

Economic Development Committee

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report requests the committee to consider the current arrangements for economic development matters and whether these remain appropriate.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To review the committee arrangements for economic development and make recommendations to Council as appropriate.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy Committee	14 March 2018
Council	11 April 2018

Economic Development Committee

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Councillor Harper has requested that the Democracy Committee consider the creation of an Economic Development Committee to deal with economic development issues. Currently economic development falls within the remit of the Policy and Resources Committee.
 - 1.2 The Democracy Committee has responsibility for reviewing the council's constitution and democratic matters. Ultimate responsibility for the constitution and committees sits with Council. Any change would be recommended to Council for approval.
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2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Create a new Committee or Sub-Committee

- 2.1 Currently the Policy and Resources Committee has Economic Development within its remit. Over the course of the year they have considered various items in relation to Economic Development including:

June 2017:

- National Productivity Investment Fund for the Local Road Network – this was a bid for national funding to improve J7 of the M20
- Maidstone East Project update
- Brunswick & Union Street - housing development with an economic development component
- Acquisition of a Residential Property – primarily a commercialisation project but with an economic development component.

July 2017:

- Housing Development & Regeneration Investment Plan – primarily housing and commercialisation but with an economic development component
- Kent Medical Campus Investment Strategy
- Property Acquisition – Lenworth House - housing development with an economic development component

October 2017

- Property Acquisition – Commercial Property on the Park Wood Industrial Estate - primarily a commercialisation project but with an economic development component.

December 2017

- Thames Gateway Kent Partnership – A strategic decision, but relating to economic development

February 2018

- Brunswick & Union St – final sign off

March 2018 (special meeting)

- Phase 3 Public Realm – final sign off of town centre improvements

2.2 Whilst there are a significant number of items, these would not constitute a typical full committee agenda each month. There are also areas of overlap with the Policy & Resources Committee. Members need to consider if there is enough business to warrant a new committee being created.

2.3 There will also be resource implications if a new committee or sub-committee is created. Additional time will be needed from 9 Councillors who form the committee and officers to support the committee from Democratic Services and those who are responsibility for economic development. When the Committee system was introduced work was carried out to estimate the cost of a committee meeting. This can be used to provide an indicative cost of an additional committee and amounts to around £1,500 per meeting.

Move Economic Development to Heritage, Culture and Leisure

2.4 Currently the service responsibility in relation to these items sits with the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, with the rest of her portfolio falling to Heritage, Culture and Leisure (HCL) Committee. A case could be made to place responsibility for economic development with the HCL Committee as there is synergy. At times there has been space on the committee's work programme for additional items for decision and they have considered some of the reports above in relation to their remit in terms of parks and heritage for example. This will be less costly and add more weight to the HCL Committee and could be managed with their existing workload.

Do nothing

2.5 A final option would be to do nothing and leave the current arrangements as they are. Policy and Resources has managed to consider all economic development items within time and within their meeting schedule.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 If the Committee believes a change is necessary then it is recommended to consider changing Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee to the Economy, Culture and Heritage Committee, removing responsibility for economic development from Policy and Resources Committee to give this to HCL. Other names may be suitable for the Committee. This would be the least costly suggestion in terms of resourcing meetings as this could be managed within the current workload of HCL and there is synergy with the Committee's terms of reference.

4. RISK

4.1 Councillors will need to consider the risk of moving economic development to a different committee. Consideration will need to be given to whether HCL have the time to consider items properly or whether it is best placed with Policy and Resources or a new committee entirely. In terms of mitigating risk in relation to decision making it will be necessary to ensure members are fully briefed and trained in the areas they will be making decisions on. The decision referral process is also in place to mitigate risk whereby service committee decisions can be referred by Councillors to the Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 The Democracy Committee is being consulted on the proposal to change and may identify further consultation in order to make a decision.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 If a recommendation for change is made this will be considered by Council on 11 April 2018. If approved the constitution will be updated.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Economic development is a crucial to meeting the corporate priority to regenerate the town centre and increase financial resilience with commercial activities	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Covered in the risk section.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	The creation of a new Committee would involve additional costs. The alternative solution proposed in the report, of including economic development within the remit of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

	Committee, has no cost implications.	
Staffing	There will be implications if an additional sub-committee or committee is created these are set out in the options section of the report.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	Under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council may arrange for the discharge of any of their functions by a committee, a sub-committee or an officer of the authority. Section 102 of the Act allows for the establishment of committees to fulfil functions under Section 101. Sections 15-17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 require political balance on committees and impose a duty on the Council to allocate seats to political groups. If a new committee or sub-committee is created or if functions are transferred between committees it will be necessary for the Council's Constitution to be amended accordingly	Keith Trowell, Interim Team Leader (Corporate Governance)
Privacy and Data Protection	None	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Equalities	None	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Crime and Disorder	None	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	None	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None