

## Overview Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 10 June 2021

7.30 pm

### Present:

Cllr Jordan Meade (Chair)  
Cllr Baljit Hayre (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:        Gurjit Kaur Bains  
                         Sarah Gow  
                         Leslie Hills  
                         Diane Morton  
                         Elizabeth Mulheran  
                         Christina Rolles  
                         Peter Scollard

Melanie Norris	Director (Communities)
Chris Wakeford	Committee Services Manager
James Bridges	Digital Developer

### 1. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

### 2. Minutes

The Chair advised the Committee that the recommendations around Member IT equipment from minute 35 - Response to Member Survey - December 2020 were presented to Cabinet and in due course it would be good to revisit this matter and request a progress report back to the Overview Scrutiny Committee. The Chair will liaise with the relevant Director on this matter.

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 1 April 2021 were signed by the Chair.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Jordan Meade declared an 'other interest' in Item 6. Consideration of the Recommendations of the Maritime Strategy Scrutiny Review in that he is a National Trustee and Director of the Maritime Volunteer Service.

### 4. Consideration of the Recommendations of the Maritime Strategy Scrutiny Review

The Committee Services Manager presented Members of the Committee with the draft report for the review of GBC's Maritime Strategy and invited Members to consider and comment on the review report with a view to agreeing a final set of recommendations for submission to Cabinet.

The Committee considered each of the seventeen recommendations in turn and made the following comments / amendments:

#### IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

- 1. The lead Cabinet member should consider dedicating the Community & Leisure Committee agenda to the 'river' once per year and invite representatives along from various groups to update members on activity throughout the year and how such groups could work better together in events or bid funding.**

The purpose of the Group would be to encourage a joined up approach to the recreational and tourism aspects of the Thames - providing The Executive with a reliable group of stakeholders from which the Council may develop a better understanding of the needs of the river community

The Committee agreed Recommendation 1.

- 2. The Leader of the Executive consider adding the oversight of matters relating to the River, under the portfolio of a single Cabinet Member**

This will demonstrate the Council's desire to have a key-point of entry for members of the public, organisations and businesses whom wish to engage on maritime matters.

The Committee agreed the 'r' in 'river' should be lower case in Recommendation 2.

- 3. The Council should improve its engagement with Young People in matters relating to the river.**

The Council should work with the Port of London Authority and RNLI, acting as a facilitator to better communicate messages around River Safety to schools and local organisations.

The Executive Member for Young People should ask the Youth Council to appoint a "youth representative for the River" who will act as a stakeholder for the Cabinet to engage and consult with on matters concerning the recreational use of the Thames.

Councillors and Youth Councillors be provided with a tour (when conditions allow) of Northfleet Harbour and the Northfleet River frontage so that they can be better aware of the issues and opportunities.

The Executive engages and consults with the Youth Council on the Lower Thames Crossing giving young people a chance to feed into the mitigation process.

The Committee agreed Recommendation 3.

- 4. The Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure ensures that greater consideration is given to recreational/sport activities on the Thames and that these opportunities are communicated to young people across the Borough as part of the annual sports programme and listed on the Visit Gravesend website.**

The Committee agreed Recommendation 4.

- 5. The Council consider passing a motion (in the name of the Leader and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition) which communicates the unanimous desire of Members to protect and enhance the river.**

Whilst this could not be attached as an annex to the Council's Planning Policies it could be referenced as evidence to help inform planning decisions in the future.

The Committee agreed Recommendation 5.

- 6. The Council start to consider the real and immediate threat posed by global warming and the rise in water levels.**

The Executive should make sure that the Environment Agency is reporting back to the Council on this subject and that Planning Policy is considerate of the fact that greater flood defences will be needed in the near future. Disabled access should also be considered in relation to this matter.

The Committee agreed to amend Recommendation 6 to:

**The Council start to consider the real and immediate threat posed by global warming and the projected rise in water levels.**

- 7. The Leader of the Executive appoint a representative from the Council to attend meetings of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Maritime and Ports, and the APPG on the River Thames**

This will ensure that Gravesham has a voice amongst parliamentarians at these meetings.

The Committee agreed to amend Recommendation 7 to:

**The Leader of the Executive appoint a representative from the Council to attend public meetings of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Maritime and Ports, and the APPG on the River Thames**

**8. Members of the Executive and Members of the Planning Committee be taken on a tour of the borough's river boundary (by boat)**

This will provide a greater appreciation and understanding of how the borough's uniqueness from the river can be developed and help to inform future decision making. This should be done in collaboration with the Estuary Envoy, following her offer to facilitate such a trip.

The Committee agreed to amend Recommendation 8 to:

**Members of the Executive and Members of the Planning Committee be taken on a tour of the borough's river boundary (by boat) subject to the costs being covered from external sources.**

TO BE CONSIDERED FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS OR FUTURE BID APPLICATIONS TO APPROPRIATE FUNDING SOURCES

**9. Plans be developed for the complete regeneration of the Promenade.**

The Executive should consider a feasibility study on improving and regenerating river fronted recreation areas such as St. Andrews Garden and The Riverside area. This would then ensure that plans and scheme would be in place for when appropriate external funding becomes available.

This work should also include a commitment to making sure that all aspects of this space are DDA compliant.

For some bids this may be appropriate to join up its other users on the site such as the Gravesend Sailing Club, The Gravesend Rowing Club and LV21

The Committee agreed Recommendation 9.

**10. The Council urgently look at ways to promote and improve the accessibility of the Saxon Shoreline.**

Planning policy should reflect a desire for developers to contribute towards the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of this path.

