matching skilled workforce, increasing the borough's appeal and prosperity. Increased local opportunities for residents will also have reduced the need to travel outside the borough for employment.
 - 5.3.3 Transformation of Gravesend Town Centre into a community and cultural hub. This modern town centre, and its diverse offer, will provide both residents and visitors with a unique experience, supported by excellent public transport.
- 5.4 Sharing Gravesham's vision extends to alignment with county, regional and national strategies for improving productivity levels and realising the potential of people and communities.
- 5.5 In November 2017, the Government published its *Industrial Strategy - 'Building a Britain, fit for the future'*. This aims to address an overriding need to make the UK economy more competitive by improving the UK's productivity. It sets out five foundations for changing this position: Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Places. The Strategy emphasises the need to enable business to grow, to become more enterprising and competitive in a global market:

- 5.5.1 *“Local economies around the world tend to have some key attributes. They have a good supply of skilled labour; they are well connected and have land available for homes, offices and factories; and they have rich innovation ecosystems, often built around a university. They have an attractive cultural environment.”* (Government’s Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, 2017)
- 5.6 The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is working towards publishing a Local Industrial Strategy by the end of March 2020 in accordance with the productivity and competitiveness focus of the UK’s Industrial Strategy in respect of productivity. To date SELEP has been focused on its strategy for economic growth, skills, transport and infrastructure through its Strategic Economic Plan and its Skills Strategy 2018-2023.
- 5.7 To inform SELEP’s strategy, Kent County Council, Medway Council, and the 12 Kent Districts are working with the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership¹² to develop a Kent & Medway Enterprise and Productivity Strategy. This will identify Kent & Medway’s contribution to achieving change in the South East and focus on addressing a disparity between Kent & Medway’s competitiveness and the rest of the South East.¹³
- 5.8 These strategies are also important in that they will set the framework for future investments that can take place through the Government’s Local Growth Funding which is allocated via SELEP. It is therefore timely that this council refines its priorities for growth to benefit from future funding programmes.
- 5.9 Gravesham’s case needs to be made within the context of regional and sub-regional ambitions for making a difference to competitiveness of local economies. If real change is to take place, then a difference needs to be made in those areas that are performing less well than others in the South East and that is especially the case for areas such as Gravesham where there are investment opportunities that can raise productivity levels. This is the case that the council needs to make for Gravesham.
- 5.10 The drive for Gravesham to become a more dynamic and productive economy is reinforced by the commitment that the Government has made to delivering the potential of the Thames Gateway within which Gravesham is centrally located. The Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission¹⁴ set out a ‘clear vision of a tapestry of productive places along a global river’ with the potential for generating an additional £190 billion GVA, 1.3 million new jobs and at least 1 million new homes in support of growth. This will make the most of key sectors such as sports and logistics, together with the Gateway’s natural advantages, including its proximity to London.
- 5.11 Commitments include tackling barriers to economic growth, the generational shortfall of skills, a low skill, low wage economy, entrenched deprivation and a lack of connectivity to employment centres. Alongside these to promote the

¹² The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) is one of the four federated partnerships which comprise the SELEP, with membership drawn from businesses, local government, further and higher education.

¹³ The GVA per head for Kent & Medway is £21,435 - lower than the figures for the South East (£28,683) and England (£26,621) Source: Area Profiles, KCC.

¹⁴ Government’s response to the Thames Gateway Growth Commission - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thames-estuary-2050-growth-government-response-to-commission>

- attractiveness of the Thames Gateway to employers, enhancing mobility and infrastructure, addressing a risk of tidal flooding and meeting technological changes.
- 5.12 Specific funding has been made available to the Thames Estuary Creative Production Corridor (Creative Estuary) to realise an ambition for the Corridor - as a world-leader for cultural and creative industries. A Great Thames Park is planned to recognise the natural capital opportunities for the Estuary.
 - 5.13 A conduit to benefiting from investment in the Thames Gateway is Gravesham's partnership in the public/private sector *Thames Gateway Kent Partnership* along with other North Kent local authorities. The TGK vision is *to make Thames Gateway Kent the place to be - to live, work, study, invest and enjoy your leisure. Our role is to help create the conditions to support sustainable economic growth and prosperity.*
 - 5.14 Gravesham's economic development strategy also needs to recognise the significant potential for long-term business growth at Ebbsfleet Garden City, especially around the Central Ebbsfleet/Ebbsfleet Station area. The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation is preparing an Inclusive Growth Strategy for the Garden City so that it is recognised as an economic driver of a more productive economy.
 - 5.15 London Resort Holdings is seeking to advance their proposals for The London Resort on Swanscombe Peninsular through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) process. This global resort project has the potential to be one of the largest construction projects in Europe creating thousands of jobs and attracting millions of visitors, being within easy reach of central London by highspeed train. Such investment will transform the visitor economy in this part of the South East with major implications for business development, employment and skills. Its impacts will be assessed carefully as it progress through the NSIP process.
 - 5.16 Gravesham's economic future is intrinsically connected to these major opportunities for growth on its doorstep and engagement is taking place to ensure that these complement Gravesham's ambitions for growth and benefits accrue to Gravesham's business and resident communities.
 - 5.17 It goes without saying that the strategy also needs to reflect and take steps to assess the impact that the outcome of Brexit negotiations will have on economic growth opportunities and the capacity of the local business community in its preparedness for the UK's departure from the European Union.

