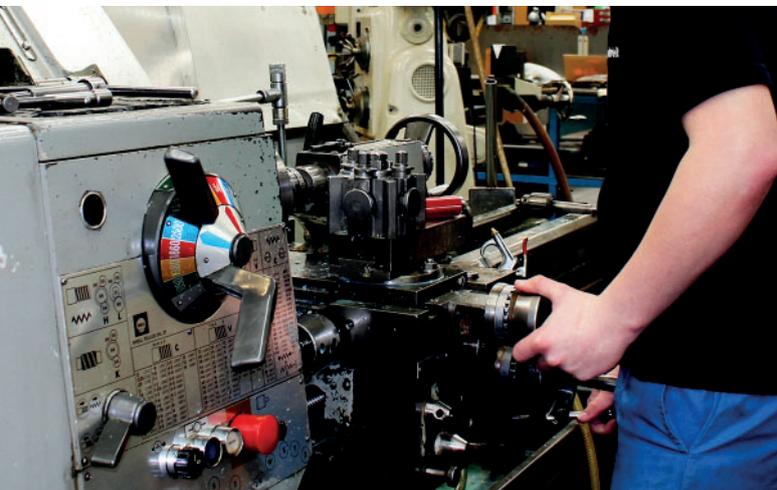


# Swale Economic Improvement Plan

## ACTION PLAN 2020 – 2023



## Economic Improvement Plan 2020-2023 - Action Plan

This action plan sits alongside the draft Economic Improvement Plan (EIP) and sets out in more detail activity and interventions that the Council intends to pursue to deliver against the four headline themes. This document will be subject to regular review and its content will evolve, initially informed by consultation for the draft EIP but also over time in response to available local economic data, engagement with the local business community and partner organisations and changes to the wider set of influences that can impact on local economy and labour market.

The priorities identified are divided to reflect the need to meet short-term needs and longer-term ambitions. The timescales for the short-term priorities is for a period of up to a year and is in no small part driven by immediate pressures and issues generated by the COVID-19 crisis, its economic impacts and the need to play our part in the economic recovery. It may well prove the case that responding to the challenges this presents will extend beyond that period.

Some of the Council's longer-term ambitions are identified as medium-term. Many of these are aligned not only to the Council's new ethos, but can also make a contribution to the recovery of the local economy, as we move out of the current crisis. Working within the resources available, we will seek to make progress against these across the life of the plan, but how far and how fast will also be influenced by a range of external factors. Many may not be delivered within the life of this Plan, but their inclusion helps set out Swale's objectives for partners and funders to understand and assist in making progress against them.

## Raising Swale's profile

Short Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Put forward the Borough's case for support, as it is made available through Government and other agencies, to aid economic recovery.	<p>Stay abreast of the resources being made available via Government and others respond to relevant opportunities.</p> <p>Monitor and report on local economic conditions</p> <p>Build and consolidate relationships with local and regional partners to inform and support funding bids and delivery.</p>	<p>Swale BC</p> <p>Swale BC/KCC</p> <p>Swale BC, other districts, KCC, TGKP, KMEP SELEP, private sector</p>	<p>Existing ECS staff resource.</p> <p>Possible financial inputs for specialist help for bids</p>
Refresh and enhance the Swale Means Business (SMB) on-line presence to communicate and increase our reach into the community of local SME's.	<p>Simplify the Swale Means Business website, with regular review and update of content of content well of interest to SME's</p> <p>Continue to build database of business contacts in receipt of regular communications and promote content of SMB</p>	<p>Swale BC</p> <p>Swale BC</p>	Existing ECS staff resource and budget
Inspire local businesses through local 'success stories' that promote creativity, innovation and the use of technology, to help rebuild business success in the "new normal".	<p>Identify local businesses adapting to the 'new norms' and the economic climate and develop case studies to be promoted through SMB and wider media.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to provide support through workshops or peer support.</p>	<p>Swale BC</p> <p>Swale BC, private and public sector providers</p>	<p>Existing ECS staff resource and budget</p> <p>Comms Team</p>
Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Develop and present a clear narrative for the Borough's longer-term ambitions so that it is understood and reflected through the work of key bodies including KCC, Locate in Kent, Visit Kent, the Thames Estuary Commission and the South East LEP.	<p>Create a set of strategies, including the Economic Improvement Plan, that set out the ambitions for the Borough and develop this into a clear overarching narrative.</p> <p>Communicate this through our local and strategic partnerships and more widely through our on-line platforms.</p>	<p>Swale BC</p> <p>Swale BC</p>	<p>Existing ECS staff resource</p> <p>Pan-authority inputs via strategy development</p>

Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
<p>Use the attributes of each area of Swale to promote places and the Borough as a whole as a great place to visit and invest.</p>	<p>Alongside visit Swale and local businesses develop a suite of imagery and video available for promoting the Borough and its component parts. Expand audience engagement on social media channels and other media.</p> <p>Develop our on-line presence through SMB and Visit Swale to better present the offer that the Borough and its component parts.</p>	<p>Swale BC</p>	<p>Existing ECS staff resource and budgets</p>
<p>Work with partners to develop and promote shared stories about Swale as a great place in which to invest and do business.</p>	<p>Work with local business and investors to develop cross-promotional opportunities and campaigns via social and other media.</p> <p>Identify positive investment and business stories and develop case studies that can be shared through SMB, social media and other channels.</p>	<p>Swale BC, private sector</p>	<p>Existing ECS staff resource and budgets</p> <p>Comms team</p>

