

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Overview Scrutiny Committee
Date: 10 June 2021
Reporting officer: Chris Wakeford, Committee Services Manager
Subject: Review of GBC's Maritime Strategy.

Purpose and summary of report:

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

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee consider and comment on the draft report for the review of GBC's Maritime Strategy.
2. That the Committee agree the recommendations in the report and endorse their submission to Cabinet

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 (replaced by Cllr Elizabeth Mulheran on 27.10.20)
Councillor Alan Ridgers (replaced by Cllr Leslie Hills on 3.12.20)
Councillor Christina Rolles (replaced by Cllr Emma Morley on 17.9.20)
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. The Overview Scrutiny Committee then agreed to resume the review in September 2020 with a view to completing the review by March 2021. Consideration of the final draft of the review report was further postponed due to the Elections held in May 2021

2. Evidence gathering

2.1 The review sub-group held eight evidence gathering sessions with various organisations including:

- the Port of London Authority
- Visit to the Rochester Riverside Development
- Riverside Clubs (Gravesend Sailing Club, Gravesend Rowing Club, Gravesend Regatta Society, PLA Community Outreach Manager)
- Young People from the Youth Democracy Scheme
- GBC Planning Policy Department
- The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation
- The Thames Estuary Envoy (Thames Estuary Growth Board)
- A Local Historian and the Assistant Director (Communities) GBC

3. Review Report and Recommendations

3.1 The Full Review report can be found at Appendix 3 to this report.

3.2 In summary, the Scrutiny review of Gravesham Borough Council's Maritime Strategy has identified seventeen recommendations for Cabinet consideration, as set out below

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

- 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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

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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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
	<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. N/A</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	<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. -
Climate Change	<i>There are no climate change implications associated with this report.</i>

Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Digital and website implications	None identified at this stage
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	None identified at this stage