

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Overview Scrutiny Committee

Date: 17 September 2020

Reporting officer: Chris Wakeford, Committee Services Officer (Scrutiny)

Subject: Restarting the Review of GBC's Maritime Strategy.

Purpose and summary of report:

Members of the Committee are invited to consider resuming the review of GBC's Maritime Strategy.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee note the work that has been undertaken so far and agree to reinstate the work of the review sub-group.
2. That the Committee consider and agree a new target date for the completion of the review.

Background

- 1.1 As per Annex 2.5 of the council's Constitution, the Overview Scrutiny Committee is required to "...establish and maintain a continuing programme of Topic Reviews".
- 1.2 In July 2019 the Committee agreed to conduct a review of GBC's Maritime Strategy
- 1.3 In September 2019 The Terms of Reference were agreed by the Committee (as detailed in Appendix 2) and the composition of the review sub-group was confirmed as follows:
Councillor Jordan Meade, Chair of the sub-group
Councillor Conrad Broadley
Councillor Alan Ridgers
Councillor Christina Rolles
Councillor Peter Scollard
- 1.4 The Committee agreed to aim to complete the review by March 2020, this was subsequently amended by the Committee at their meeting in January 2020 to a completion date of April 2020. The pandemic resulted in the cessation of the review from March 2020 onwards.

2. Progress to March 2020

2.1 20 December 2019 – Meeting with the Port of London Authority (PLA)

- The review group met with Nadine Collins-Smith - Head of Thames Vision Delivery, Port of London Authority.
- The session raised some interesting points including:
 - Development of GBC's relationship / interaction with the PLA
 - Air quality
 - The effect of Tilbury 2 on the river.
 - Nadine Collins-Smith offered an open dialogue with the group so questions can be submitted and she can be invited back in if needed.

2.2 7 February 2020 - Visit to the Rochester Riverside Development

- Cllr Broadley and Cllr Meade visited the Rochester Riverside Development Scheme and met with Peter Sofoluke, the principal Architect behind the scheme.
- The following areas were discussed / noted:
 - Member engagement, use of River assets and how members from across the Council were involved in the design of the scheme.
 - Sustainability and how the buildings were being designed not only to compliment the environment but with the environment in mind.
 - It was noted that as part of the initial design consultation, local councillors were given a Polaroid camera and told to go around Rochester taking snaps of architectural features of the town that they liked and felt would make the scheme more acceptable to local people. This worked well with the final design reflecting its surroundings well.
 - It was further noted that this scheme was looking to create "communities within communities" in that local shop units had been leased prior to the occupation of residential properties being occupied.
 - It was felt that while the scheme was strong in terms of design, sustainability and community engagement; opportunities for recreational access to the River Medway had not been realised.

2.3 14 February 2020 - Riverside Clubs Meeting

- Cllr Meade met with the following clubs: Gravesend Sailing Club, Gravesend Rowing Club, Gravesend Regatta Society, PLA Community Outreach Manager.
- The following areas were discussed / noted:
 - There was a general consensus that there needs to be "more joined up thinking" when it comes to the recreational use of the River.
 - It was sometimes confusing which sports/recreational users of the River should contact for compliance/event support.
 - There was a general consensus that club resources were limited and outdated.
 - Clubs/Groups hoped that with the Lower Thames Crossing there might be an opportunity for funding from mitigation to improve recreational access to the Thames, but they did not know who to contact with ideas or how to feed back to the consultation.

- All agreed that it was challenging to allow young people to participate in water-based activity due to health and safety and lack of adult volunteers.
- All agreed that we could make so much more of the River and the heritage of the Thames.
- Gravesham has a lack of; changing facilities, exercise facilities and the club-based night-time economy offering that other riparian towns have.

2.4 21 February 2020 - Meeting with Young People from the Youth Democracy Scheme to discuss the Maritime Strategy Review.

- Cllr. Meade met with a group of eight members of the Youth Council for a general and informal discussion on the use of the River from a young person's perspective.
- The following areas were discussed / noted:
 - The young people had a generally good awareness of the River and the Borough's riparian offering. There was a consensus that many young people in the town would not use places such as the Fort Gardens, The Prom or St Andrews' Gardens as they worried about safety and "the type of people" that congregated in these spaces. This was particularly prominent in the winter months where it was expressed that a lack of lighting around the river front makes it feel "unsafe" and not the type of place that a young person would want to go.
 - The group were unaware of assets in Northfleet such as Northfleet Harbour, the Northfleet Beach and the industrial heritage in Northfleet connected to the River.
 - The group was aware that recreational activities took place on the Thames, but they were generally unaware of how they could participate in the activity of the clubs. They felt that the clubs were not doing enough to make themselves attractive to young people.
 - The group felt that the Council should do more to promote these recreational opportunities within schools as an alternative to the traditional fun runs and sports like tennis.
 - Many in the group felt that "we were missing a trick" in not providing more recreational activities connected to the enjoyment of the River.
 - There was a consensus in the group that not enough was done locally to educate young people about the importance of the River Thames and there was equally little done to promote safety. It was suggested that the Council and Schools should develop a local curriculum around this.
 - The group did not have a clear understanding of "Thames Gateway", "The Estuary" and they additionally did not know about the "Port of London Authority".
 - On being presented with a map of the River the group found it challenging to demonstrate direction and to identify local places/landmarks.
 - The Group did not know about the Saxon Shoreway and on being told about it stated that the Council should do more to promote this as a key feature of our borough.
 - The group did not know that the PLA was based in Gravesend and further still they had no idea about the career opportunities available. It

was discussed that the Council should work with the PLA to better present these opportunities and further still it would be useful to identify future skills gaps in careers on the river, so that Gravesham students could adapt their studies to make the most of these opportunities.

- It was agreed that the historical and cultural importance of the River Thames at Gravesend is often forgotten or ignored.
- There was consensus that a Ferry to London would be seen as a uniquely 'cool' alternative to travelling on the train and that such a facility would be used by young people especially when going to concerts in Greenwich and other hard to reach by train locations.
- The young people suggested that the promenade area was outdated and lacked anything interesting.
- The young people further suggested that the club facilities along the promenade looked tired and that the area could do with an uplift.
- There was concern over the Lower Thames Crossing and it was unanimously agreed that Highways England had failed to engage with young people throughout the process thus far.

3. Next Steps

3.1 Members of the Committee are invited to consider:

- Resuming the Review of GBC's Maritime Strategy.
- Setting a new target date for the completion of the review
- Which areas to explore next and the format of this exploration (bearing in mind Covid-19 restrictions)

4. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	None identified at this stage.
Finance and Value for Money	It is envisaged that the topic recommendations will be value for money for the Borough.
Risk Assessment	None identified at this stage
Equality Impact Assessment	Screening for Equality Impacts
	Question
	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
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. N/A
	<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	<p>Strategic Objective 1 - Safer Gravesham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver on our 'green agenda' by increasing the levels of recycling and reducing the amount of residual household waste Generate service efficiencies to maintain weekly, effective rubbish collections. - Deliver a quality built and green environment; keeping streets clean and maintaining a high standard of local horticulture - Use all available powers to pursue anyone damaging the health of the local environment (e.g. dog fouling, littering, fly-tipping etc). <p>Strategic Objective 2 - Stronger Gravesham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote Gravesham's cultural and heritage offer, through initiatives such as helping to raise funds to bring back a museum in Gravesend - Deliver an improved leisure offer; activities and facilities that increase sporting participation rates and address local health inequalities.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Digital and website	None identified at this stage

implications	
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	None identified at this stage