## Securing investment and infrastructure

Short Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
<p>Work with partners and invest in improving the appearance, functionality and economic and environmental sustainability of our town centres.</p>	<p>Help maintain a safe and welcoming environment for visitors to the town centres, adapting the public realm to meet prevailing needs of visitors and traders.</p> <p>Support measures that help create safe pedestrian friendly environments in the town centres, including appropriate traffic restrictions, removal of street clutter and signage.</p> <p>Build a contact database for town centre businesses, less reliant on business addresses, to enable quicker and more effective communications.</p>	<p>Swale BC, KCC, local businesses, public transport operators</p>	<p>Existing staff resource across a number of teams</p> <p>Safer High Streets Funding; Active Travel Funding</p>
<p>Work with partners to introduce measures that encourage more walking and cycling to secure modal shift as well as develop the borough's visitor economy</p>	<p>Access the active travel funding for Kent to implement local measures that facilitate and encourage walking and cycling, in particular to access key destinations, including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access routes to town centres and seafronts</li> <li>• “Schools Streets” schemes, where supported by schools</li> <li>• New facilities that support cycling, including bike storage</li> <li>• 20's plenty schemes in appropriate areas</li> </ul> <p>Devise and implement an associated communications strategy that help inform about measures and benefits and encourage behaviour change</p>	<p>SBC, KCC, local partners, including FTC, STC and schools</p>	<p>Existing ECS and Planning staff resources</p> <p>Comms team</p> <p>Active Travel Funding</p>

Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
<p>Offset housing growth and promote sustainable, local economic improvement through balanced improvements to physical, environmental, social and health infrastructure.</p>	<p>Deliver a revised Local Plan, that sets a new policy framework in keeping with the ambition for a balanced approach to development in the Borough.</p> <p>Maintain and build on strategic partnerships that inform and support the delivery of required infrastructure.</p> <p>Seek to optimise the contribution from development towards meeting local infrastructure needs through the planning system</p> <p>Take advantage of appropriate funding streams made available to support infrastructure delivery</p>	<p>SBC, KCC, other public service providers, registered Housing providers</p>	<p>Existing ECS and Planning staff resources and budgets</p> <p>Possible financial inputs for specialist help for bids</p>
<p>Push for a range of measures that contribute to ease of movement and improved traffic management across the Borough, including appropriate improvements to the road network; alternative modes of freight transport; public transport provision; lorry and coach parking and measures that encourage walking and cycling.</p>	<p>Lobby for appropriate, Government led solutions to lorry parking for the Borough and across the Strategic Network</p> <p>Help seek local solutions for the issue of coach parking, both for the visitor economy and commuting purposes</p> <p>Act on preferred recommendations from the emerging walking and cycling strategy, seeking to deliver enhancements that support an improved network of routes that support modal shift and the Visitor Economy</p> <p>Install EV charging points across the borough and promote work-place car chargers</p> <p>Work with KCC to develop the Swale Local Transport Strategy (in parallel to the Local Plan Review) and the promotion and facilitation of a major shift in priorities to public transport and active travel.</p>	<p>SBC, KCC, private sector</p>	<p>Existing ECS and Planning staff resources</p> <p>Active travel and other funding as it is made available</p> <p>Possible financial inputs for specialist help for bids</p> <p>Private sector contributions from development</p>

Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
<p>Where we can, promote the delivery of broadband and mobile services, that support the changing needs of both the urban and rural economies and residents working patterns.</p>	<p>Encourage take-up of voucher schemes to help enable access to improved broadband services</p> <p>Work with KCC, as required, to help roll-out Government funded improvements within the Borough</p>	<p>SBC, KCC</p>	<p>Existing ECS and Comms staff resources</p> <p>Broadband Vouchers schemes</p>
<p>Develop and deliver clear strategies for our town centres, investing in improving their appearance and working with partners to diversify their offer to enhance the important role as centres for economic, cultural and community activity.</p>	<p>Develop a longer-term strategy for Sittingbourne Town Centre, including future development options to introduce new residential communities.</p> <p>Deliver a programme of works to improve the environment in the town centres, particularly in Sittingbourne and Sheerness, including street furniture and wayfinding.</p> <p>Use a mix of enforcement and encouragement to tackle issues of poor building maintenance and appearance in the town centres.</p>	<p>SBC, KCC, Local Businesses</p>	<p>Pan-Authority staff inputs required</p> <p>Funding required to be identified</p>
<p>Implement the visitor economy framework to increase investment, address new visitor demands and grow the value of the sector to the Swale economy</p>	<p>Please see Visitor Economy Action Plan</p>		

