

Summary of feedback from the Advisory Committees

To assist the Advisory Committees in making additional suggestions for growth or savings for Cabinet to consider an interactive session was held at each of their recent meetings.

This Appendix provides a summary of the Advisory Committees for Housing & Health, Economic & Community Development, Direct & Trading Services, Legal & Democratic Services and Planning. A summary of responses from the Advisory Committees for Finance and Policy & Performance will be circulated separately once the final Advisory Committee meeting has been held.

Members should note that this appendix is provided as information for Cabinet arising from the discussions held at the Advisory Committees. The recommendations arising from those meetings are provided elsewhere within the Agenda.

Question a: What services might the Council want to consider investing more in?

Members of each Advisory Committee provided feedback on services that were both within the remit of their committee and on services overseen by other committees. In general, each Advisory Committee was supportive of seeing further investment in priority services within their portfolio responsibilities.

Members commented that their priorities for investment in housing are on energy efficiency, HERO, housing initiatives, private sector housing and affordable housing.

When thinking about services delivered by Communities and Business investment would be welcomed on health and leisure with some focus on youth engagement in sport and other activities. Members commented a new leisure centre for Swanley should also be considered for investment.

In the same service areas Members also suggested investment in community safety (e.g. supporting more Safer Neighbourhood groups) and grants to other organisations.

On the subject of Economic Development Members would like to see more investment in this area generally as well as specific mention of property, tourism and business advice. Communication infrastructure was also mentioned, this is understood to be broadband and mobile phone coverage across the District. Consideration of how business rate rebates could be used to bring investment to the District was also highlighted.

Members would also like to consider further investment in the Council's recycling service, with specific mention of glass and the green waste service. Aligned to this was investment in street cleaning, fly tipping and fly tipping enforcement.

Services such as car parking, car parks and parking enforcement (including potential use of CCTV to support safer parking near schools) were also suggested for investment as were income generating services such as Building Control, land charges, markets and the Licensing Partnership. Improved enforcement of dog fouling and promoting good pet ownership was also suggested.

In relation to Planning, Members priorities for investment are enforcement, pre-application advice charge, conservation and support for neighbourhood plans.

Suggestions that were not service specific include investing in services that give a return / profit, an income or is a shared arrangement. Investing in the sale of products was also put forward as was investing in channel shift, including more online forms.

Question b: Where could the Council make savings to enable investment in other service?

Members were asked to consider those services, either within the remit of their Advisory Committee or elsewhere that the Council may be able to disinvest to enable investment in some of the areas set out above.

In the area of Communities and Business there is some contradiction with (other) Members suggesting that leisure and leisure centres is an area could consider for savings. It was noted that Members were seeking to reduce Council spending and did not imply that would seek to see the level of service reduced.

Members also suggested savings could be drawn from work undertaken to improve broadband provision, from grant to organisations, from the Community Plan, tourism and economic development.

Within the Housing service the only suggestion put forward was to review the expenditure on sites for the Districts gypsy and traveller community.

Across the Council's environmental & operational services Members suggested that savings could be considered or disinvestments made in the pest control service, asset maintenance of playgrounds, in the provision of air quality monitoring, building control services and CCTV. Disinvestment in the trade waste service was also suggested.

In relation to Planning Members suggested that some savings could be gained in planning policy, the pre-application advice service, from enforcement and in the administrative expenses that support the service.

Suggestions that were not service specific include disinvesting in in-house costs, stopping non-statutory services that cost the Council money, reducing spend in non profitable areas and selling the Council offices and relocating to a new site. It was also suggested that the Council could disinvest in Members.

Question c: What services work well?

Members were asked to consider those services, either within the remit of their Advisory Committee or elsewhere, that perform well.

The Council's refuse collection service was said to perform well at almost all of the Advisory Committee meetings. Other Environmental & Operational services considered to be performing well also include street cleaning (incl. clearing of fly tips), building control, civic protection, the pest control service, car parks, the Licensing Partnership and the Environmental Health food safety inspection and rating scheme.

Within the Housing service Members consider the HERO scheme, home improvement grants, homeless service and sites for the gypsy and traveller community perform well.

Other services commended by Members include health improvements, leisure contract, community safety, economic development, the legal function, the register of electors, the development management service and conservation.

Question d: What services would Members like to see make further improvement?

Members were asked to consider those services, either within the remit of their Advisory Committee or elsewhere, which could seek to make improvements in their performance.

Feedback from Members that did not relate to a specific service included the ability to deliver more affordable housing across the District, work that is undertaken to support the most vulnerable citizens and it was also suggested that Members would be an area for further improvement.

Within the Council's environmental and operational services Members suggested that further improvements in performance could be sought in street cleaning, fly tipping and fly tipping enforcement, parking enforcement and the recycling service.

The arrangements for the leisure contract, youth services, tourism and grants to organisations are also considered by Members that the Council could seek to improve.

Members have suggested that improvements in the planning service could be focussed on planning in relation to business development, the conservation and enforcement services and the work of the Development Control Committee.

Finally, Members consider that the Council could seek to work ever more effectively with other major housing providers in the District and seek to further improve the way its communications.

Question e: What would Members like Cabinet to take into account?

Housing & Health Advisory Committee

- ▶ Health inequalities – more focus to be on bridging the gap between least and most deprived areas of the District
- ▶ Taking health priorities across Council services
- ▶ Youth groups in Swanley (improve community sport/activity for kids)
- ▶ Disabled Facilities Grants – opportunities in future for more income generation and shared working
- ▶ Parity of esteem needed between mental and physical health services

In relation to responsibilities of other Advisory Committees the following feedback was given:

- More parking enforcement officers
- Rural broadband in northern parishes
- SDC shouldn't be competing with local businesses

Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee

- ▶ Grants to organisations – measured return
- ▶ Broadband
- ▶ Rural economy
- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Economic Development
- ▶ Civil protection

In relation to responsibilities of other Advisory Committees the following feedback was given:

- Recycling
- Commercial MOT services
- Best bang for buck
- District to take larger role in ensuring Parishes have flood plans
- Work more with Town and Parish Councils
- Direct trading
- Property portfolio

Direct & Trading Services Advisory Committee

- ▶ Contributions to CCTV
- ▶ Contributions to air quality management
- ▶ Parking needs
- ▶ Fly tipping
- ▶ Recycling

In relation to responsibilities of other Advisory Committees the following feedback was given:

- Invest in more property for starter homes
- Profit making?
- Customer expectations
- Shared services – any more to be had?

Legal & Democratic Services Advisory Committee

- ▶ Lobby LGA/Government to lift fixed fee for Temporary Event Notices and others
- ▶ Post Committee Agenda papers instead of delivering
- ▶ Shared Services roadshow / Kent Conference to showcase our Licensing Hub
- ▶ The need for professional specialist Legal advice especially Licensing
- ▶ Members allowances should stay as they are
- ▶ Legal Services – the need for a permanent Planning Lawyer

In relation to responsibilities of other Advisory Committees the following feedback was given:

- Need to gain more income from services

Planning Advisory Committee

- ▶ Planning pre-application advice – charging
- ▶ Street numbering – increased charges
- ▶ Provide expert Planning advice service to poor performing Councils – for a fee
- ▶ Provide a rival service to the Land registry
- ▶ Lobby Government to allow local determination of Planning fees
- ▶ Force development of long term empty sites

In relation to responsibilities of other Advisory Committees the following feedback was given:

- Work better with Towns and Parishes
- Provide additional public rubbish bins
- Public Health and Housing – reduce waiting lists
- Prioritise affordable / small housing