The Executive may want to consider using the Community Payback scheme or the new Kickstart initiative to start clearing the pathway.

The Executive should explore the possibility of registering and administering the Promenade, Gordon Gardens and the Saxon Shoreway as a "Country Park" (Like Riverside Country Park in Gillingham).

The Committee agreed to amend Recommendation 10 to:

**The Council commences work, where possible, to promote and improve access to Saxon Shore Way.**

The Director (Communities) clarified that this area of work is currently not in the work plan / budget for next year but there are some areas of work that could begin straight away via the Kickstart Initiative and volunteer work.

The Committee discussed the potential of tree planting for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and getting schools involved but agreed that this would be better placed at the Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee.

**11. When applying for grants it would be good to conduct a public consultation on how the river can play a much more important part in the life of the borough and the type of events or facilities that local people would wish to see if the council were successful in the bid funding.**

The Committee agreed to amend Recommendation 11 to:

**When applying for grants it would be productive to conduct a public consultation on how the river can play a much more important part in the life of the borough and the type of events or facilities that local people would wish to see if the council were successful in the bid funding.**

#### WORK ALREADY HAPPENING OR BEING DEVELOPED

**12. The Executive is now working with the Port of London Authority to promote and grow the Thames Visitor website, ensuring that it corresponds and complements the existing Visit Gravesend Website.**

The Committee agreed to amend Recommendation 12 to:

**The Executive should continue and strengthen the work with the Port of London Authority to promote and grow the Thames Visitor website,**

**ensuring that it corresponds and complements the existing Visit Gravesend Website.**

- 13. The Executive considers all possible options to improve access to the Thames for passengers, including working to secure a commuter ferry service from Gravesend to London.**

The Committee agreed Recommendation 13.

- 14. The Council should enhance their work with the EDC and the Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust to preserve Rosherville assets and support the interim use of Northfleet Harbour for biodiversity and community use.**

The Council currently have good partnership working with the EDC and we are aware that EDC have already funded some work for the Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust. If this trust is to be successful in its aspirations the work needs a project plan, with key stages, so that successful bids can be submitted for the various stages or when such funding becomes available.

The Executive should consider if they could assist the Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust with some in-kind help, so that they are in a better position to submit bids for funding.

The Committee agreed to amend the second paragraph in Recommendation 14 to:

The Council currently have good partnership working with the EDC and we are aware that EDC have already funded some work for the Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust. If this trust is to be successful in its aspirations the work needs a project plan, with key stages, so that successful bids can be submitted for the various stages or when such funding becomes available.

The Executive should consider if they could assist the Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust with some expert guidance, so that they are in a better position to submit bids for funding.

- 15. The Executive begin to work with the Thames Estuary Growth Board (Thames Estuary Envoy) and local education providers to understand how opportunities such as the London Resort will require the upskilling/retraining of the local workforce.**

Under the Council's commitment to Social Mobility an assessment should be carried out on the future skills gaps that we may have in the near future

The Committee agreed Recommendation 15.

**16. The Council take a much more active part in participating in partnership-programmes such as the Estuary Festival, using such events as a catalyst to promote tourism locally and in the wider area.**

The Council is very involved with this years Estuary Festival and has led on some art installations and also obtained funding from Arts Council for a Fringe Festival, we hope that this relationship will grow as the Festival becomes bigger.

The Committee agreed to amend Recommendation 16 to:

**The Council continues to build and take a much more active part in participating in partnership-programmes such as the Estuary Festival, using such events as a catalyst to promote tourism locally and in the wider area.**

**17. The Council consider sponsoring and/or facilitating a Maritime Festival weekend in which people from all backgrounds could have taster sessions in rowing, mud larking, sailing etc.**

A small festival has already started which celebrates the river and is currently being organised for this year at St. Andrews Gardens. The organisers have been spoken to and are considering how they might better involve others from the river community into the event and make residents and visitors aware of the many clubs that exist within the borough that make use of the river.

The Committee agreed to amend Recommendation 17 to:

**The Council consider sponsoring and/or facilitating a Maritime Festival weekend, to promote economic development, in which people from all backgrounds could have taster sessions in rowing, mud larking, sailing etc.**

Following discussions with the Committee; the Chair agreed to revisit the front cover of the review report to ensure it encapsulates the essence of the review. The list of Members who took part in the review would also be added to the contents page.

Following questions from the Committee; the Director (Communities) highlighted that Cabinet will consider the recommendations and decide which, if any, would be appropriate to take forward; at that point Cabinet would ask officers to look into the chosen recommendations further and come back with costs.

**Resolved** that, subject to the amendments detailed above, the Committee agreed the recommendations in the report and endorsed their submission to Cabinet.

## **5. Scrutiny Review of Street Cleanliness, littering, and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough**

The Committee were invited to revisit the Scrutiny Review of Street Cleanliness, littering, and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough and agree the terms of reference and composition of the review sub-group.

The Chair explained that the original Terms of reference were agreed back in September 2019 but the review was postponed due to the pandemic. The new Terms of Reference had been amended in consultation with the Director (Housing & Operations) and reflect work that has already been done and current workstreams.

### **Resolved that:**

- The Terms of Reference, as detailed in Appendix 2, be agreed
- The review Sub-Group will comprise of:
  - The Vice-Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee (Cllr Baljit Hayre) who will Chair the Sub-Group
  - Two Conservative Councillors (Cllr Gurjit Bains and Cllr Diane Morton)
  - Two Labour Councillors (to be confirmed by Cllr Hayre outside of the meeting, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee).
- The review is expected to take 6 months to complete but this will be monitored carefully in relation to the pandemic and officer resources.

### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.31 pm