## Supporting local business

Short Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Optimise access to government financial support to businesses	<p>Deliver government funded grants to eligible businesses.</p> <p>Be responsive to any future funding opportunities made available, promoting and facilitating access to local businesses</p>	Swale BC	Existing ECS staff
Deliver our support service for start-ups, providing access best suited to the public health advice and the demand from residents	<p>Produce online and other marketing materials to promote the service to residents, particularly those impacted by the crisis and link with partners to generate referrals to the service, including Jobcentre Plus, CAB, banks and registered housing providers.</p> <p>Support contracted provider to develop materials and approach that helps support delivery on-line and adapt provision over time to suit circumstances and customer needs.</p> <p>Signpost to other support and information as required</p>	SBC, contracted business support provider	Existing ECS Staff and budgets
Gather intelligence to understand the immediate and potential ongoing impacts on the local economy to inform how we adapt our support	<p>Monitor available local economic indicators</p> <p>Conduct surveys in summer/ autumn 2020 to ascertain impacts and issues amongst the local business community to inform our understanding and response</p>	SBC	Existing ECS Staff and budgets
Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Continue to develop our support service for start-ups and businesses across sectors including those which support the visitor economy and promote creativity and innovation in the Borough.	<p>Deliver our contracted business support service in a manner best suited to meet customer demands.</p> <p>Develop a wider set of partnerships with other providers to broaden and evolve the offer</p>	SBC, other public and private sector providers	Existing ECS Staff and budgets

Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Investigate the evolution of a ‘one business account’ approach within the Council, that helps us better support local businesses and aids their understanding how to be compliant in relation to their business activity	<p>Liaise with internal services to establish how information might be better shared and take forward actions identified.</p> <p>Develop and implement campaigns around compliance and support that is available through a broader set of Council driven services.</p>	SBC	Pan authority inputs required
Improve the supply and diversity of space that supports micro and start-up businesses, including co-working.	<p>Investigate and establish the potential for part of Swale House to provide space for businesses use.</p> <p>Investigate and establish potential for the Masters House to provide space for business use.</p> <p>Maintain discussions with private sector providers of small business and co-working space to monitor market trends and to test potential opportunities for investment.</p> <p>Pursue funding opportunities arising that will support the delivery of small business space</p>	SBC, private sector	<p>Pan authority inputs required</p> <p>Funding requirements to be identified</p>
Support a pipeline of available commercial sites and premises across Swale.	<p>Identify and promote new employment land that supports local ambitions through the revised local plan.</p> <p>Work with developers looking to deliver new employment premises in the Borough, with a view to securing more diversity and choice in the market for SME’s.</p>	SBC	Existing ECS and planning staff resources and budgets
Provide networking and learning opportunities that help businesses take forward ideas, access funding; develop their workforce; improve productivity and grow sustainably.	<p>Devise and deliver a programme of workshops and other learning opportunities for businesses, in areas such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carbon and cost reduction</li> <li>• access to support for workforce development</li> <li>• use of technology to support business development</li> </ul>	SBC	Existing ECS Staff and budgets

Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Support creative and innovation led businesses to tap into centres of excellence and knowledge, including Higher Education, to support innovation and growth	Monitor funding and the support available through HE institutions and signpost to local businesses.	SBC, HE providers	Existing ECS Staff and budgets

## Improving skills

Short Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Help provide local, labour market intelligence to partners and local schools, to help inform provision for young people and adults.	Monitor available local economic indicators and other labour market intelligence from surveys to provide a picture of the local position and develop a bulletin to be shared with appropriate school and other learning provider contacts, through which intelligence can be shared on a regular basis.	SBC, KCC, schools and FE colleges	Existing ECS staff and resources
Monitor how the crisis is impacting upon the local labour market and need locally and lobby providers and funders to respond to the challenges	Monitor available local economic indicators and other labour market intelligence from surveys to provide a picture of the local position and use the data to lobby for resources as opportunities arise.	SBC	Existing ECS staff and resources
With partners, take steps to help the most disadvantaged families and communities to access job and skills opportunities	Work with partners to provide a local support service to those made redundant where possible  Use the available data and work with partners to develop programmes in response to circumstances and new funding opportunities.	SBC, registered housing providers, Jobcentre Plus, other local partners	Existing ECS staff and resources  DWP rapid response and other funding
Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Pursue all opportunities to progress our long-term ambition to enhance the provision of further and higher education accessible to Swale residents	Maintain regular contact with the FE sector, building our relationship or trust with key providers  Support efforts to enhance provision at Sheppey College, encouraging collaboration with school providers  Monitor the market conditions for the FE sector and lobby for future dedicated FE provision in Sittingbourne.	SBC, KCC, FE providers, KMEP, SELEP	Existing ECS staff and resources  SELEP skills funding

Medium Term Priorities	Activity	Organisations	Resources
Encourage employers to become more engaged with developing young people, working with local schools and providing progression opportunities through work placements and apprenticeships	<p>Identify businesses that wish to engage with the education and learning sector and make introductions.</p> <p>Use entry level jobs within the Council to deliver new apprenticeships</p> <p>Promote the provision of entry level of jobs as apprenticeship opportunities amongst local businesses, alongside any financial support that is available</p>	SBC	Existing ECS staff and resources