6. The Council's Role and Resources

- 6.1 The economic development strategy has to be delivered within the context of the council's limited resources. It therefore needs to work closely with its partners to realise the opportunities for economic growth.
- 6.2 Having said that the council's role is influential and significant in the following ways:
 - 6.2.1 Strong leadership in placing a dynamic and productive local economy at the heart of its Corporate Plan and making the case for investment through promoting Gravesham as a place open for business.

- 6.2.2 Ensuring that the Gravesham Local Plan, as Gravesham's spatial plan, make provision for sufficient employment land and enables sustainable economic growth to take place.
 - 6.2.3 Preparation of complementary strategies for Gravesend Town Centre, tourism and cultural development.
 - 6.2.4 Takes a lead in demonstrating a significant commitment to through regeneration proposals for the Town Centre, use of existing landholdings and strategic acquisition of sites.
 - 6.2.5 Co-ordinating funding resources, including S.106 funding, grant funding from Central Government, SELEP and other sources, borrowing and its own financial resources, e.g. business rates pilot funding towards delivery of employment sites, infrastructure, finance and climate change initiatives.
 - 6.2.6 Working to engage the investment community in all its forms to invest in the Borough.
 - 6.2.7 Champion the cause for local enterprise, designing initiatives to enhance business support, especially for new and start-up businesses.
 - 6.2.8 Ensuring that the council's procurement strategy and procedures enable local businesses to do business with the council and where pertinent connecting local businesses with procurement opportunities in local infrastructure.
 - 6.2.9 Enabling investment in growth and jobs in the local economy through the local authority planning system.
 - 6.2.10 Influence training providers and skills agencies to focus on raising attainment levels and addressing identified skill gaps.
 - 6.2.11 Commissioning evidence based studies into the local economy and regularly monitoring its performance.
 - 6.2.12 Seeking and acting on feedback from businesses and residents.
 - 6.2.13 Promoting achievements and success.
- 6.3 Year on year the council has been receiving less funding from Central Government and by 2019 there will no further direct grant funding, with the expectation that the council will become self-sufficient in its' funding from local sources. A greater part of business rates can be retained locally, placing an even greater incentive on the council to create the conditions for business growth. It is through the co-ordination of its economic development role across the council's services that it will demonstrate its leadership and facilitate such growth.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 There are no background papers pertaining to this report.

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.
Finance and Value for Money	No implications at this stage.
Risk Assessment	Preparation of an economic development strategy for the Borough is timely as it will help develop the economic development objectives of the Corporate Plan and focus actions, without which opportunities will not forthcoming.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><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> <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. Yes, to encourage inclusive growth in the Borough.</p> <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></p>
Corporate Plan	#2 Place: a dynamic borough; defined by a vibrant and productive local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and active community.
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications.
Digital and website implications	A place branding exercise will have implications for digital and website communication.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	No direct implications.

Appendix 2: SWOT Analysis

This SWOT analysis sets out some of the opportunities and challenges facing the Borough and was used to develop this Strategy.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A growing and diverse community driven by housing growth. • Small business growth and resilience comprising the majority of employment growth • Business networking opportunities • Town centre focus for public services • Diverse cultural offer • High quality rural landscape and AONB • Good quality primary and secondary schools • Further Education presence • Highspeed connections to London – 24 minutes to London St Pancras. • Metro rail services into London and across North Kent. • Road links to London and Channel ports via the A2/M2, M25. • Cross river passenger ferry services to job opportunities in Tilbury. • Sector strengths in construction, distribution & logistics, etc. • Thames Gateway context and Government commitment to growth • Strong partnerships focused on growth, e.g. Kent & Medway Economic Partnership, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership. • Political leadership • Presence of large international companies – Moove, Britannia Refined Metals and Kimberly Clark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's Corporate Plan focus on economic growth • Local Plan in place with employment land allocations • Town Centre regeneration taking place • Proactive council in respect of land acquisition • Investment attracted by Ebbsfleet Garden City • London Resort proposals • Proactive business community • Business Rate Retention pilot • Tourism growth • Fast river bus services to and from Central London
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of sites/premises for business use and expansion • Concentration of employment sites along the River rather than A2. • Resident workforce skills, lower levels of qualifications • Skills gaps • Low wage levels • Relatively high unemployment, especially within specific wards with pockets of deprivation • Town Centre – vulnerabilities in the retail sector • Contribution of the visitor economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to access funding from various sources including Local Growth Funds • Economic uncertainties, especially in retail undermining the functioning of the Town Centre • Delays in bringing forward employment land or it not forthcoming • Lower Thames Crossing – economic benefits passing Gravesham by • Brexit implications

<p>relatively small</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traffic congestion along A2/M2 corridor• Low stock of office floorspace, especially in the Town Centre• Lack of Higher Education facilities• Small number of larger employers• Proximity of London in respect of access to larger job market• Rural broadband pockets of poor access• Health disparities• Attractiveness to inward investment – availability of sites and premises	
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Appendix 3 – Gravesham's Economic Indicators

Indicator Value	GBC	Kent	South East	National	Time series
Job Density	0.62		0.87	0.86	2017
Unemployment Rate	3.4%	2.6%		2.8%	Sept 2019
Median Gross Weekly Workplace Earnings Full Time (£)	£556	£542		£571	2018
Median Gross Weekly Resident Earnings (£)	£577	£598	£615	£571	2018
3 year business survival rate (%)	61.2%	59.6%		59.5%	2017
Gross Value Added per Head (£) (value of goods and services in an economy)	£13,918	£23,149	£29,415	£28,096	2017
Employees in the Knowledge Economy (%)	7.0%	15.00%	20.7%	20.10%	2019
National Vocational Qualification Level 4+ (%), 16-64 year olds	28.40%	35.40%	42.20%	39.30%	2018

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